State of

SKILLS

International Labour Organization

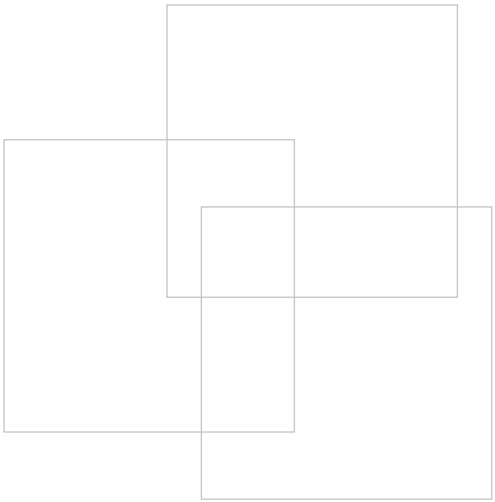
1919·2019



Nigeria

State of

SKILLS



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The socio-economic context

The importance of Nigeria to West Africa cannot be emphasized enough. Its population of 196.9 million is the largest in Africa and its economy the strongest (World Bank, 2019a). It is the economic and political hub of West Africa and, together with Togo, Nigeria spearheaded the formation in 1975 of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

Limited economic diversification and dependency on the oil sector.

The Nigerian economy is reliant on the country's petroleum resources. The agricultural and manufacturing sectors are both underdeveloped and mineral resources underexploited. Despite 70 per cent of the working population being engaged in agriculture, that sector contributes only 41 per cent of the country's GDP, mainly because 80 per cent of farming is at a subsistence level with a majority of farmers owning less than 5 acres of land (Anderson et al., 2017). Most of those engaged in agriculture have been trained informally through family labour. In contrast, the majority of agriculturalists with formal training work for government services and not on farms.

An economic downturn was partially overcome by economic diversification.

In 2019, Nigeria's GDP grew by only 2.1 per cent, representing a slowing of the country's economic recovery from the recession of 2016 when GDP fell by 1.6 per cent (IMF, 2019). Diversification and closure of the border have served to stimulate domestic production in non-oil sectors to such an extent that by 2019 they contributed 90.9 per cent of GDP, while the oil sector's share was down to 9.1 per cent. More specifically, for that year, agriculture contributed 21.9 per cent to GDP, while services accounted for 54.6 per cent (NBS, 2019b). Communication, insurance, financial services and manufacturing have undergone an upswing during recent years. In 2019, for instance, the communication sector represented 11.4 per cent of GDP and provided jobs for around 9.3 per cent of youth through the retailing of recharge cards and phone accessories, repairs and services (NCC, 2020). Nevertheless, poverty and unemployment continue to grow, especially in the northern part of the country where the Boko Haram insurgency has constrained economic activity.

Poverty is persistent and inequalities increasing.

A lack of economic diversification coupled with an inefficient social redistribution mechanism has contributed to a persistently high level of poverty in the country, such that in 2017, an estimated 49.1 per cent of the Nigerian population lived below the poverty line (World Bank, 2018a). This has perpetuated multidimensional vulnerabilities and weak human development outcomes, for example, in health and education (IMF, 2019).

Regional disparities and a wide south–north socio-economic divide.

