

EMPOWERING NIGERIAN YOUTHS THROUGH TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR ENHANCING NATIONAL SECURITY

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ABSTRACT

The Nigerian government had initiated several youth empowerment programmes through TVET, but a lot of these programmes lack structure and their impact not felt by the nation's youths. This is evident in the substantial number of youth that still lack work skills-which often results to unemployment, insecurity, loss of lives and properties and chaos. The study therefore, sought to investigate, TVET empowerment skills required by youths as a means for enhancing national security. Descriptive survey research design was used and data was obtained using a structured questionnaire known as the Empowerment Skill Inventory Checklist (ESIC). Eighty five TVET lecturers in post-secondary vocational institutions took part in the study. Findings revealed that youths require vocational skills in areas such as horticulture, business, engineering and construction works. Also recommended techniques and strategies for career development that include specific skills such as business skills, financial management skills, basic computation skills, communication skills and adaptation skills.

Keywords: *Empowerment skills, National Security; Nigerian Youths, Technical Vocational Education and Training.*

1 INTRODUCTION

Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) provides one of the most recognized and effective means by which developed nations such as Germany and Australia, through quality and up-to-date information have been able to prepare and train workers to be both knowledgeable and proficient in particular skill areas. This by no means indicates that TVET is a form of education that particularly seeks to equip individuals with capacities, skills, knowledge and understandings in a specific vocation or trade to enable such individuals become productive citizens of their nations and also to enable the individuals live productive and meaningful lives (UNESCO & ILO, 2001). The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2004) defined TVET as a comprehensive term referring to those aspects of the educational processes involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences, the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life.

It is therefore evident, that TVET prepares humans for the ever changing world of works. It has as one of its core goals and aims the quest of preparing people for employment and also to be as a source of change for people in the world of works, through which these individuals can aspire to have a better life and then develop the necessary skills needed to attain such aspirations. Consequently, TVET is seen as an instrument for reducing extreme poverty (Hollander & Mar, 2009). These distinctive features of TVET make it an effective tool that can be used to achieve a globally recognised workforce, peace and national security for a nation. According to Zarini, Wilson, Mar, and Varis (2009) TVET facilitates the development and strengthening of youths around the world thereby enhancing peace and strengthening national security.

There is no single universally accepted definition of national security. National security objectively means the absence of threats to acquired values and subjectively, it implies the absence of fear that such values will be attacked. National security according Paleri (2008) is the ability to preserve the nation's physical integrity and territory; to maintain its economic relations with the rest of the world on reasonable terms; to preserve its nature, institution, and governance from disruption; and to control its borders. National security is the measurable state of the capability of a nation to overcome the multi-dimensional threats to the apparent well-being of its people and its survival as a nation-state at any given time, by balancing all elements of state policy through governance (Davis, 2010). Davis (2010) emphasized national security as the capability of a nation to overcome the multi-dimensional threats to the apparent well-being of its people. What then are these multi-dimensional threats to the well-being of the Nigerian people? In an attempt to answer the question raised, what threats other than a severity of poverty and unemployment does a better job in threatening the well-being of the people of a nation. These two threats are sufficiently enough to cause issues of insecurity, disruption of the social environment, increase crime, violence and so on. These were borne out of the nation's inability to implement informed decisions made regarding the well-being of its people (Nwankwo, Obeta, & Nwaogbe, 2013; Onderi, Ajowi, & Malala, 2014). Therefore, it becomes necessary for the Government as well as NGOs interested in promoting peace and stability to seek out ways to

empower youths to become more productive. TVET offers one of such ways by providing youth with relevant and useful skills to build small enterprises with which they can earn a living or gain employment so as to become productive members of the society.

Empowering young people according to Olabiyi (2013) is the process of encouraging them to be active citizens in their community. Youth mentoring can provide young people with positive role models, support and encouragement, and is thus considered one of the most effective ways of helping them reach their fullest potential as productive members of the society. TVET aims to promote the social inclusion of young people of diverse ethnic, religious, educational and socio-economic background with vocational skills. This would help reduce unemployment among youths and as a result their energy, time and effort would be channelled into more productive means. Hence, youths will be better equipped for work and not be susceptible to socially degrading activities that could disrupt the peace and stability of the nation. TVET programmes offers training to people in areas including auto mechanics, building, metalwork, woodwork, plumbing and fitting, electrical work, business, home economics, agriculture among others. However, based on current needs of the nation, it is expedient that these youths are trained in specific areas that has been identified from market surveys, needs analysis and employers of labour as needed skill areas. This is necessary to maintain a balance in the spread of workers across all sectors of the economy and to reduce the duplication of skilled workers in already populated skill areas.

