

Article

Government Policies and the Growth of Vocational Education in Nigeria

Dr. Ebimiewei Barakabo¹

1. Department of Business Education, School of Vocation and Technology Education, Isaac Jasper Boro College of Education, Sagbama, Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

*Correspondence: bishopbed@gmail.com

Abstract: The current study aimed to assess the extent to which the current vocational education programmes in Nigeria align with the competencies demanded by the labour market, to identify the barriers to effective governance and execution, and to recommend corrective actions to increase the alignment between educational and industrial demands. The qualitative methodological framework was used, relying on secondary sources such as textbooks, peer-reviewed journal articles, governmental reports, and international news media. The gathered data was analyzed in a systematic content analysis, thus shedding light on the complex issues facing vocational education programmes in the Nigerian setting. Three main findings were obtained in the analysis. To begin with, there is a strong disconnect between the skills that are generated and those demanded by the industry, which can be explained by the fact that the curricula have failed to keep up with the changes in the market, and the graduates are ill-prepared to work. Second, vocational institutions lack adequate infrastructural facilities thus limiting hands-on training. Third, the implementation of the policy is still disjointed and ineffective, characterized by insufficient financial resources and poor coordination of educational institutions and industry stakeholders. Taken together, these results highlight the need to undertake a wholesale curriculum change, enhanced industry-educator partnership, and increased investment in vocational training infrastructure to guarantee that it is in line with labour market demands. These observations underscore the dire need to reform the curriculum, strong industry partnership, and increased infrastructural investment to align training with market needs. The inquiry came to the conclusion that, despite the presence of governmental policy frameworks, their implementation has been of little effectiveness, in large part due to the lack of long-term commitment and sufficient financial support. The research suggests the following recommendations: first, the establishment of regular curriculum reviews that incorporate ongoing industry feedback to maintain relevance; second, the strengthening of investment in vocational education infrastructure, especially by using the public-private partnership model to modernise facilities; third, the reinforcement of governmental policies and financial flows to support sustainable vocational training programmes.

Keywords: Vocational education, skills mismatch, labour market alignment, government policies, infrastructure.

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1. Introduction

The role of vocational education (VE) in socio-economic growth of countries, such as Nigeria, cannot be overestimated. Vocational education in a fast changing global economy provides practical skills that are in line with the demands of the labour market, and thus, individuals are able to participate in productive activities and contribute to the growth of the nation. In the case of Nigeria, a nation that is struggling with the high rate of unemployment, vocational education is a critical tool of reducing unemployment among the youth and promoting sustainable development. The policies of the government have played a significant role in shaping the vocational education environment, but the compatibility of these policies with the requirements of the labour market is still fraught with difficulties. Although vocational education has the potential to empower Nigerian

youth and drive economic growth, its effectiveness has been hindered in many cases due to the lack of funding, infrastructure, and policy implementation [1].

The role of government in vocational education in Nigeria can be traced back to the early post-colonial policies that saw the need to acknowledge the role of skill-based education in the industrialisation agenda of the country. In the 1970s, the National Policy on Education (NPE) defined a vision of vocational education as a key tool of human capital development. The NPE highlighted the importance of a strong technical and vocational education and training (TVET) system to equip the Nigerian youth to be ready to work. Nevertheless, the implementation of the policy has been marred by issues like lack of alignment between training programmes and industry requirements, lack of qualified trainers, and poor utilisation of the available training facilities [2]. Although the policy framework is well laid down, implementation is usually poor because of lack of consistency in government commitment, poor resource allocation and poor governance structures.

The importance of vocational education in the development of Nigeria depends on the ability of the government to organize and fund educational programs that are sensitive to the changing needs of the global economy. Over the past few years, the need to provide Nigerians with technical skills that are applicable in major sectors like agriculture, manufacturing, and technology has gained increased awareness [3]. However, the lack of funding of vocational education institutions and the lack of modern equipment is also a major obstacle to the successful implementation of TVET programmes. Research has revealed that despite the governmental desire to enhance vocational education, administrative inefficiencies and insufficient investment in essential infrastructure have hindered most of the gains [4]. Thus, it is high time to reconsider these policies, making sure that they are adjusted to the present-day economic conditions and the needs of the industry [5]. This paper aims to discuss the ways in which the government can improve the growth of vocational education in Nigeria, and how the systemic issues that are currently affecting its performance can be resolved.