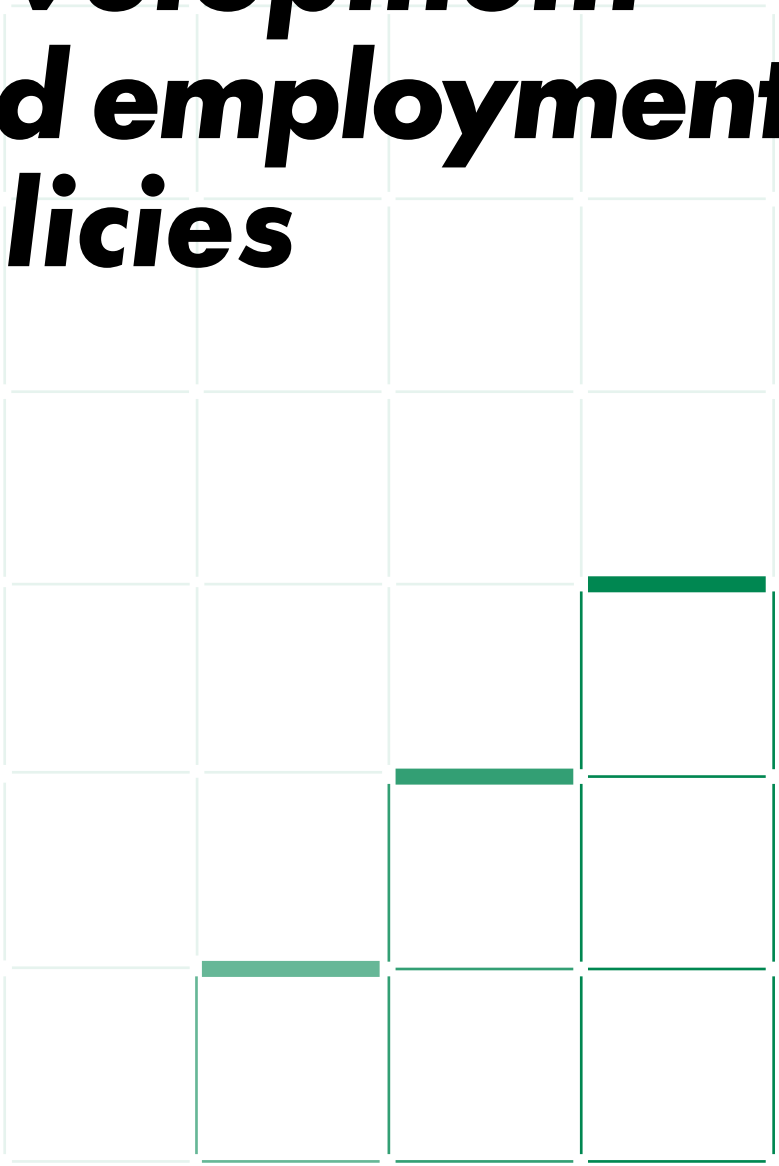
There is a stark difference in the poverty rate between the northern and southern parts of Nigeria, with rates increasing in the North and falling in the South. Similarly, the economic structures of these two parts of the country differ significantly. In the northern part, a formally trained workforce relies heavily on government employment, whereas the majority of those trained informally are reliant on agriculture, trading, merchandise and artisanal businesses, such as tailoring, carpentry, plumbing and bricklaying. The presence of private companies in most cities of the South attracts university and college graduates. Thus, in addition to having trades similar to those in the North, the southern workforce is also engaged in manufacturing, activities related to shipping, finance and general services.

A high level of underemployment, even among graduates.

According to a recent report by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2018), unemployment among people with a post-secondary school education almost tripled within three years, from 12 per cent in 2015 to 30 per cent in 2018. Combined, unemployment and underemployment stood at 43.3 per cent. There are, however, some noticeable disparities revealed by the report: 26.6 per cent of women and 20.3 per cent of men who sought a job remained unemployed, while 23.9 per cent of rural and only 21.2 per cent of urban dwellers were unemployed. Also, while 23.1 per cent of secondary school leavers were unemployed, this figure rose to 29.3 per cent for graduates. In terms of underemployment, however, only 13.7 per cent of urban dwellers were in this category compared to 22.8 per cent of rural dwellers (NBS, 2018). This indicates that, whereas underemployment in terms of the low number of hours worked is prevalent among people with a low educational attainment, among the better educated unemployment was the more prevalent of the two.


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Development and employment policies



Vision 20:2020 (NV20:2020) is Nigeria's development plan in response to both an overdependence on petroleum extraction and the country's socio-economic problems. The plan is designed to achieve the following objectives:

I. restructure the exports base from primary resources to manufactured goods;

II. adopt a decentralized approach to development and promote pro-poor policies;

III. support small-scale and rural farmers, with a focus on commercial agriculture;

IV. reform the education system and attain a high level of efficiency in order to be competitive at the global level; and

V. boost industrialization of the economy and the expansion of the private sector.

This national strategy is accompanied by several sectoral plans targeting some of the key issues confronting the Nigerian economy.

Promoting a structural transformation of the private sector through the Nigerian Industrial Revolution Plan (NIRP) (2014–2019) in accordance with objective five of NV20:2020 (rapid industrialization). This plan targets the following outcomes:

I. jobs creation in the industrial sector;

II. economic development and revenue diversification within the private sector;

III. a reduction in dependency on imported goods, instead producing them locally at lower cost;

IV. diversification of the country's export portfolio of manufactured goods at the region level; and

V. a broadening of the Government's tax base in order to fund broader fiscal policy.

These fives outcomes are expected to be achieved through an improvement in seven support structures: infrastructure, skills, innovation, investment climate, standards, local patronage and financing. Designed in 2014 as a five-year development plan, the NIRP had hoped to increase manufacturing as a proportion of GDP from 4 per cent in 2015 to 10 per cent by 2019 (FGN, 2014). Indications are good that the Plan is succeeding. The manufacturing sector has grown by 36.4 per cent (year on year) and in Q1 2019 the sector contributed 9.8 per cent of GDP (NBS, 2019b).