The objectives of empowering youths according to (Botswana Core Welfare Indicators Survey, 2009 ; 2010) are to: enable them to (1) develop good work ethics, (2) gain entrepreneurship experience, (3) attain employment readiness (4) develop skills and competencies that will enable them to make positive contribution to the development of their communities; (5) foster the development of behavioural change and (6) instil some level of responsibility and accountability in them; drawing on their creativity and energy to improve the delivery of public services; reduce youth unemployment and eradicate poverty among young people (Ministry of Sports and Youth Culture, 2009). Increasingly, with the conceptualisation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the emphasis on poverty reduction that encompasses a multi-dimensional understanding of poverty, TVET has come to be seen as a tool for social inclusion, and for the integration of individuals into the labour market. TVET has assumed a much more credible position in the education spectrum as it addresses a number of social and economic problems that have been highlighted by the MDGs.

Ma'aji and Hassan (2012) as cited in (Nwankwo et al., 2013) reports that among the youth empowerment programs and poverty reduction programmes set up by the government since independence till date, there still exist a high rate of unemployment and poverty looming in the nation. Nwankwo et al. (2013) attributed this to the inappropriateness of these programmes, too much focus on already established skill areas, inconsistency in the running of the programmes, poor administration, poor and unsuitable programme content that is not consistent with employer's needs. These are responsible for the looming poverty and unemployment in the nation which results in youth engaging in numerous social vices that thus

disrupts national peace and threatens national security. Therefore, the need for youth empowerment programs (YEPs) that would provide youths with adequate skills to be empowered is not only necessitated but also mandated.

YEPs, according to Nwankwo et al. (2013), are supposed to be within the reach of youths irrespective their social backgrounds and class. Morton and Montgomery (2013) also explains that YEPs are supposed to be highly participatory, youth-driven processes that help young people to strengthen positive attitudes, skills and behaviours that improves proper functioning across a range of life activities. Yet this is not the case with the YEPs and poverty reduction programmes set up in the nation. Various researchers have reported that many youths do not participate in these programmes due to the shallow means with which these programmes are being publicized (Nwankwo et al., 2013; Ohize & Adamu, 2009; Osuala, 2004). Furthermore, there also exist the issue of misappropriation of funds specifically disbursed for the sole purpose of implementing these programmes. Nwankwo et al. (2013) reports that this has led to ill-structured programmes with unsuitable content focusing on skill areas already vastly populated. Hence, resulting in the production of unskilled workers with little or no knowledge of the vocation they were trained for.

TVET is believed to prepare youths to develop profitable social habits required by the society (Olaitan, Nwachukwu, Igbo, Onyemachi, & Ekong, 1999). Research literature has also emphasized that it is rare to see those who are vocationally trained and gainfully employed become delinquents and anti-socials of the society (Ma'aji & Hassan, 2012; Nwankwo et al., 2013; Ohize & Adamu, 2009; UNESCO, 2004). To this end, it becomes necessary to overhaul already established programmes to focus on skills and vocational areas that have not been fully explored in order to provide skills to youth across all sectors of the nation's economy. Furthermore, administrators of these programmes across federal, state and local government areas would need to develop working plans that draws from the results of research to appropriate funds disbursed for YEPs. Therefore, it is the goal of this study to specifically, seek experts views on aspects of TVET programs that YEPs can focus on to empower youths thereby promoting peace and national security. The study also addresses strategies and techniques that can be adapted by YEPs to empower youths.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Nigeria as a developing nation with rich intellectual and material resource should have attained a state where unemployment, crime rate, violence, and numerous social vices are at a minimum. Unfortunately this is not the case with Africa's largest economy, as reports shows large proportions of youths are unemployed and unskilled. As a result these youths engage in socially degrading activities that disrupts the nation's peace and threatens her national security. In an attempt to curb the excesses of social violence and crime resulting from unemployed and unskilled youths in the country, the government through its various institutions had set up various youth empowerment programmes to empower youths with various vocational skills. However, despite the government's effort to solve this problem, unemployment and poverty still

