



TVET POLICIES AND PRACTICES IN NIGERIA: WHY THE GAP

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Abstract:

The critical role played by Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in national development has long been acknowledged in Nigeria. Many policies have evolved with respect to reforming TVET towards addressing the socio-economic challenges in Nigeria. After decades of practicing these TVET policies, outcomes have fallen far behind expectations. Thus, this paper looked at TVET policies and practices in Nigeria, identifying the gaps and factors that have led to the gaps. Remedies to closing the gap were proffered.

Keywords: TVET, policy, national development, technological knowledge, political will, political instability, corruption

1. Introduction

If, with the advent of knowledge economy, educational competences are prized above natural resources as the prime factor in national development, the combination of Science, Technology and Mathematics Education is acknowledged as the pivot of economic and industrial development, with its sub-sector, Technical, Vocational Education and training - TVET as the hinges and bolts of the economy (Chukwumerije, 2011). A country's standing in Science and Technology and in TVET defines her stand in the ladder of the world economies. Success stories of the newly industrializing countries (NICs) as Korea, China, Malaysia, India, Singapore, etc.; attest to the fact that the systematic application of scientific and technological knowledge is a major actor to leapfrog into sustainable economic development. This has led to the emerging consensus that skilled technicians and technologies are pivotal in meeting the challenges of a technology-driven economy. As a result, TVET has been accorded the

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master key to unlocking the required potential and productive workforce with the right scientific and technological competence to transform the economy.

This explains why in the recent years, a desire has surfaced to actively recognize a new, the role of TVET to achieve national transformation through technical innovations spurred by the advancement in technology and globalization (Yamada & Matsuda 2007). Tang (2012) reiterated that, after a period of neglect, TVET is now firmly on the agenda of governments around the world. Youth unemployment, social exclusion and poverty have led many decision-makers to refocus their attention on providing skills development opportunities that respond to evolving social and economic demands. Far from being the weakest link in education systems, TVET is emerging as a cornerstone for the transformation of education and training. Indeed, the development of skills through TVET is now one of the most often-cited priorities by ministers of education in both developing and developed countries.

This has drawn the interest of many developing nations like Nigeria to adopt education and TVET in particular as an integral part of national development strategy. Strategic planning is at the core of any successful institutional effectiveness effort. It defines the vision and the way forward, but this vision requires execution and management. Unlike the NICs, for more than three decades that Nigeria embraced TVET, the country is yet to, at least, produce adequate skilled middle-level manpower to attain lowly stage of modest self-reliance. Thus the concern of this paper - why the gap and what should be done?

2. Conceptual Definitions

2.1 TVET – Technical Vocational Education and Training

When thinking what TVET is all about, it is worthwhile to first take a look around the room where we sit. From the sit on which people are sitting to the laptop they are holding, to the projector screen, to the building and other things, are all partly or completely the product of TVET. No wonder Thompson (2012) said that TVET properly understood is not a career but the application of skills to support life. TVET refer to those aspects of educational processes involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences, as well as the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understandings and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life (FRN, 2004). TEVT is meant to impart knowledge and skills for increased efficiency in the world of work, sustainable livelihoods, personal empowerment and socio-economic development, which enhances proper adjustment in knowledge economies and rapidly changing work environment. Thus, TVET is all embrative comprehensive education and training program, involving lifelong learning, responsible citizenship, and the promotion of environmentally sound development and social transformation. Former President Olusegun Obasanjo stated that TVET, with its

relevant practical training component, holds the key to Nigeria becoming technologically relevant and internationally competitive in the world market. He continued that TVET is also the most effective means of empowering the citizenry to stimulate sustainable national development, enhance employment, improve the quality of life, reduce poverty, limit the incidence of social vices due to joblessness and promote a culture of peace, freedom and democracy (Federal Ministry of Education-FME, 2000).