The current National Employment Policy (NEP) is a derivative of the first NEP formulated in 2002 in Nigeria. It contains outline strategies and a framework for employment generation, a reduction in unemployment, as well as a reduction in underemployment within the country. The Federal Executive Council approved the current NEP on 19 July 2017. Its premise is to adopt a "multi-pronged employment generation strategy to become more employment intensive". It is expected that this will be achieved through an emphasis on employment promotion in all sectors of the economy, as well as by a decentralization of the employment structure, whereby federal, state and local governments design and execute specific employment strategies best suited to local context and capacity. In addition, all agencies of government are encouraged to initiate and then implement action programmes to accelerate employment opportunities and promote decent work based on international labour standards (FGN, 2017). The NEP has four strategies to attain these objectives:

I. Establish a functional education and skills training system through the alignment of the education, industry and ICT sectors and improve the TVET system in Nigeria thereby raising the overall skills levels and technical competences of youth.

II. Stimulate private sector growth and the development of SMEs through greater access to finance, improved infrastructure and a better power supply.

III. Transform agriculture from subsistence farming to strong commercial enterprises. This applies to the four main subsectors of agriculture (crop production, forestry, fisheries and livestock) and foresees the establishment of an Agricultural and Geographic Information System (GIS) to ensure quality control, open access to markets and improved planning.

IV. Revitalize manufacturing by creating value chain activities within the sector, review regulatory incentives so as to encourage the establishment of industrial parks and clusters, and promote a 'made in Nigeria' campaign. The full potential of creative industries and tourism is also to be exploited.



"Government shall direct its policy towards ensuring that there are equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels."







– Constitution of the Republic of Nigeria

Article 18. (1)

The skills system in Nigeria



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The Nigerian skills system has undergone a series of reforms in recent years. The latest of these introduced free, compulsory basic education, which includes pre-vocational courses teaching basic technology and mandatory vocational lessons. Basic education spans a nine-year period divided into six years of primary education and three of junior secondary education. Post-basic education consists of three years of senior secondary education. The Government has made trade disciplines and entrepreneurship compulsory at this level and every student is expected to train in one. Animal husbandry, woodwork, metal work and fabrication, and fisheries are some of the courses taught (FGN, 2013). Other reforms include the establishment of the following:

- National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF) to make it easier to compare and understand qualifications, both formal and informal.

- Vocational Enterprise Institutions (VEIs) and Innovation Enterprise Institutions (IEIs). These are privately-owned, Government-approved institutions designed to equip secondary school leavers and working adults with the professional, technical and vocational skills necessary to industry.

- National Occupational Standards (NOS) to aid managers in workforce planning, quality control, the identification of skills gaps and in raising productivity.

- Open, distance and flexible e-learning (ODFEL) for the Nigerian TVET sector in order to improve access in the acquisition of knowledge and skills (NBTE, 2019).

- The National Council on Education (NCE) in partnership with the private sector is proposing a one-month internship once every three years for technical teachers (NBTE, 2017).

Skills mismatch is prevalent and the disparity between skills demand and skills supply is growing. Education and training in Nigeria do not correspond to what the labour market wants and requires. There is a wide disconnect between theory and practice, such that it becomes difficult to apply what is taught, for example, on university courses to real-world issues. On the other side of the argument, labour market entrants have criticized employers for expecting an unrealistic level of work experience while at the same time not offering mentoring at the beginning of a job. The TVET skills development system meanwhile continues to take a largely theory-driven instructional approach, with less attention given to the practice needs of the labour market.

There is multi-level governance of the skills system in Nigeria, which is managed simultaneously at the federal, state and local government levels. At the federal level, the Federal Ministry of Education, the Federal Ministry of Science and Technology and the Federal Ministry of Labour and Productivity are jointly responsible for the development of TVET and the governance of the skills system (UNESCO-UNEVOC and NBTE, 2019). State ministries of education and local education authorities are responsible for skills system governance at the state and local government levels, respectively. However, federal government remains the central guide and takes precedence over state and local government education skills systems.