looms in the country (Atsumbe, Emmanuel, Igwe, & Atsumbe, 2012; Ma'aji & Hassan, 2012; Ohize & Adamu, 2009). Nwankwo et al. (2013) and Atsumbe et al. (2012) asserts that this is as a result of the inappropriateness of these programmes, duplication of already populated skill areas, inconsistency in the running of the programmes, poor administration and unsuitable programme content that is not consistent with market needs. Therefore the goal of this study was to identify specific vocational skill areas consistent with market needs where youths can be adequately trained to gain employment or create one. Also the study identifies some techniques and strategies that can be utilized to empower youths, thereby promoting peace, stability and national security.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to identify vocational skill areas with which youths can be empowered for the enhancement of peace and national security. Specifically, the study determined the employability skills required by youths for promoting national security, the techniques and strategies for empowering youths with vocational skills.

1.3 Research Questions

In line with the purpose of the study, the following research questions were formulated for the study.

- (i) What are the empowerment skills required by youths through TVET for national security?
- (ii) What are the techniques and strategies that can be adopted for empowering youths to promote peace and national security?

2 METHODOLOGY

The design of the study was a descriptive survey research. There exist a need to determine the empowerment skill areas needed to empower youths in an attempt to promote peace and national security in Nigeria. Hence, the researchers sought the expertise of eighty five TVET lecturers purposefully selected from ten south-western states in Nigeria for the study.

2.1 Population and Sample

The population for the study was defined as TVET lecturers in public post-secondary vocational institutions in South-western Nigeria. To ensure that a representative sample was selected from the population, the researchers defined specific selection criteria used in selecting participants for the study. TVET lecturers with a minimum of seven years teaching and research experience, and a significant contribution to issues in TVET were considered the base selection criteria for participants for the study. Hence, a total of hundred and twenty lecturers were first listed as

potential participants for the study having met the base selection criteria. After several considerations and review the list was reduced to a total of eighty five participants selected. Participants were purposefully selected to ensure that only those with adequate knowledge of TVET related issues were chosen, and also to ensure that quality data was generated.

2.2 Instrument

Data for the study were collected with a questionnaire. The questionnaire utilized for the study was a researcher developed questionnaire known as the Empowerment Skill Inventory Checklist (ESIC). The ESIC is a structured questionnaire that consists of three sections, A, B and C. Section A sought personal information from respondents which included; institution name, position, gender, qualification, teaching and research experience. Section B contained 11 items specifically aimed at determining the empowerment skills required by youths. While section C contained 15 items aimed at determining strategies and techniques that can be adopted in empowering youths to promote peace and national security. The ESIC was structured on a five point Likert scale and was subjected to face and content validity by three TVET experts at the department of Science and Technology Education, University of Lagos. Expert's suggestions and recommendations were duly incorporated into the final draft of the ESIC. The Cronbach's Alpha value obtained for the ESIC was .87.

2.3 Data Analysis

Data were analysed using descriptive statistics. The analysis was carried out using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16.0. Raw data was first coded and fed into the SPSS program and mean and standard deviation were specifically used to analyse the data. The cut-off point set for accepting or rejecting an item was set at 3.5. Hence, items with mean values of 3.5 and above were accepted while items below 3.5 were also rejected. Out of a total of 85 questionnaires that were packaged and distributed, only 70 of them were retrieved, making up a total of 82.4% retrieval rate.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Empowerment skills required by youths through TVET

Table 1 shows the responses of TVET experts (lecturers) on the empowerment skills required by Nigerian youths in order to promote peace and national security. Respondents agreed to all items as shown in Table 1. Items had mean values ranging from 4.01 to 4.43 respectively. Findings revealed that youth empowerment skills should focus on horticulture, business, engineering and construction, financial planning skills, basic computation skills, communication skills as well as adaptation skills necessary for youths to cope with the ever changing business and work environment.

Table 1: Empowerment skill required by youths for national security (N=70)

S/No	Empowerment Skills Required for National Security	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	Vocational skills in areas such as horticulture, business, engineering and construction works,	4.33	0.96	Agree
2	Develop in youths character and general discipline of work environment	4.20	0.63	Agree
3	Develop business skills in order to start up viable businesses.	4.06	0.69	Agree
4	Develop in youths financial planning skills to enable the sustainability of their enterprises.	4.30	0.62	Agree
5	Develop appropriate skills that commensurate with changing demands of the labour market.	4.30	0.91	Agree
6	Instill in young people the attitude of participating in the national economy through small businesses.	4.33	0.91	Agree
7	Sponsor young graduates for postgraduate programme and research in some strategic disciplines of economic demand	4.11	0.79	Agree
8	Develop in youths the techniques of maintaining customer relations.	4.04	1.07	Agree
9	Develop basic computation skills.	4.43	0.50	Agree
10	Develop appropriate communication skills to meet clients and customer's expectations	4.14	0.59	Agree
11	Develop the skill of adaptation in a changing business environment.	4.01	1.12	Agree