Statement of the Problem

The absence of a strong government system that promotes vocational education in Nigeria is a major issue of concern, particularly in the context of the economic problems that the country is facing. Although it is undeniable that vocational education can help to alleviate unemployment and equip the youth with skills that are useful in life, the policies of the Nigerian government in this regard are usually poorly funded and coordinated. Although the National Policy on Education (NPE) has tried to deal with the role of technical and vocational education and training (TVET), there has been a poor implementation. Vocational training institutions are not well funded and this influences their capacity to offer contemporary training facilities, competent trainers and appropriate training programs. This is aggravated by the fact that the funds are channeled to more conventional modes of education that may not be necessarily in tandem with the pressing demands of the labour market. Unless specifically invested in, TVET programmes will be poorly placed to fulfil their purpose of alleviating unemployment and economic growth, particularly in a country where the unemployment rate remains alarmingly high [6].

The other significant problem is the lack of alignment between the vocational education programmes and the real job market requirements in Nigeria. Most vocational education institutions have outdated curricula that are not aligned with the current needs of the global economy, particularly in areas like technology, renewable energy, and digital skills. Also, education and industry are not aligned and the graduates are left with skills that are not highly demanded by the employers. This gap begs a burning question: How can Nigeria hope to achieve sustainable economic growth when its vocational education system is not sensitive to the changing needs of the workforce? Why has there been minimal development in establishing synergies between the government, industries and vocational training centres to come up with programmes that are relevant to the labour market? Unless these questions are answered, Nigeria will remain in the paradox of having

a high number of educated unemployed youths when there is a high demand of skilled workers [7].

The systemic issues of TVET programmes are also caused by the poor governance of vocational education in Nigeria. The lack of sustained attention to vocational education as an important instrument of national development has been caused by political instability, corruption, and inconsistent application of policies. Although there is increased awareness of the necessity of acquiring skills to overcome unemployment, the policies that ought to support the growth of vocational education are usually hampered by bureaucratic bottlenecks and inefficiencies. It is on this basis that this research was conducted to analyze the government policies and the growth of vocational education in Nigeria, with a view of establishing the systemic barriers that impede the growth of TVET and suggest viable solutions to policy reform [8].

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. how effective are the current government policies in addressing the challenges faced by vocational education institutions in Nigeria, such as funding, infrastructure, and curriculum relevance?
2. how does the existing vocational education programmes in Nigeria align with the skills demanded by the labour market?
3. what are the key barriers to effective governance and implementation of vocational education policies in Nigeria?

Specific Objectives

The aim of this paper is to examine the impact of Government Policies on the Growth of Vocational Education in Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. assess the effectiveness of current government policies in addressing the challenges faced by vocational education institutions in Nigeria, focusing on key areas such as funding, infrastructure, and curriculum relevance.
2. evaluate the alignment of existing vocational education programmes in Nigeria with the skills demanded by the labor market
3. identify the key barriers to effective governance and implementation of vocational education policies in Nigeria,

Literature Review

Government Policies

Government policies are the basic tools by which states respond to the needs of society and determine the course of national development. These policies are organized, practical strategies designed by the government to accomplish certain goals, whether it is economic development or social justice. The effectiveness and application of these policies have a direct impact on the governance, stability, and progressive course of a country. Therefore, understanding government policies is critical in assessing how governments handle and address the issues of the people like education, healthcare, security, and economic well-being.

In their analysis of the governance process, Olaniyi define government policy as a collection of planned and implemented actions by the institutions of the society to address the problems of the society. Their definition focuses on the systemic, organized manner in which governments are using to meet the demands of the people. However, although this view is accurate in the sense of what governmental planning is all about, it fails to acknowledge the dynamic and in many cases contradictory nature of policy goals and the role of political ideologies in the formulation of such policies. This exclusion points to a loophole that requires a more comprehensive definition that includes the political, economic, and social determinants that inform policy formulation and execution. To this extent, a more conceptualised approach, which recognises the interaction of various forces in society to influence the government policy, is justified [9].

Demaine provides a more organized definition, stating that government policies are planned, intentional actions of a government to urgent national problems like poverty,

unemployment, or healthcare. This definition is helpful in understanding government policy as an active mechanism. Nevertheless, it ignores feedback mechanisms that allow adaptation and the impact of external forces like globalization. This weakness is an indication that a definition is required that does not just cover the planned actions but also the dynamic nature of policy as it responds to new challenges and changes in the global dynamics. In this regard, a more detailed method would appreciate the dynamism of governmental policies in reaction to internal and external forces [10].

