

MAKING TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING FIRST CAREER CHOICE IN AFRICA: WHAT CAN STAKEHOLDERS DO DIFFERENTLY?

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Abstract

Despite calls by International Organisation and Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Stakeholders to embrace TVET for sustainable livelihood and development, enrollment in TVET institutions in Nigeria and Africa at large is still very low. The purpose of this study is to find out what stakeholders can do differently to make TVET the first career choice in Africa. Three research questions and 3 hypotheses guided the study. The population of the study was TVET lecturers and administrators from TVET Institutions in Nigeria. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 100 TVET professionals comprising of 70 TVET lecturers and 30 TVET administrators. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire, the questionnaire was validated by 3 lecturers from Delta State University, Abraka. To ascertain the reliability of the instrument, Pearson Product Moment Correlation technique was used which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.67. Data were collected through the aid of 3 Research Assistants. Questionnaires were also sent to TVET professionals by the researcher through emails. Data collected were analysed using Mean for research questions. The findings revealed amongst others that, stakeholders such as Government, Industries, and TVET Institutions/Providers should improve the quality of TVET, as well as raise the awareness about TVET. Hence, it was recommended that TVET Stakeholders should work collectively to make TVET the first career choice in Nigeria and beyond.

Introduction

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is that special type of education that involves the acquisition of occupational skills for sustainable livelihood. According to Ayonmike (2016), TVET also known as Vocational Education and Training (VET) or Career and Technical

Education (CTE) can be regarded as a means of preparing for occupational fields and effective participation in the world of work. It also implies lifelong learning and preparation for responsible citizenship. TVET is a notable instrument for producing skilled manpower for various sectors of the nation's economy thereby creating jobs for her citizens and improving the economy of the nation through wealth generation (Ayonmike, 2016).

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is perceived in developing, emerging and even in industrialized countries as a 'second-best option' in comparison to general or academic education. Enrolment in TVET at secondary education level in Sub Saharan Africa (SSA) is very low, (at about 8% in 2010) compared to about 12% for its comparators in Asia. As noted by the African Transformation Report (ATR, 2014). A comparison of students' enrolment into TVET programmes in Europe and Africa reveal an extremely low patronage of TVET in Africa. According to African Centre for Economic Transformation (ACET) in 2009 Germany had 53.2% enrolment in TVET colleges; Finland had 55.1%, Ireland 33.9%, and South Korea 24.4%. In Africa, with the exception of Angola and Ethiopia that had 72.2% and 59.5% respectively, other countries such as Burkina Faso 20.9%, Cameroon 22.4%, Ghana 13.2%, Kenya had 1.0% and South Africa had between 1% and 22%. (Maiga, 2013).

For many years, technical and vocational education in Africa has been considered as a career path for the less academically endowed. This perception has been fuelled by the low academic requirements for admission into TVET programmes and the limited prospects for further education and professional development (Kersh & Juul, 2015). TVET has also been positioned as an alternative education for those who perform poorly in academics (Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, 2013). According to Osuanyi, Agyarkoh, Sumaila, and Patrique (2014), one serious ramification of the stigma on TVET in Ghana and other African countries is that many parents and guardians discourage and prevent their wards from pursuing TVET programmes due to its limited academic opportunities in academic progression and lack of prestige that have characterized TVET on the continent over the years. This situation has affected the enrolment of students into the TVET programmes in many African countries.

These notions have continued to reinforce poor positioning of TVET programs in Africa. Moustafa (n.d) argued that enrollment in TVET programs in Africa face challenges of perception by parents, communities and stakeholders, and are often labeled as the 'second choice' education, 'meant for those who have failed' or are unable to compete in the 'formal' education system. In the same vein, the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training

(MoEVT,2013), reported that there is poor/wrong perception on TVET with the notion that it is meant for students who are poor performers. Also, in most developing countries, TVET institutions are fewer in number and have lower enrolments and graduates than their academic counterparts. Although more and more developing countries wish to increase their ratio of sciences to humanities manpower base, the enrolments remain heavily skewed towards the social sciences. This is partly due to fact that TVET education is more expensive to provide than education programmes in the humanities. In addition, due to insufficient training facilities, particularly at the tertiary level, TVET institutions have a small student carrying capacity and often have to refuse entry to many applicants, since overcrowding would compromise the standard of education being offered (NICHE, 2010).