3.2 Techniques and Strategies for Empowering Youths

Table 2 shows respondents rating of the techniques and strategies that can be adopted to empower youths to promote peace and national security. All items had mean values ranging from 4.05 to 4.72 respectively; hence the items were remarked as agreed, since each mean value exceeded the cut-of value of 3.50. Findings revealed that respondents agree to all the techniques and strategies suggested by the researchers on empowering youths for peace and national security.

Table 2: Techniques and strategies for Empowering Youths (N=70)

S/No	Techniques and strategies for Empowering Youths	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	Utilize apprenticeship training to prepare youths to develop and master work skills.	4.07	1.15	Agree
2	Establish computer literacy programmes to empower youths with basic IT Skills	4.31	0.49	Agree
3	Standardize all certificates and diplomas from training colleges to allow graduates gain employment.	4.65	0.56	Agree
4	Create business awareness through entrepreneurship programmes.	4.32	0.98	Agree
5	Establish more vocational colleges to accommodate more youths simultaneously into programmes.	4.40	0.81	Agree
6	Utilize distance learning programmes to cater for youths outside the reach of vocational colleges.	4.48	0.85	Agree
7	Sponsor young graduates for postgraduate programme in research in strategic disciplines of economic demand.	4.72	0.48	Agree
8	Vocational college administrators must ensure that programmes offered are structured in line with allocated budgets to ensure continuance.	4.66	0.48	Agree
9	Promote healthy collaboration between vocational schools and industries to provide adequate vocational training for youths.	4.53	0.53	Agree
10	Conduct public education campaigns and activities to educate and inform youths about opportunities for vocational training.	4.21	1.01	Agree
11	Institute a vocational training policy which addresses issues such as the transition from general to vocational education	4.37	0.57	Agree
12	Qualified instructors and trainers (sector-specific and teaching qualifications) should be recruited	4.30	0.92	Agree
13	Administrators with vast experience and knowledge of vocational education should be selected to administer vocational colleges	4.30	0.62	Agree
14	Training contents should be aligned with market needs and incorporate more practical experience	4.65	0,48	Agree
15	Instructional methods which challenge learners to be motivated and solve problems should be utilized.	4.05	0.69	Agree

4 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study sought to identify empowerment skills required by youths in order to promote peace and national security, as well as determined some techniques and strategies that could be adopted in empowering youths. Based on the data collected and analysed, findings indicate that TVET experts recommend that empowerment skill areas should focus on horticulture, business, engineering and construction. Furthermore, respondents agree that specific skills which includes, business planning skills, financial management skills, computation skills, communication skills, customer relation skills and adaption skills should be the focus of youth empowerment training programmes. The emphasis that it is rare to see those who are vocationally trained and gainfully employed become delinquents and anti-socials of the society perhaps brings justification to the need for empowering youths with vocational skills. Okorie (2001) reported that TVET has a good potential of creating jobs for the unemployed graduates, and reducing poverty level in the society. Hence, a focus on horticulture, business, engineering and construction is thus a necessary way of creating jobs and empowering unemployed youths. To elucidate this, (Shields & Willits, 2003) in a survey carried out to determine the growing importance of horticulture in the agricultural economy of the north-eastern United states, reports that the sector generates an estimated \$3.3 billion and creates over 107,000 jobs. This goes a long way in exposing the need for this skill area to be vastly developed especially in the African economy. Business, engineering and construction are complimentary skill areas which should not be left unattended to. Therefore, youth empowerment programmes aimed at preparing youths for work should focus on training youths specifically more on these identified skill areas.