The third definition, which is given by Brooks, highlights the effectiveness, influence, and suitability of government policies in responding to the concerns of the people. Brooks describes policies as those that have the ability to produce results that meet the expectations of the people. This is a pragmatic and outcome-focused view, but it does not consider the processes that result in the formulation of such policies. The resultant gap is in the conceptualisation, debate and institutionalisation of policies before they are assessed on their effectiveness. Therefore, a more comprehensive definition would include the formulation and implementation stages, including the intricacies of matching policy to the needs and expectations of the population [11].

Riak and Bill argue that government policy is a holistic combination of legislative activities that are intended to solve the problems of the population by direct intervention and regulation. This definition is broad and encompasses both proactive and reactive aspects of governance. However, it does not sufficiently cover ideological motives or the possibility of policy contradictions within one government. This gap highlights the necessity of a definition that takes into account the political aspects as well as the role of different interest groups in the policy process. The full picture of government policy thus cannot be achieved without the legislative process but also the political battles and ideological conflicts that influence the direction of policy.

Based on the above definitions, I would suggest that the government policies should be defined as organised actions and decisions made by the governmental bodies to address the challenges facing the society based on a combination of legislative frameworks, political ideologies, needs of the people and international forces. This definition combines the proactive and reactive character of policy, as it acknowledges that the process is not only about planning but also about adjusting to the changing environment and responding to the feedback provided by internal and external stakeholders [12].

Vocational Education

Vocational education is important in equipping people with technical and practical skills to prepare them to particular trades, crafts, and careers. In the face of economic changes and technological developments in the world, vocational education has become increasingly relevant especially in the sense that it is a transition between formal education and the labor market. Vocational education facilitates economic development and reduces unemployment by offering practical experience and skills in specialised areas. Considering its increasing significance, it is necessary to comprehend vocational education through diverse academic lenses. The subsequent paragraphs discuss the definitions provided by the leading scholars, whose combined knowledge contributes to our understanding of this active educational method.

According to Young and Hordern, vocational education can be defined as a systematic framework that is aimed at instilling certain trade-related skills in people, thus making them more employable. Although this definition prefigures the practical aspect of vocational education, it is more likely to ignore the wider educational and social implications of such training on the personal growth of an individual. Moreover, it fails to consider the dynamic needs of industries or the dynamic nature of work that vocational education needs to respond to. This means that a more dynamic definition that takes into account the changing labour market and the long-term development of individuals is required. [13]

Ambarova and Zborovsky concentrate on the role of older populations in vocational education and redefine the concept as a lifelong learning instrument that can be used by

people outside the traditional age groups. This increased breadth makes vocational education more relevant to a greater population. However, it creates a loophole by not discussing the particular pedagogical models that are needed to reach older learners. The question arises: how can vocational education meet the needs of various age groups and at the same time maintain its main purpose of acquiring skills to work? A subtle perception that incorporates age-specific pedagogical approaches and principles of lifelong learning is thus needed [14].

Hvozdetzka broadens the scope of vocational education by adding the role of psychological and pedagogical training of instructors. She describes vocational education as a holistic process that combines technical skills training with pedagogical and psychological preparation to promote holistic development. Though this definition expands the concept of vocational education by focusing on the development of instructors, it overlooks the practical aspect of vocational education in relation to the needs of the industry. The gap that has been created is how the vocational education systems can reconcile teacher preparation with the changing needs of the labour market and thus the definition of vocational education as not only an educational process but also an adaptive system [15].

Lastly, Asnawi and Djatmiko state that vocational education should be transformed to address the increasing demand of green jobs in different industries. They identify vocational education as a discipline that needs to incorporate sustainability and environmental consciousness in its curriculum to equip students to work in the future. Although this progressive definition points to the disconnect between the traditional vocational education systems and the fast-changing global economy, it also points to the necessity to redefine vocational education to focus not only on technical skills but also on ecological responsibility and sustainability [16].

According to these definitions and gaps, vocational education can be defined as a dynamic and adaptive learning system that provides individuals with specialised skills in particular industries and encourages lifelong learning, responds to the needs of the changing labour market, and includes sustainability. This definition combines the technical and holistic nature of vocational education and focuses on its contribution to addressing global economic and environmental issues.