In practice, greater decentralization is required in the formulating and implementation of educational policies and strategies due to regional disparities in the education sector and the need to ensure local autonomy (IOM, 2014). The Industrial Training Fund (ITF) is charged with non-formal skills development in both industry and the public sector, and collaborates with the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) to improve informal skills training (Evoh and Agu, 2015).

Non-formal skills provision is handled by several institutions such as the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC), the ITF and the NDE. Skills development is coordinated at the ministerial level for those agencies within specific federal or state ministries of education. However, the NBTE has general oversight of all policies relating to technical education for the formal TVET programme, irrespective of whether an institution is privately owned or run by either a state or the federal government. Still, there is a need for non-governmental agencies to provide accreditation and quality assurance rather than have the NBTE both make the regulations and then oversee quality assurance. It would be more efficient if the functions of the NBTE were decentralized and given to the six recognized geo-political zones, since their skills needs vary significantly. The National Skills Council should be empowered to conduct studies to collect and disseminate data for skills development in Nigeria.

Enlarging the role of employers' and workers' organizations in the governance of TVET institutions through social dialogue puts greater emphasis on accountability, transparency and stakeholders' ownership of skills and development programmes. The Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN), the Nigeria Employers' Consultative Association (NECA), the Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (NACCIMA), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international development agencies are all becoming involved in curriculum development and implementation. NGOs and other agencies have been invited to participate in curriculum development together with the NBTE and attend stakeholders' workshops as part of the TVET policy development process. Remarkably, the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) has created an online content developers' social network to facilitate an interactive community for curriculum development.

Sources of funding for skills development are diverse and various with financial participation from governments, international development agencies, community and faith-based organizations, and philanthropists.

The federal and state governments provide the bulk through budgetary allocations and grants for development assistance, followed by targeted funding from development agencies for specific intervention projects. However, funding alone does not guaranteed quality education, unless it is allied to the proper management of funds committed to training, the motivation of teachers and a well-designed curriculum fitted to the needs of the country and its economy, coupled with effective monitoring (Osinbajo, 2018).

Linkage between academia and industry needs to be incentivized. The ITF provides incentives to companies engaged in the continuing professional development of its employees. Some development agencies have like the World Bank adopted an incentivized approach in the funding of some intervention projects. To improve the funding of skills acquisition, the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund), the ITF, the National Science and Technology Fund, the Universal Service Provision Fund (USPF) and the Petroleum Technology Development Fund all promote initiatives such as the advanced skills development programmes (FGN, 2013).

Skills anticipation

Skills anticipation is largely the responsibility of institutions. The Ministries of Labour and Productivity, the Federal Ministry of Budget and National Planning, and the Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment are the key ministries focused on skills anticipation through their agencies. These agencies include the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the ITF and the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER). In addition, international agencies such as the ILO, UNESCO, UNIDO and UNDP have partnered with the different national agencies in Nigeria to provide information on skills anticipation for training purposes.

Political discontinuity leads to policy changes that affect skills anticipation. The National Manpower Board (NMB) was established by the Federal Government of Nigeria in 1962 to collect, process, analyse and deploy labour market information in support of policy formulation and strategic planning (Evoh and Agu, 2015). However, its merger with NISER in 2006 has created serious challenges to the collection of data on skills anticipation.

The NMB's functions are expected to be performed by NISER. This new institution is charged with determining and advising the Government on the nation's labour needs for all occupations; formulating development policies and programmes for the workforce; and coordinating the formulation of workforce policies and programmes at the federal, state and local government levels. In addition, NISER is expected to collect, analyse and publish workforce and employment information. They usually gather the data through surveys, studies and inquiries. Nigeria has a long tradition of workforce planning, but has recently underperformed in this regard, resulting in a lack of reliable labour market information (ITF, 2011). Furthermore, the country has undertaken few forecast studies on skills needs anticipation and few tracer studies on the impacts of existing skills programmes.

Skills development



In 2019, the World Bank reported a literacy rate for Nigeria of 62 per cent. Skills development is comparatively difficult to quantify in percentages (World Bank, 2019b). In the formal sector, skills development begins with primary education, followed by junior then senior secondary education. Thereafter, students enter tertiary education and study at either a science, commercial, technical or arts institution, be it a university, polytechnic or teacher training school. In recent years, entrepreneurship development courses have been taught in all tertiary institutions, while each secondary pupil must train in at least one vocational subject.

TVET is effective in improving the employability of young Nigerians. In its recent report, UNESCO-UNEVOC & NBTE (2019) argue that the competences imparted to Nigerian youth by TVET is a good instrument with which to address poverty and unemployment. In response to an evolving social and economic situation, the Government has introduced skills development programmes targeting youth. These include the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P), and the current N-Power programme aimed at providing both graduates and non-graduates with education, on-the-job- training and a monthly stipend.