2.2 Policy

Business Dictionary (2014) defined policy in management term as the set of basic principles and associated guidelines, formulated and enforced by the governing body of an organization, to direct and limit its actions in pursuit of long-term goals. A policy is a practice that has been thought through, formalized and formally presented as an expectation of management (Cohen, 2012). Policies are generally formal and written empowerment tools that guide the decision and action of managers and their subordinates in strategy implementation (Chaurasiya, 2009). In a nutshell, public policy seeks to achieve a desired goal that is considered to be in the best interest of all members of society. Think of policies as a starting point for government to take a course of action that makes a real life change.

Educational policies are initiatives mostly by governments that determine the direction of an educational system (Okoroma 2000); such is the process by which knowledge contents are transmitted or 'delivered' to students by the most effective methods that can be devised (Blenkin 1992). Policy is therefore among the tools used in running education system.

2.3 Practice

Practice is the actual application or use of an idea, belief, or method, as opposed to theories relating to it. It is also the customary, habitual, or expected procedure or way of doing something. Other words for it include application, exercise, use, action, operation, implementation, execution, enactment, doing. In the context of this paper, practice is the actual implementation of the policies enacted for TVET. That is the performance of actions or exercises to realize the expectations of TVET policies.

3. TVET Policy and Practice in Nigeria

Major educational reforms in Africa and Nigeria in particular have been to restructure colonial education system with emphasis on vocationalization. Consequent upon the attainment of independence, it was discovered that the colonial education did not meet the aspiration of Nigerians. This led to the introduction of 6-3-3-4 education policy in 1977. The policy sought to introduce a functional technology-based education, which could sustain the nation's economic activities for rapid socio-economic development.

Nigeria has long acknowledged TVET, at least in policies, as the master key to unlocking the future. Evidence is illustrated in some of these policy statements in Nigerian policy documents:

Recognizing that TVET is an integral part of technological development, a greater proportion of education expenditure shall continue to be devoted to vocational education at Federal and State levels

(Federal Republic of Nigeria, FRN, 2004, section 7, 52 pp. 35)

In recognition of the fundamental importance and cost intensive nature of TVET, government shall provide adequate funds for TVET

(FRN, 2004, section 7, 56 pp. 35)

The purpose of development of individuals is to enable them contribute to the development of the society. For this reason, the plan lays emphasis on TVET as the "master key" to unlocking our future

(FME, 2012, pp 2)

The ability of Nigeria to realize the vision of becoming one of the twenty largest economies in the world by the year 2020 is largely dependent on the capacity to transform its youths into highly skilled and competent citizens It is for this reason that commitment to TVET must be strengthened

(FME, 2012, pp. 54; FME, 2009, pp. 14)

Specific steps in the direction of meeting the challenge of according priority to science were taken in 1986. Nigeria's first national Science and Technology Policy was formulated in the realization of the fact that the overall national development could only be sustained through effective application of scientific and technological skills for the production of goods and services (Chukwumerije, 2011). More so, the precursor to the formulation of the National Policy was the birth of the National Board for Technical Education established in 1977 to address the shortage of technical manpower identified in the Third National Development Plan. The decree was complemented by 1985 Education (National Minimum Standards and Establishment of Institutions) Decree, 1993 National Board for Technical Education Amendment Act and 1993 Education National Minimum Standards and Establishment of Institutions (Amendment) (Chukwumerije, 2011)

With the above policy statements, it is not out of place to affirm that TVET will turn the nation to the expected El Dorado. Going by the various policy documents in Nigeria, it is expected that TVET through the production of skilled manpower in applied science, engineering technology and commerce, will generate employment,

reduce poverty and eliminate the Area Boy Syndrome; and launch the country to technological and economic super power. However, what is being experience is far from what has been expected. The effectiveness of an organization is not only reflected in its ability to formulate policy, but also in its ability to execute such policies effectively. As Francis Sullivan, adviser on the environment to HSBC, a UK-based global banking firm, said, "*writing policy is the easiest thing to do; the hardest thing is to get the governance and structure right from day one*" (Economist Intelligence Unit - EIU, 2010).