Theoretical Underpinning

The research is based on the Human Capital Theory, which was put forward by Gary Becker. This theory argues that investment in education and skill development increases the productivity of an individual and leads to the general economic growth. It is in line with the goals of vocational education, which are to enhance employability and productivity by acquiring particular skills.

Human Capital Theory provides a strong framework in the Nigerian context where unemployment among the youths is still high and how government policies on vocational education can be used to promote economic growth. The Nigerian government can invest in vocational education to provide people with the technical skills needed to meet the labour market demands. As a result, these talented people are able to spur development in various sectors hence alleviating poverty and enhancing sustainable development. The theory is especially applicable since it assumes that increasing human capital by means of education and training will increase the productivity of the workforce, which will result in increased national income and sustainable development. Nevertheless, the issues that are related to funding, policy implementation, and the perception of vocational education in the society should be overcome to enable the theory to achieve its full potential in Nigeria. In this regard, this study examines the role of government policies in closing the gaps in vocational education, which will boost human capital and promote the growth of the national economy [17].

2. Material and Method

The researcher uses a qualitative methodology to investigate the connection between government policies and the growth of vocational education in Nigeria. The secondary sources were used to obtain data, such as textbooks, journal articles, newspapers, government publications, and international news sources. These sources give a detailed insight into the main variables, including the effectiveness of government policies in vocational education, funding and infrastructure issues, and the relevance of vocational training to the labour market. The study critically analyzes the insights and views obtained through these sources to determine patterns, trends, and gaps in policy implementation through content analysis. This qualitative approach will allow developing a subtle insight into how government policies may either promote or hinder the development of vocational education in Nigeria.

3. Results and Discussion

How effective are the current government policies in addressing the challenges faced by vocational education institutions in Nigeria, such as funding, infrastructure, and curriculum relevance?

The efficiency of the existing governmental policies in overcoming the challenges that vocational education institutions in Nigeria have to cope with is a highly important issue, especially in the context of the growing recognition of vocational education as one of the key factors of economic growth. With the continued high unemployment rates among the youths, vocational education is an important channel of acquisition of skills, creation of employment, and economic empowerment. However, the sector is still crippled by the same old problems, which are lack of funding, poor infrastructure and outdated curriculums, which have hampered its effectiveness. Despite the fact that government policies have been formulated to alleviate these problems, their effectiveness has been limited by structural inefficiencies as well as lack of commitment. The present situation in the field of vocational education, though indicating certain improvements in certain areas, highlights the need to have a more effective and holistic policy framework. An increasing literature has discussed these dynamics, which provides information on the success of governmental interventions in this sector.

Poorly Financed Vocational Education: One of the major challenges facing vocational education institutions in Nigeria is the long-lasting lack of funds. Although the government is undertaking many efforts to enhance vocational education, financial limitations continue to hinder the process. Lack of continuity in investment leads to a stagnant system, which does not allow institutions to offer students relevant and modern training. This long-term underinvestment only worsens the situation with infrastructures and the lack of modern equipment, which is a necessity in developing skills. Furthermore, the lack of resources impedes the recruitment and retention of skilled technical staff, which leads to the staffing shortage and the drop in the quality of the instruction. The budget deficit reduces the quality of education, as schools and colleges are unable to afford facilities and to acquire the required materials. Combined with a lack of outside support provided by international organizations, the funding crisis worsens, and a cycle of underdevelopment continues to produce a skilled workforce that can address the needs of the industry. Lack of political will and funding is cited as one of the biggest obstacles to the realization of the goals of the Technical and Vocational Education and Training policies in Nigeria.

Moreover, the studies and policy suggestions also note that sufficient funding of TVET is a key determinant of the quality of the programs, ongoing educator training, and the availability of necessary facilities. This perception is supported by the fact that funding systems often exclude the input of private business and government subsidies of work-based learning elements - aspects that cannot be left out in the development of practical skills and workforce integration. The funding shortage has a direct influence on the ability of institutions to provide modern and relevant training, restricting graduate employability and not addressing the changing needs of the Nigerian labour market.