Delivery and assessment of training is imperative for effective skills development. The success of skills development programmes in Nigeria depends on the effectiveness of their delivery. The informal TVET apprenticeship programme has remained effective due to its heavy reliance on work-based learning (WBL). Non-formal and formal TVET programmes implement WBL in different ways. Formal WBL is implemented in TVET institutions through internships, the school-based enterprise (SBE) entrepreneurial initiatives and one-off assignments/activities (field trips, work shadowing, occupation-based projects, career day events, career mentoring, and so on). Irrespective of the type of WBL, among its benefits are a smoother school-to-work transition, a bridging of the gap between theory and practice and acquisition of the type of experience and skills not available in schools. Other of its benefits are heightening the interest of students in their chosen career path, building relationships between schools, industries and communities, and expanding the professional networks of students, teachers and admin¬istrators (Ogwo, 2019).

Most company-based, non-formal TVET programmes are conducted through WBL. The WBL approach introduces the learner to equipment similar to that found at a workplace. However, since equipment is expensive to procure, the Government needs to step up the funding of public TVET programmes.

It is important to note that both the NERDC and the NBTE stipulate in their respective curricula minimum standards for instructional delivery, the scope of the technical content, teacher qualifications, teaching methods and types of assessment, and the appropriate student/teacher/equipment ratios. They also periodically visit and inspect programmes to ensure that TVET institutions have the necessary resources and the requisite capacity to provide skills development.

Various mechanisms enabling private sector involvement in TVET are in place, depending on the geopolitical zone of the country. The main areas of private sector involvement in TVET are policy development, funding partnerships with government and coordination of internships (industrial attachment) for students and teachers. The ITF is the key organization coordinating liaison between private sector companies and TVET institutions for the implementation of WBL through its Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES). SIWES imposes 1 per cent a levy on the payroll of companies employing more than five people (ITF, 2011). While such coordination in the formal sector is established, serious attention needs to be given to coordinating formal and informal skills development. A considerable portion of the country's skills development activities takes place within the informal economy. Formal TVET institutions should collaborate more closely with the informal TVET sector in the implementation of WBL programmes, since companies in the formal sector are currently unable to meet the demand for internships.

Skills recognition and quality assurance

Skills recognition and quality assurance in TVET are important in providing guidance on the planning and implementation of skills development initiatives.

Nigeria has an established National Skills and Qualification Framework (NQSF) guaranteeing the skills recognition and quality assurance of its TVET system. The NQSF is a system for the development, classification and recognition of the skills, knowledge and competencies acquired by individuals, irrespective of where and how the training or skill was acquired (UNESCO-UNEVOC and NBTE, 2019). The Framework states clearly what a learner must know or be able to do, regardless of whether the learning took place in a classroom, on-the-job, at home or within an informal community setting. It also indicates the comparability of different qualifications and how a person can progress from one level to another. The NSQF's main objective is to enhance quality, accountability, transparency, access, progression and the comparability of various qualifications in relation to labour market needs by setting national standards. The NSQF has six levels, from unskilled employees (Level 1) through to professional engineers and senior management positions (Level 6). The NSQF classification equates to the six different levels of certification within the Nigerian TVET system, namely pre-vocational (trade tests 1–3), national diploma, higher national diploma and postgraduate degree. The NQSF therefore represents a bridge between informal training and formal skills development.

Thirteen National Occupational Standards (NOS) have been developed in four occupational areas, namely energy, hospitality and tourism, construction, and the service industry, and are classified at NSQF Levels 1 and 2 (UNESCO-UNEVOC and NBTE, 2019). However, NBTE, ITF and UNIDO have all recommended that sector skills councils (SSCs) are established in order to regularize the recognition of skills acquired outside the formal TVET system. SSCs are employer-led organizations that cover specific occupations and support employers in developing and managing apprenticeship standards; reducing skills gaps; and improving workplace learning. Formal recognition for prior learning has not yet begun in Nigeria. The construction industry is the first sector to be currently seeking a national licensing scheme for its workers. In the meantime, the NBTE is working towards a skills value system through the establishment of NCSs.