The outcome of TVET in Nigeria is a clear indication that TVET policy is divorced from the practice. While the National Policy on Education (NPE) puts the ratio between secondary and technical vocational education/schools at 3:1, Nigeria has 5,100 secondary schools with enrolment of 4,448,991 as against technical colleges of only 169 with enrolment of 43,354 representing ratios of 37:1 and 102:1 respectively (Odukoya, 2013). In Nigeria, only 3.6% of senior secondary school students were enrolled in TVET in 2005 (Federal Government of Nigeria, FGN, 2009); and 3% out of 166000 enrolled in TVET in 2007 (UNESCO - UIS, 2009). On the average, FME (2009) reported a 2.5% enrollment in TVET at the secondary level as against the modest NPE target of 20%. The Roadmap for Nigerian Education sector estimated a transition rate of 84% for potential TVET programs from junior secondary. This trend will continue unabated with the limited TVET opportunities in the country and low esteem for TVET. According to the policy, technical colleges are expected to feed polytechnics just as secondary schools are to feed universities. The prevailing situation however is that the total products of technical colleges represent only 17% of available spaces in polytechnics. So right from the on-set the mission of technical colleges concerning feeding polytechnic is not being met. Consequently, the country tends to be producing more theoreticians than technology experts (Odukoya, 2013).

Oketch (2009) asserted that a look at the funding of TVET can shed light on the contradiction between the emphasis for skills and the limited funding that governments are willing to commit to it. Best estimates are that Nigeria spends about 2.3% of GDP for education, less than half the percentage of GDP spent by the 19 sub-Saharan African countries on average (FGN, 2009). In 2010, the Federal Government spent N249.08 billion on education out of a budget of about N4.07 trillion. This sum translates to just about six percent of the total budget in spite of UNESCO's recommendations that, at least, 26 percent of national budgets should go to education. Available data indicate that 20.9%, 7.1% and 13% of total expenditures on education in 2003, 2004 and 2005 respectively went to the NBTE of which 39.2%, 83.6% and 78.4% of yearly budget appropriations to NBTE in the same years were actually spent (OECD, 2008). In the scale of low priorities to Education system, TVET comes lowest. Capital allocations for TVET showed that 0.13% of total FGN budget and 0.05% of total proposed FGN budget were allocated to TVET in 2011 and 2012 respectively (Chukwumerije, 2011).

The NPE also stated that every technical college shall establish and operate a production unit for on-the-job training and commercial activities to sustain college operation, as well as encourage cooperation with industries (FRN, 2004, pp. 35). Unfortunately, most technical colleges lack adequate facilities and functional workshops, not to talk of operating a production unit. These and many other gaps existing between the TVET policies and practice have posed many challenges to TVET in realizing its goals.

4.0 Why the Lingered Gap?

It is obvious that chanting policies will not take a country anywhere, if there are no good structures and governance to put the policies to practice. It is not enough to predict the future; rather it is better created. A number of factors have hindered TVET in Nigeria; making it difficult for TVET practices to march its policies. Some of these factors are: faulty policy and institutional frameworks, policy somersaults arising from instability of the political environment, and lack of political will compounded by the hemorrhage of rampant corruption.

4.1 Faulty policy and Institutional Frameworks

Adopting systems that have worked for great nations without adequate consideration of the value structure of the target country may not yield a successful result. Apart from minor structural and organizational changes, very little has changed in the philosophy and curriculum content of education in Africa. Education in Africa is still designed after Western models and paradigms that have little connection to life in Africa (Eze & Okorafor, 2012). The failure to restructure the colonial education and economies to African context, while expanding their formal education systems, will continue to lead to mismatch between economic growth and education output.