Infrastructure Deficit and its Effect on Vocational Education: The other issue of concern to vocational education in Nigeria is lack of proper infrastructure. Abubakar and Anthony argue that most of the technical schools lack proper infrastructure, including access to technology and outdated educational institutions. The government has been implementing policies like the National Skills Development Policy to enhance the conditions of infrastructures but this has not been implemented uniformly and comprehensively. As a result, vocational education institutions are forced to live with poor classrooms, lack of internet facilities, and shortage of modern facilities- things that severely affect the quality of training. Such infrastructural shortcomings undermine the success of the vocational programmes, which leave students unprepared to face the realities of the labor market.

According to Oviawe and Anetekhai, the policies must not only deliver the basic facilities but also improve the technological infrastructure that is needed in modern vocational training. As an example, insufficient financing prevents the acquisition of modern equipment and maintenance of modern workshops, which is essential to instill practical skills in line with the current industry standards. This infrastructure shortage is a great impediment to the provision of quality technical and vocational education and training, which leads to graduates who might not have practical skills as required by employers. The lack is also exacerbated by the lack of joint structures between schools and the industry that would help to provide access to the latest industrial equipment and real training facilities.

In addition, many institutions still use old machinery and equipment which makes their graduates ill-prepared to the demands of the modern labour market. These issues are further compounded by the absence of strong digital infrastructure such as internet connectivity and server capacity, which hinder the introduction of the necessary digital skills in vocational education. Low educator competence in digital technologies and unstable connectivity are additional factors that slow down the successful implementation and use of digital technologies in vocational training. A meta-analysis proves that a lack of proper infrastructure and unequal access to digital resources significantly hinder the process of digital integration in vocational and technical education. This widespread lack has a direct impact on pedagogical strategies, which tend to shorten the practical teaching and skill acquisition, thus not meeting industry expectations of technically competent graduates. The lack of credible digital infrastructure is also a major obstacle to modern pedagogical practices and the impartation of digital literacy in vocational education.

Obsolete Curriculum and Inappropriateness to the Labour Market Requirement: The continued use of obsolete curricula is a major limiting factor to the success of vocational education in Nigeria since it does not always capture the changing job market requirements. Ayonmike note that most vocational institutions fail to update their curricula on a regular basis to reflect the current trends in the industry, technology, or global economic needs. This industry-educational disintegration breeds graduates who are unprepared to face the workforce challenges. Although reforms have been made like entrepreneurship education, the curricula are still more theoretical with little focus on practical and industry related skills. According to Fadipe, the absence of routine curriculum changes and the mismatch between the skills taught and the demands of the employer are major factors that cause youth unemployment. This is made worse by the fact that the exposure of students to new web-based technologies, including MOOCs and virtual laboratories, which are necessary to develop vocational skills relevant to modern industries, is low.

Therefore, graduates tend to be less specialized and flexible to work in dynamic industrial settings, which impedes the smooth integration of workforce. Stagnation in the curriculum is especially an issue in digital entrepreneurship, where the lack of integrated entrepreneurship education in TVET lecturer training hinders the acquisition of the necessary digital skills. Incorrect focus on the conventional approach to teaching and insufficiently taught entrepreneurial and business management principles only contribute to the widening of the gap between the educational process and the needs of the industry. This leads to the failure of most training programmes to provide students with the competencies that are actively sought by companies, which creates a significant skills

mismatch that compromises the employability of graduates. This lack of economic alignment between the output of education and the market is a major hindrance to economic development- industries cannot find sufficiently skilled labor and graduates do not have jobs. The process of closing this gap requires a dynamic curriculum development process that incorporates real-time industry feedback and embraces agile practices to keep up with the fast technological change.

How does the existing vocational education programmes in Nigeria align with the skills demanded by the labour market?

The policies governing and implementing vocational education in Nigeria are faced with a lot of challenges that limit their effectiveness in achieving the intended goals. Despite the general agreement that vocational education is a key tool in reducing unemployment among youths and enhancing economic growth, the challenges of effective policy implementation are still acute. The lack of funding, inadequate infrastructure, bureaucratic inefficiencies, political instabilities, and lack of coordination among the stakeholders are some of the key problems that undermine the potential of vocational education to meet the needs of the labour market.