Accreditation of institutions and academic departments is the most important quality assurance mechanism in Nigeria. This is carried out by governing bodies such as the NBTE who ensure that skills development programmes are implemented effectively and attain their stated objectives. In Nigeria, accreditation is awarded to TVET institutions by the statutory regulatory agencies (e.g., the NBTE) in partnership with professional bodies. Accreditation guarantees programme quality in relation to an institution's instructional resources, delivery and assessment methods. Once a programme is accredited by the NBTE, employers do normally consider its quality as guaranteed. Internal quality assurance mechanisms involve assessments that can be administered by either academic departments, faculties or academic boards.

Minimum training standards for all skills acquisition programmes in TVET institutions are set by the NBTE (FGN, 2013). The NBTE and the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) are respectively charged with quality assurance in polytechnics (including monotechnics) and Colleges of Education (for technical teacher training). Minimum standards are applied to the delivery method, instructional materials, activities and methods of assessment. In pursuance of the general goals set for TVET, curricula activities for technical colleges are arranged in foundation and trade modules. The curriculum for each trade module has five components: general education; theory, and related courses; workshop practice, industrial training/production work; and entrepreneurship. For effective participation by students in practical workshops, a teacher–student ratio of 1:20 is stipulated; polytechnic and monotechnic TVET programmes set a similar optimal ratio.

The National Business and Technical Examination Board (NABTEB) is the examination board for secondary level technical education subjects. NABTEB inspects and approves every school applying to administer its examinations. This constitutes part of the quality assurance process for the awarding of ordinary level certificates in technical subjects. Polytechnics and monotechnics award national diplomas and higher national diplomas to graduates.


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Social inclusion

Access to TVET programmes for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups is part of a nationwide policy on education. For example, the Nomadic Education Commission provides education to disadvantaged nomadic populations, namely, nomadic pastoralists and migrant fisherfolk and farmers (FGN, 2013); the proposed teacher–student ratio in special schools is 1:10 and school buildings and facilities adapted to the special needs of persons with physical disabilities, for example, with ramps instead of steps, wider doors for wheelchairs and lower toilets. In addition, federal, state and local governments provide many out-of-school TVET programmes for women, the disabled and those who have dropped out of school. For example, at the federal level, the NMEC affords access to education and training for women and persons with disability through out-of-school programmes; state governments have a similar agency charged with providing out-of-school programmes. International development agencies also run specific skills intervention programmes for different disadvantaged groups in the country.

Migrants face financial barriers to entry onto TVET programmes, even though there are no formal restrictions. High training fees, especially those charged by private training institutions, tend to restrict migrants' access to TVET programmes. In addition, notable gender disparities exist in terms of occupation: occupations in construction, the military and the automotive industry are considered suitable for men, while teaching, fashion and beauty, as well as the services industry, are regarded as occupations best suited to women.

Several initiatives ease the transition of TVET students into the labour market. In Nigeria, transition into the labour market remains a challenge for TVET students. There have, however, been ad hoc intervention programmes in support of college graduates' transition into the labour market. For example, the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and the NDE have supported business start-ups programmes facilitating the entry of graduates into the labour market. Other examples are the Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS), designed as an employment generation intervention programme and part of the SURE-P for job creation, as well as the N-Power programme. The GIS was launched in October 2012 to create opportunities for graduates to become interns in organizations where they can work for a year and acquire work-based skills. It is a platform that provides young graduates with a temporary work placement, as well as acquainting them with a skills acquisition environment for a period of up to a year (Evoh and Agu, 2015). The GIS has contributed to the employability of 50,000 unemployed graduates in the 36 states of the Federation and in the Federal Capital Territory by improving the skills base through work placement.

Lifelong learning

Voluntary and continuous learning by individuals to acquire and develop skills throughout life is usually delivered through workshops, self-study, technology-enabled platforms, as well as by formal and semi-formal institutes. In Nigeria, the different agencies involved in TVET all have policies and practices to encourage and provide for lifelong learning and continuous training. For example, promotion for technical personnel within the civil service is dependent on being able to demonstrate continuous learning and retraining. Some personnel are required to show verifiable evidence of having completed an approved continuous professional development programme since their previous promotion; others must pass a prescribed examination before promotion to the next rank. In many instances, continuous training programmes are funded by individual workers, while in others, workers are granted paid study leave.


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Recognition for lifelong learning is evolving, albeit gradually. Presently, in Nigeria, there is no licensing examination for a majority of technical trades; the only requirement for practicing after graduation is the funds to set up in business. This has resulted in trades being practised by persons without either formal or informal certification or valid training. Trade tests are one possible route by which lifelong learners could obtain formal recognition. Licensing examinations for skilled workers needs to be introduced, additional to the certificates that can be obtained in schools or from master craft-persons. Trade associations and unions have an important role to play in such examinations and certifications. For example, the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) has initiated a certification of teachers, including technical teachers graduating from colleges and universities.