The status and attractiveness of TVET is a responsibility for all TVET stakeholders' (such as government, donor and development partners, educational institutions and training providers, parents, and industries). Any campaign aiming to improve the image of TVET must be targeted directly at the stakeholders it wishes to influence, particularly parents, who are the key providers of careers advice, and young people. The campaign should focus on sectors where the financial and career benefits of pursuing a TVET-related career are clear (Kersh & Juul, 2015). Mwangi and Makworo (2012), posited that enhancing the status and attractiveness of TVET will involve changing perceptions and attitudes of the public about technical and vocational education. For this to happen the use of role models in TVET and the involvement of successful TVET professional for awareness campaigns on the need of studying TVET, especially in schools, will be necessary. The status of technical and vocational education can also be enhanced by upgrading polytechnics to offer technical or "skills" degrees. Positive perceptions of vocational education have been associated with students' motivation towards their occupational choice. Being motivated towards their chosen occupational area has been cited as an important factor that enables young people to make their career choices.

Apart from awareness campaign to improve participation in TVET programmes, the quality of TVET institutions must be taken into consideration. According to Baah-Boateng (n.d), quality of TVET in Sub Saharan Africa (SSA) is also low. Some TVET experts believed that with the required training facilities and manpower in TVET institutions, it will help to improve the attractiveness of TVET and thereby increased participation in TVET. Owano (1998) as cited by Kitui (2015), posited that provision of better equipped workshops, supply of training materials and greater emphasis on practical skills would improve the programme and lead to increased access.

Similarly, Kitui (2015) citing Adeyemi (2008), posited that quality educational output revealed that availability of physical facilities like text books, laboratories and other equipment's was vital for effective teaching and learning. Adeyemi further noted that lack of such facilities compromises quality teaching and affects enrolment in educational institutions.

Consequently, increased participation in TVET can be achieved when TVET institutions are repositioned. Amaechi (2013) as cited by Ogbunaya & Ekereobong (2015), suggested the following as strategies for repositioning TVET in Nigeria: improvement of instructional and infrastructural resources in TVET institutions, regular capacity building and training workshops for teachers of TVET; increased funding for TVET institutions for procurement of equipment and more facilities for better learning; better synergy between TVET institutions and industry through exchange programmes; genuine political will by government and education policy makers; improving the conditions of service and regular motivation for TVET teachers and instructors; lastly, regular sensitization to improve public's poor perception of TVET as desirable course option instead of tagging it as inferior course option.

According to Odugbesan (1995), industries contributions to enhance TVET include: donation of equipment, machinery and computer components (new and/or used ones) to the institutions for their laboratories and workshops, where funds are limited; Special endowments, scholarships and awards should be instituted by private companies and industry to promote their special interest in an institution. Furthermore, Netherlands Initiative for Capacity development in Higher Education (NICHE, 2010) opined that upgrading of teachers, training facilities and curricula improvements would improve the image and quality of TVET, draw more students and provide a solid technical manpower base for the nation.

According to Ute (2014), a good image of TVET leads to more gifted young people choosing vocational training. Such young people graduate with better results and are more easily employed by companies. Through this process, certain career paths and options for non-academic professions develop further in companies and in turn add to the attractiveness of certain professions in the TVET sector. Investment in TVET (by the government, by companies and by individuals) becomes less risky and more profitable. When this happens, qualified teachers also choose TVET as an attractive option for themselves. Thus, in turn, the quality of TVET improves, which leads to more talented young people choosing vocational education and training. The focus of this research is to find stakeholders perceptions of possible ways of

improving the quality of TVET thereby improving participation in TVET as first career choice in Africa.