Bureaucratic Inefficiency and Governance: Challenges One of the most dominant obstacles to the successful execution of the policies of vocational education in Nigeria is bureaucratic inefficiency. According to Onwusa, the success of the vocational education in the country can only be sustainable with a lean and well-coordinated governance structure. This ineffectiveness often creates delays in policy formulation, resource misallocation, and a general failure to be accountable, thus impeding the creation and implementation of the appropriate vocational training programmes. In addition, lack of strong feedback systems between industry and training institutions worsens the situation and results in supply-based programmes that do not sufficiently address the dynamic skills needs of the labour market. Therefore, it is necessary to immediately change the supply-driven curriculum to a demand-driven model, where graduates learn skills that are directly relevant to the economic and industrial requirements.

Insufficiency of Adequate Funding and Resource Allocation: The other significant hindrance to the successful execution of the vocational education policies in Nigeria is the lack of funds and the allocation of resources in an inefficient manner. Although the government has realised the value of vocational education, it still puts minimal resources in this sector and tends to focus on other sectors in the education system. According to Akindele, the lack of funds directly affects the infrastructure, equipment, and training materials that vocational institutions have, thus limiting their ability to provide quality education. Most vocational institutions are housed in old and inadequately fitted institutions, with little access to modern technology and training facilities, and students are not well equipped to meet the workforce requirements. Moreover, the provided funding is often not sufficient to support any meaningful reforms or to expand successful programs. Oghuvbu state that despite the numerous policies that the government has put in place to facilitate vocational education, the necessary funding to implement the same has not been realised, thus making vocational training programmes unsustainable. In the absence of a strong financial investment, vocational education establishments cannot upgrade infrastructure, improve the quality of teaching, and meet the changing demands of the labour market.

Political Instability and Policy Fragmentation: Political instability and policy fragmentation are also major problems to governance of vocational education in Nigeria. As Abdullahi and Othman note, the constant shift in the leadership and policy direction of the government have created inconsistency in the implementation of the vocational education policies. Absence of a coherent, long-term vision of vocational education contributes to the policy fragmentation whereby the various governmental bodies and ministries might have conflicting interests or have unclear roles in the implementation process. This disjointed practice leads to confusion and ineffectiveness, with various stakeholders working independently of each other instead of working together to meet the common goals. Furthermore, political unrest tends to result in the fact that the resources available are not used to the fullest, and the focus is not on the long-term educational goals but on the short-term political ones. Political will and commitment is yet another issue that

has contributed to the problems facing vocational education making the sector susceptible to neglect and underdevelopment. Therefore, political instability is a hindrance to the development of a unified and holistic policy framework that is able to meet the growing need of skilled labor in the Nigerian economy.

What are the key barriers to effective governance and implementation of vocational education policies in Nigeria?

There are a number of barriers that hinder the governance and implementation of the vocational-education policy in Nigeria which hampers their ability to achieve the desired results. Despite the fact that vocational education is generally recognized as one of the key tools of reducing unemployment among young people and promoting economic growth, the barriers to its successful implementation are still significant. The capacity of vocational education to meet the demands of the labour-market is undermined by principal impediments such as lack of adequate funding, inadequate infrastructure, bureaucratic stagnation, political instability, and poor coordination of stakeholders.

Bureaucratic Inefficiency and Governance: The first limiting factor to the effective execution of vocational-education policy in Nigeria is the bureaucratic inefficiency. Nigeria, as Onwusa has observed, has a history of poor governance systems that lack coordination, fragmented policy execution, and poor management of resources, thus compromising the entire education system. Vocational-education programs are not clearly owned and are prone to changing policy priorities as a result of changing government. This lack of a consistent, long-term commitment to the growth of vocational education creates an unstable atmosphere in which the policy is implemented.

In addition, the political interference is likely to corrupt the policy-making process, and vocational education will be subject to the whims of partisanship instead of responding to the urgent labour-market demands of the country. Weaknesses in accountability in policy implementation are also demonstrated by the fact that there is little control over the policy implementation by the concerned regulatory agencies, including the National Board of Technical Education (NBTE) and the Ministry of Education. Such lapses produce a reactive, not proactive, policy space, which produces regulations that are not responsive to the changing needs of the workforce. This kind of a governance gap leads to a rhetoric that in most cases does not translate into long lasting, practical effects, thus creating disjointed and unequal outcomes in the vocational education programs. These problems are further complicated by the lack of strong monitoring and evaluation systems, which make it hard to evaluate the effectiveness of the programs, monitor budgetary allocations, and beneficiaries, and, therefore, effective oversight.