The role of intermediaries and skills ecosystems has been limited until now, but has recently grown. The new, privately-owned IEIs and the VEIs provide the training that enables students to acquire nationally recognized continuous education (FGN, 2013). Technical colleges are competing as an alternative to publicly-owned TVET institutions within the country's skills development system. NGOs, foundations and philanthropists have equally stepped up their participation in policy development processes and in articulating and implementing skills programmes. Furthermore, lots of new, privately-owned education services and consulting companies now complement Government's efforts to improve the skills development system.

The role of social partners in enterprise development has been varied and include groups such as employees' associations, trade unions and employers' organizations. These groups have been cooperating with the Government in articulating policies for a better business environment and greater opportunities for entrepreneurship. For example, some employees' associations have founded cooperatives to help members to obtain low interest loans, while employers' associations and trade unions have advocated for policy advantages, incentives and tax reduction or elimination. In the informal sector, trade unions have helped draw up apprenticeship agreements between apprentices and master craft-persons. In some of these, the master craftsperson is expected to assist ("settle") the graduating apprentice in setting up in business or hiring themselves out as a journeyperson. Employers' and workers' organizations in both the formal and informal economy were engaged in dialogue involving the National Economic Management Team and the private sector aimed at job creation and the expansion of opportunities in the economy (Evoh and Agu, 2015).

Key challenges

There are several key challenges confronting the TVET system and impeding skills development in Nigeria. They are:

1 Over centralization of policy formulation.

TVET policy formulation and implementation strategies are designed at the federal level and states have not invested sufficient resources in developing their own state or local government level-specific policies. TVET policies do not therefore reflect the inherent socio-cultural and economic differences evident across the country.

2 Political discontinuity.

TVET policies and programmes are often replaced before having had adequate time to mature. There has been a trend for every new government to discard the policies and programmes endorsed by its predecessor.

3 Labour market needs and skills gap.

The TVET system is still taking a theory-driven approach without considering the practical experience required by the labour market (ITF, 2014). With a few exceptions, there has been no tradition of sustainable partnerships between private companies and TVET institutions. The result is a wide gap between the competencies of graduates and the needs and opportunities of the labour market. Despite an emphasis on the importance of collaboration between TVET institutions and employers, the contribution made by employers to curriculum design and implementation has been less than satisfactory (Phillips Consulting, 2014).

4 Gaps between the education system and industry.

Addressing these gaps can enable better policy formulation and programme implementation. There is (i) a lack of trust from the private sector in the ability of the education system to produce graduates with skills appropriate to the needs of industry and (ii) TVET programmes do not have a very good image. TVET is regarded as a second option by society at large and students encouraged to enter universities in preference to TVET institutions. This contributes to an increase in the incidence of poverty and underemployment in the country. (iii) The formal and informal sectors are viewed as mutually exclusive and this prevents their collaborating in support of skills development.

5 Limited and inadequate funding.

Funding is the most daunting challenge facing the education system in Nigeria, and it adversely affects the operation of TVET programmes (Esere, 2015). Inadequate funding has largely contributed, among other things, to poor TVET infrastructure, a lack of equipment and overcrowded classrooms with a disproportionate number of students per teacher, producing often unemployable graduates as a consequence.

6 Data crisis.

It is impossible to plan without valid data. A lack of data impacts policy formulation and programme implementation alike. Nigeria lacks a structure and a mechanism for coordinating the data collection needed to plan for skills development (Evoh and Agu, 2015).

7 Lack of quality assurance practices.

The skills development system has been unable to respond to changing labour market requirements (Ezekoye, 2019). This is due to an inadequate implementation of the curriculum development process and a lack of quality assurance practices. TVET curricula, instructional equipment, methods of teaching and techniques for evaluation often rely on periodic inspections and accreditation exercises.

The way forward



Recommendations include, but are not limited to, the following:

1 Decentralising policy development.

According to the Constitution of Nigeria, both federal and state governments can formulate education policy. Because the skills and developmental needs of individual states vary considerably, it is important that states and local governments are empowered through decentralization to develop policy designed for local needs (Sagagi, 2016).