Findings from the study also revealed some techniques and strategies that can be adopted in empowering youths for national security. Respondents agree that some of these strategies and techniques should include; utilising apprenticeship training to prepare youths to develop and master work skills, establish computer literacy programme to empower youths with basic IT Skills; standardize certificates and diplomas from training institutes to enable youths gain employment, create business awareness through entrepreneurship programmes, utilise distance learning programmes to train youths outside the reach of vocational colleges, develop in youths the required vocational skills needed to create and sustain viable enterprises and so on. The findings are congruent with the reports of the (Botswana Core Welfare Indicators Survey, 2009 ; 2010) which emphasized that youths can be empowered through the following programmes: Life skills and capacity building programme, youth entrepreneurship programme; attachment to public programmes; attachment to mega projects; and basic computer literacy training programme. MacFarlane and Khong (2006) and Paleri (2008) also asserted that the provision of jobs also makes it possible for a country to be well secured economically, they emphasised that third world countries are less secured due to the lack of employment for its citizens. Therefore, in

order for developing nations like Nigeria to become economically stable, without the incessant disruption of its peace and national security, necessary action must be taken to integrate these strategies and techniques into its existing system to bring about the desired change Nigeria seeks.

Furthermore, findings on the strategies that can be adopted to empowering youths also revealed approaches such as; conducting public education campaigns and activities to educate and inform youths about the opportunities of vocationally inclined youth empowerment programmes- Youth empowerment programmes however carefully planned and structured, would be deemed irrelevant if it fails to address the sole purpose for which it was established, therefore adequate measures should be taken to ensure that opportunities for empowerment programmes are well communicated to youths. Administrators with vast experience and knowledge of vocational education should be selected to administer vocational colleges- this is necessary to curb issues of losses and waste that leads to the non-implementation of established training programmes the way they were originally planned and conceptualized. Also, qualified instructors and trainers (sector-specific with adequate experience and teaching qualifications) should be recruited to ensure that up-to-date content is taught to trainees who participate in these empowerment programmes.

5 IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY

The study has shown that TVET would be very effective in empowering Nigerian youths towards ensuring peace and national security. The study's implication for youths is that it highlights specific skill areas where youths can be trained so as to gain employment and be able to create jobs also. Successful implementation of youth empowerment programmes focusing on the highlighted skill areas from this study would ensure that youths are rehabilitated and channelled into more productive means where they can contribute to the nation's economy instead of engaging in crime and other socially degrading activities that disrupts the nation's peace and national security. It is believed that youths empowered through TVET programmes will become worthy and responsible citizens of their societies, self-reliant by providing for themselves their needs and also shun violence and also their overdependence on white collar job would be reduced since they can be their own bosses and employers of labour once adequately empowered.

Employers of labour will have a pool of qualified and skilled/competent individuals to recruit into their organization, and the dependence on foreign workers would be reduced drastically. Parents who send their children for training in either formal or informal TVET programmes will have the joy of seeing their children become responsible ambassadors of the family. Also, the image of TVET programmes will also be improved in the society and would now be seen as a potent instrument for preparing youths for active service and work in the country, thereby reducing violence and crime significantly. Also, the implication for the Nigerian

government would be that the vast amount of funds allocated for crime control will now be significantly reduced as youths become responsible and law abiding citizens and such funds can be channelled back into more suitable and productive use for the continual empowerment and development of youths.

6 CONCLUSION

The study sought to determine empowerment skills required by Nigerian youths through TVET for enhancing national security. The results of the study revealed that empowerment skills programmes should specifically focus on skill areas such as horticulture, business, engineering and construction. Developing skills in these areas are very essential for youths as it enables them to be gainfully employed and productive, enabling them to become responsible citizens, thereby promoting peace and national security. The study also highlighted some techniques and strategies that can be adopted for empowering youths. It is believed that if these techniques and strategies are duly adopted, it would ensure peaceful coexistence among people living in societies and equip youths with adequate and up-to-date skills of their chosen vocation.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of this study;

- (i) TVET administrators should develop vocational skills in areas such as horticulture, business, engineering and construction works that will develop in youth character and general discipline of a work environment towards national security.
- (ii) Administrators in TVET programmes should utilize apprenticeship training to prepare youths to develop profitable social habits required by the society and basic computer literacy training programme to empower youths with IT skills.
- (iii) The Ministry of Education through NBTE and its respective agencies charged with the responsibility of empowering youths through vocational training should conduct public education campaigns and activities to sensitize, educate and inform youths in various communities about the significance of TVET programmes.
- (iv) Efforts should be made to strengthen the collaboration between industries, vocational institutions and TVET providers so as to enable that relevant content that meets labour needs are taught to participants of various vocational training programmes.
- (v) Government through technical education boards should offer counselling, mentorship and teach youths to develop financial planning skills, business skills, communication skills, customer relation skills as well as basic computation skills needed to enable them start viable and sustainable enterprises.

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