It seems educational policymakers do not integrate implementation into their strategy. Instead, they have a make-it-so mentality. They are reactive, looking at implementation only after the creation of a policy instead of pro-active in anticipating how to roll out a new initiative during its formulation. Failure to think about execution beforehand may lead to more detrimental fallout from the policy change than benefits from the policy. Moreover, the institutionalized split between political decision-makers and professional civil servants who carry out policy tends to exacerbate the problem (EIU, 2010). Some policymakers will pick up the latest idea and say 'that sounds OK'. A lot of politicians seem to do that. Even when experts explain implementation issues to political aides, members of Congress tend to ignore the experts' advice. As EIU (2010) explained, statutes don't pay much attention to practical difficulties.

The gap between policymaking and execution creates more problems than poor planning. Most often, you see academics sit around in conferences or the like,

discussing great ideas, but they tend to dry up on the vine. There could be huge effort and expenditure researching, but at best it will never deliver. While the academics are doing their own, the policymakers are busy doing their own too. Researchers discuss findings among themselves while decisions made by policymakers continue to be based mostly on intuition and very little on research or experience of practitioners. In the light of this Miller, (2008) raised the following questions: Is the research reported at conferences so theoretical that it is not of relevance to policymakers? Are the problems addressed by the research so trivial that others do not see them as important? What could be going on in their mind as they examine the topics and content of research paper sessions and/or journals? Might they say: "This stuff is too specific?" "This stuff does not apply to me." "This stuff is too theoretical." "This stuff is too abstract and not concrete enough for my needs." "This stuff is just done to help someone get promoted or to keep their job"?

4.2 Political Instability

Frequent changes in government and politics in Nigeria have negatively influence policy implementation not only in education but also in other sectors of the economy. Policy somersaults and inconsistency is a fatal problem. Educational policy in Nigeria may best be described as inconsistent. Professor Ajayi, one time Provost of Federal College of Education (FCE) Osiele, Ogun State in Nigeria made this observation:

Within the eight years (1991-1999) that I served as Provost, the nation passed through five different regimes (Babangida till 1993, Shonekan for less than four months in 1993, Abacha 1993-1998, Abubakar 1998-1999, Obasanjo 1999-2007). Within this period, I had to operate under eight Ministers of Education. The same thing happened at the state level. Each of the Presidents, Ministers, Governors and Commissioners had their own different conceptions and policies on education that they tried to implement during their tenure. With such instability in the system of governance, coupled with constant changes in "Ministers of" "Ministers for" and "commissioners for," one should not be surprised at the level of the crises the nation's education system has witnessed over the years and the inconsistency and often contradictory nature of the educational policies and practices. It's one step forward and two steps backward.

(Odukoya, 2013)

Unfortunately, even in the present democratic dispensation, the trend still continues. The 9-3-4 education policy that replaced the 6-3-3-4 in 2009 may soon be replace, just less than five years. Awoyinfa (2013) reported that the nation's education policy of 9-3-4 may soon be replaced by another one, as the Federal Government has almost concluded plans to change the existing policy to a 1-6-3-3-4 education structure. Mrs. Bola Mosuro, the Proprietress of Access Universal College, Lagos lamented:

Our problem in this country is that we often pick and drop policies as we want. In the United States, the two tier secondary school system is still in operation delivering wonderful results. There is nothing wrong with the 6-3-3-4 system. We simply have not implemented it well and now we have picked another one (Odukoya, 2013)

4.3 Lack of Political Will

The policy statements and the documentations are vivid evidences of the Stakeholders' intention to foster educational sustainability. Though these documents contain roadmaps and target dates of implementation, but the stakeholders' attitudes (weak motivation, lack of self-will power and declination from vocational ethics) have affected implementation and development (Aderonmu, 2012). It is obvious that the government of Nigeria lack the political will power to support education financially. The failure to provide necessary resources is not always a result of overwhelming cost. Resource issues frequently arise not because implementation is inherently expensive or time consuming, but because existing issues within the organization impede it. As was shown earlier in this paper, Education is in the scale of low priorities in Nigeria with TVET receiving the least attention. This is further buttressed in the disparity in remuneration of workers in the various sectors of the economy.