2 Skills and risks anticipation.

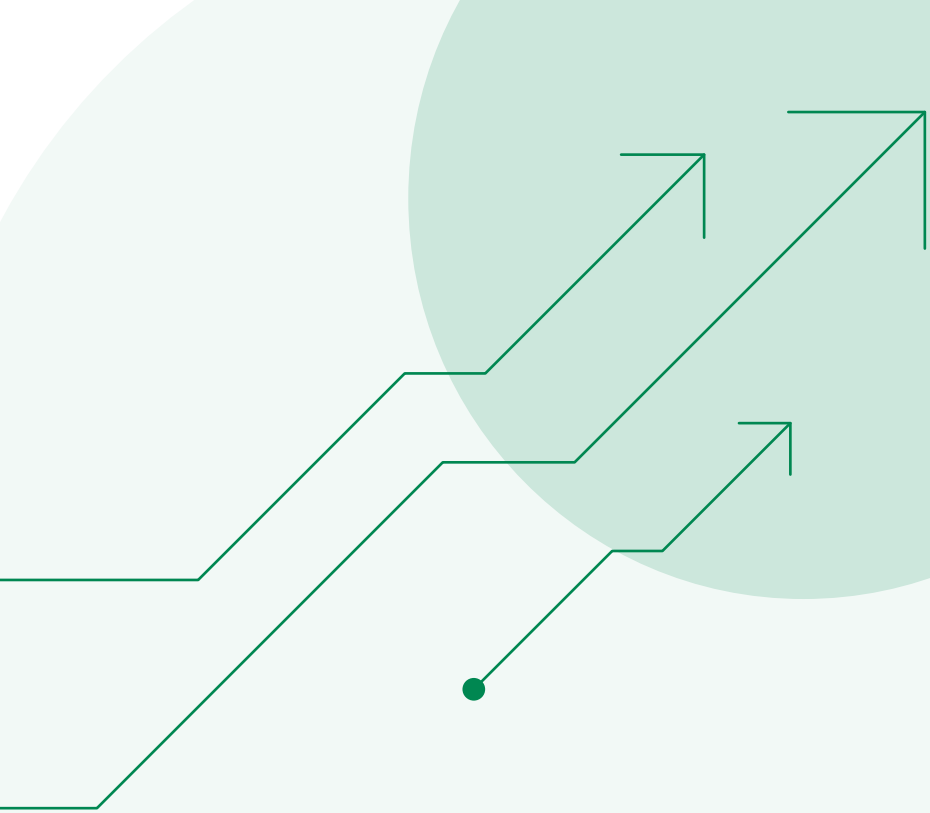
In addition, every skills development project should state the anticipated and specified risks and set out ways of mitigating them; this way, all levels of government will articulate policies suited to citizens and their worldview. Finally, policies on skills development should incorporate impact and sustainability plans into every TVET programme. The leadership of TVET institutions, politicians and other social partners should all be upskilled on systems analysis methods in order to be able to relate all aspects of national development to the skills development system.

3 Improving social dialogue and ownership of skills training programmes.

Skills development programmes that take into account the viewpoints of all stakeholders are the most likely to succeed. Stakeholder engagement at every level of skills development and implementation is required to enhance ownership and promote partnership. In some cases, as demonstrated by World Bank projects (Independent Evaluation Group (IEG), 2016), adopting a competition-and-reward systems approach to the awarding of skills development projects strengthens the commitment of participants.

4 Linking the labour market and skills development.

Linking the labour market and skills development will ameliorate many of the challenges identified. This can be achieved by improving formal apprenticeship in private and public companies through the provision of incentives (Evoh and Agu, 2015), as well as through promoting industry participation in curriculum development and implementation (ITF, 2011).



5 Promote quality assurance practices.

Processes rather than product-centric approaches ought to be used in instructional delivery, assessment, programme implementation and evaluation. During instructional delivery, an overemphasis on the product can lead to shortcutting and questionable practices. Programme evaluation, accreditation and internal monitoring should be undertaken by government agencies in collaboration with the private sector (Ezekoye, 2019).

6 Diversifying funds.

Financing of TVET ought to be restructured so as to be transparent and accountable, and to incorporate the revenue generated through school-based enterprise models. The volume and role of the informal sector is such that it deserves improved funding for its skills development efforts, especially for apprenticeship programmes and the guaranteeing of financial assistance to graduate apprentices wanting to establish start-up enterprises (UNIDO, 2017).

7 Improving the quality of governance.

There ought to be a concerted effort by all stakeholders to judiciously and prudently manage funds dedicated to skills development. Staff recruitment and placement procedures should be based on merit to ensure effective skills development and adherence to international best practice.



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