Despite the importance of TVET to provide jobs, improve living conditions, and national development, enrollment in TVET programmes is still faced with challenges in Nigeria and Africa at large. The African parents still sees TVET as the last career option for their children. Also government have tried to some extent in promoting TVET through their various skills acquisition programmes for unemployed youths and graduates, but the people still sees it as a last resort career option, which may be due to the fact that most of the recipients of such programmes are from poor economic background and the circumstances surrounding their choice of participating in TVET programmes as last resort. Others feel that TVET programmes is for students who performed poorly in academics. There is a need to carry out this study to proffer solution to the challenges to enrollment in TVET programmes across Africa by stakeholders such as government, industries, and TVET providers/institutions.

The following research questions guided the study:

- What can government do to make TVET the first career choice in Africa?
- What can industries do to make TVET the first career choice in Africa?
- What can TVET Providers/Institutions do to make TVET the first career choice in Africa?

Method

Survey research design was used in this study, the population of the study were TVET lecturers and administrators from TVET Institutions in Nigeria. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 100 TVET professionals comprising of 70 TVET lecturers and 30 TVET administrators from Southern Nigeria. The instrument for data collection was a 15 item questionnaire titled "Making TVET First Career Choice Questionnaire" MTVETFCCQ, The MTVETFCCQ has 2 parts A and B, Part A is on respondent bio data, while Part B has 3 sections based on the research questions with 5 items each, which is on a 4-point scale of Strongly Agree(SA=4), Agree (A=3), Disagree (D=2), and Strongly Disagree(SD=1). The MTVETFCCQ was validated by 3 lecturers from Delta State University, Abraka. To ascertain the reliability of the instrument, 20 copies of MTVETFCCQ was administered to TVET lecturers and Administrators from TVET institutions in Northern Nigeria and Pearson Product Moment

Correlation technique was used which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.67. Data were collected through the aid of 3 Research Assistants, as well questionnaires were sent to TVET professionals by the researcher through emails. Data collected were analysed using Mean for research questions. For decision on the research questions, any mean rating of 2.50 and above were regarded as Agree, and below 2.50 were regarded as Disagree.

Results

Table 1: Mean Response of TVET Lecturers and Administrators on what Government can do to make TVET the First Career Choice in Africa.

S/N	Item Statement: What can government do to make TVET the first career choice in Africa?	TVET Lecturers N=70		TVET Administrators N=30	
		Mean	Decision	Mean	Decision
1.	Increase funding of TVET	3.05	Agreed	3.21	Agreed
2.	Vocationalization of Education at all levels	2.56	Agreed	2.64	Agreed
3.	Raise awareness of the society regards TVET	3.32	Agreed	3.10	Agreed
4.	Establishment of more TVET institutions	3.54	Agreed	3.26	Agreed
5.	Partnering with international organization to improve the quality of TVET	3.23	Agreed	3.03	Agreed
Grand Mean		3.14		3.05	

Table 1 revealed that stakeholders agree that government can do the following to make TVET the first career choice option: Increase funding of TVET; Vocationalization of Education at all levels; Raise awareness of the society regards TVET; Establishment of more TVET institutions; and Partnering with international organization to improve the quality of TVET. These findings are in line with Mwangi and Makworo (2012), when the researchers posited that enhancing status and attractiveness of TVET will involve changing perceptions and attitudes of the public about technical and vocational education. Owano (1998) as cited by Kitui (2015), equally posited that provision of better equipped workshops, supply of training materials and greater emphasis on practical skills would improve the programme and lead to increased access. Also, Netherlands Initiative for Capacity development in Higher Education (NICHE, 2010) assertion is in line with the findings of the study, NICHE posited that upgrading of teachers, training facilities and

curricula improvements would improve the image and quality of TVET, draw more students and provide a solid technical manpower base for the nation.

Table 2: Mean Response of TVET Lecturers and Administrators on what Industries can do to make TVET the First Career Choice in Africa.