Table 1: Distorted value system scale as reflected in remuneration

A	Permanent Sec.; Executive Sec.; Chief Executive of Parastatals; V.Cs	22,051,154.30
B	Professor	3,859,078.60
C	Federal High Court Judge	26,875,840.00
D	Local Government Chairman	13,865,895.30
E	Local Government Supervisory Councillor	12,746,875.00
F	Federal House Member	35,932,346.30
G	Senate	36,677,840.00

Source: ASUU, FUTO BRANCH 2009 cited in Chukwumerije (2011)

4.4 Corruption

There is strong evidence that the cancerous growth of corruption in Nigeria is spreading fast across the education sector. Sub-optimal use of their inadequate allocations by most of the institutions and other stakeholders has compounded the financial plight of the education sector (Chukwumerije, 2011). Some policies are not very expensive if there are good people and the structure is right. Educational administrators and other stakeholders divert institutional/faculty/departmental resources as their share of the national cake. Worst still is that the bodies set up to check this ugly situation, have form allies with the stakeholders.

5. What should be done?

The basic assumption is that policy making can be seen as a policy learning process which requires that policy makers engage actively in a learning process. Typically, there has been a weak capacity in ministries to promote, monitor and draw conclusions from school based innovation practices. However, by engaging policy makers from the outset in close cooperation with the school and local/regional levels, with peers from neighboring countries and with international experience, an action policy learning process can be engineered with a focus on local context and solutions. At the same time, the role of stakeholders at local and school level is essential and it is the linking of the two that may be able to create reforms that can address the needs of the people. This process is twofold and goes in both directions – policy makers learn from innovative practices, practitioners learn from each other (peers) and policy makers consult practitioners and challenge them for more ‘useful’ innovation (Castel-Branco & Faudel, 2008).

There is need to provide better evidence to improve the practice of the profession and make sound policy decisions. This calls for lobbying. There is dire need for a thorough understanding of the principles and operation of lobbying and advocacy. It is becoming common knowledge that the correct application of these indispensable principles is vital for the successful translation of research findings into national educational policy formation and implementation.

The federal ministry of education needs to decentralize to state and local government levels in order to observe, understand, monitor, control and review policies and curriculum on a regular and consistently diligent basis. UNESCO-UIS (2009) demonstrated that indigenous peoples also have the potential to be active players in policy, advocacy, adaptation and ethical elements which could be beneficial.

Educational administrators (even senior academics) should be involved in policymaking and trained in interpreting and implementing the policy. The two leading success factors for policy implementation, according to EIU, (2010), are clear directives from senior management and their active involvement. On a practical level, those at the top of a hierarchy are also best placed to provide the clarity and direction for success.

Federal and State ministries of education need to take a holistic approach to improve their policy implementation efforts. The foundations on which to build success include:

- Ensuring that enough time and money is spent on putting the policy into effect
- Carefully putting together policy formulation, planning, and execution i. e. prepare for new policies far enough in advance
- Ensuring those at the top of the hierarchy are in the best position to provide the clarity and direction that is vital to success.

- Fostering a culture of commitment i.e. thoughtful over-communication and being open to feedback.

6. Conclusion

Chanting policies is one thing and putting the policies to practice is another. Achieving the goals of the policy indicates effective practice of the policy and vice versa. Therefore, non-achievement of the lofty goals of TVET in Nigeria is an indication of the gap between TVET policy and practice. This gap has persisted due to non-commitment to putting the policy to effect, poor institutional framework, faulty policy, corruption, etc. If TVET must assume its position fully in the transformation of Nigeria, this gap must be close. Until then, Nigeria will continue in its abysmal economy.

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