S/N	Item Statement: What can industries do to make TVET the first career choice in Africa?	TVET Lecturers N=70		TVET Administrators N=30	
		Mean	Decision	Mean	Decision
1.	Provide facilities for training of TVET teachers and students	2.52	Agreed	2.77	Agreed
2.	Employment of TVET graduates	3.34	Agreed	3.45	Agreed
3.	Partnering TVET institutions for exchange programmes	3.17	Agreed	3.20	Agreed
4.	Provision of scholarships for TVET teachers and students	3.40	Agreed	3.28	Agreed
5.	Establishment of TVET centres	3.00	Agreed	3.13	Agreed
Grand Mean		3.09		3.17	

Table 2 revealed that stakeholders are of the view that industries can do the following to make TVET first career choice: Provide facilities for training of TVET teachers and students; Employment of TVET graduates; Partnering TVET institutions for exchange programmes; Provision of scholarships for TVET teachers and students; and Establishment of TVET centres. These findings are in line with Amaechi (2013) in Ogbunaya & Ekereobong (2015), the researcher suggested the following as strategies for repositioning TVET in Nigeria for improved participation: improvement of instructional and infrastructural resources in TVET institutions, regular capacity building and training workshops for teachers of TVET; better synergy between TVET institutions and industry through exchange programmes; improving the conditions of service and regular motivation for TVET teachers and instructors. In agreement to the findings Odugbesan (1995), reported that industries contributions such as donation of equipment, machinery and computer components (new and/or used ones) to the institutions for their laboratories and workshops, where funds are limited. As well, special endowments, scholarships and awards are often instituted by private companies and industries.

Table 3: Mean Response of TVET Lecturers and Administrators on what TVET Providers/Institutions can do to make TVET the First Career Choice in Africa.

S/N	Item Statement: What can TVET providers/institutions do to make TVET the first career choice in Africa?	TVET Lecturers N=70		TVET Administrators N=30	
		Mean	Decision	Mean	Decision
1.	Awareness Campaign on TVET	3.36	Agreed	3.12	Agreed
2.	Employment of qualified TVET teachers and instructors	3.29	Agreed	3.01	Agreed
3.	Partner with international TVET providers/institutions for global knowledge sharing	3.51	Agreed	3.42	Agreed
4.	Partner with industries for industry-based learning and job placement	3.34	Agreed	3.05	Agreed
5.	Organising exhibition and TVET trade fairs	3.16	Agreed	3.39	Agreed
Grand Mean		3.33		3.20	

Table 3 revealed that stakeholders suggested that TVET providers/institutions can do the following to make TVET first career choice: Awareness Campaign on TVET; Employment of qualified TVET teachers and instructors; Partner with international TVET providers/institutions for global knowledge sharing; Partner with industries for industry-based learning and job placement; and Organising exhibition and TVET trade fairs. These findings are in line with Amaechi (2013) as cited by Ogbunaya & Ekereobong (2015), who suggested regular capacity building and training workshops for teachers of TVET; better synergy between TVET institutions and industry through exchange programmes; and regular sensitization to improve the public’s poor perception of TVET. Also, Mwangi and Makworo (2012), assertion are in agreement with the findings of the study when the researchers posited that enhancing status and attractiveness of TVET will involve changing perceptions and attitudes of the public about technical and vocational education.

Conclusion

Based on the findings from the study, it was concluded that stakeholders such as government, industries, and TVET providers/institutions have great role to play in making TVET the first career choice in Africa through active contribution and engagement in TVET activities to promote

TVET programmes in Africa. These can be achieved through government by Increase funding of TVET; Vocationalization of Education at all levels; Raising awareness of the society regards TVET; Establishment of more TVET institutions; and Partnering with international organization to improve the quality of TVET; also through industries by providing facilities for training of TVET teachers and students; employment of TVET graduates; partnering TVET institutions for exchange programmes; provision of scholarships for TVET teachers and students; and establishment of TVET centres. Also, through TVET providers/institutions by awareness campaign on TVET; employment of qualified TVET teachers and instructors; partner with international TVET providers/institutions for global knowledge sharing; partner with industries for industry-based learning and job placement; and organising exhibition and TVET trade fairs.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from the study, the following recommendations were made:

- i. Government at all levels should increase funding of TVET programmes in Africa, as well build more quality TVET institutions with adequate human and material resources to improve access to TVET.
- ii. Industries should provide training facilities, as well as training support to TVET institutions and establishment of TVET centres in Africa.
- iii. TVET providers and institutions should organized regular awareness campaign to promote participation in TVET, And also partner with international TVET institutions and industries for quality TVET programmes which will help to improve the image of TVET in Africa.

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