In addition, policy discrepancies and the absence of coordination between different government agencies also complicate the situation and do not allow working synergistically to enhance vocational training and skills development. These systemic issues hinder strategic alignment of vocational education to national development goals, often leading to policies that are not well aligned to curriculum implementation processes that would support self-employment and the overall economic development.

Absence of Sufficient Financing and Resource Distribution: The second major impediment to the successful execution of the vocational-education policy in Nigeria is the endemic lack of funding and resource distribution. Although the government has realised the role of vocational education, it still has relatively little resources to spend on it, as it focuses on other sectors of the education system. According to Akindele, the lack of funds directly interferes with the infrastructure, equipment and training resources which vocational institutions have and thus reduces their ability to provide quality education. Most vocational institutions have old and poorly furnished facilities, little access to modern technology and training facilities, and students are not well equipped to meet the demands of the workforce. Moreover, the budget allocated to vocational education is often insufficient to maintain meaningful reforms or to expand effective projects. Oghuvbu contend that although numerous policies have been implemented to facilitate vocational education, the necessary funding has not been realised, and thus, there is no sustainability in the vocational training programmes.

In the absence of a strong financial investment, vocational-education institutions find it difficult to upgrade their infrastructure, improve the quality of teaching and keep up

with the changes in the labour-market requirements. This underinvestment creates a shortage of skilled teachers because of low pay and the inability to purchase and retain the necessary laboratory and workshop materials both of which significantly undermine the quality and relevance of TVET programmes. The long-term underinvestment also leads to the image of TVET as a less prestigious educational route which is further reinforced by the socio-cultural stigmas and the curriculum that does not match the industry needs. This, in turn, discourages the possibility of enrolment, which hinders the ability of the sector to generate a skilled workforce that can spearhead industrial and technological progress. The lack of cooperation between educational facilities and industries contributes to this dilemma, which, in turn, forms a gap between theoretical education and practice. The lack of resources is also applied to the teaching environment, where teachers do not have the required resources and materials to provide effective and practical training, especially in vocational skills.

Therefore, the lack of funding over the years prevents the evolution of modern curricula and the acquisition of modern equipment, which results in the vocational training programmes being outdated and unsuitable to meet the needs of the industry. Such financial negligence is reflected in the relatively low expenditure on education in Nigeria, which ranks below most sub-Saharan African nations and continues to make it difficult to sufficiently finance vocational education and training.

Unstable Politics and Policy Division: Political instability and policy fragmentation are also major issues that affect proper governance of vocational education in Nigeria. According to Abdullahi and Othman, the constant change of government leadership and policy direction has brought about inconsistency in the implementation of vocational-education policies. The absence of a coherent, long-term vision of vocational education in the country is a factor that leads to the fragmentation of policies, where various governmental agencies and ministries can be pursuing conflicting interests or can have unclear roles in the implementation process. Such a disjointed strategy creates confusion and ineffectiveness because different stakeholders tend to operate independently instead of cooperating to achieve common goals.

In addition, political turbulence normally leads to under-exploitation of the existing resources, as the focus is not on the long run educational objectives but rather on the short run political benefits. The lack of political goodwill and dedication also adds to the problems facing vocational education making the sector prone to negligence and underdevelopment. Political instability therefore, interferes with the development of an integrated, holistic policy framework that may efficiently address the increasing skilled labour demands in Nigeria. Absence of political goodwill often means poor budgetary allocations and inability to implement the necessary reforms, which further hamper the ability of the sector to develop and meet the modern workforce needs. This ambiguity also discourages investment and cooperation in the private sector, which are essential elements in bridging the gap between academic education and industry demands. The constant change undermines the sustainability of vocational education, making it difficult to design and sustain high-quality training programmes that are in line with the overall economic growth goals.

4. Conclusion

Finally, the paper has made some important conclusions on how vocational-education programmes in Nigeria can be aligned to skills required in the labour market. First of all, it has been found that there is a vast skills gap between vocational-education programmes, with most of them not updating their curriculum on a regular basis to meet the dynamic demands of the modern industries. This imbalance adds to the high levels of unemployment especially to the young people who come out with skills that are no longer marketable. This is further worsened by the fact that there is no collaboration between vocational institutions and the industry stakeholders and as a result, the graduates are ill equipped to work in the industry. Secondly, the research found out that vocational-education institutions in Nigeria have poor infrastructure and lack access to modern training facilities. Most of the institutions are still stuck in old, ill equipped set ups and the

students are unable to gain the practical skills needed to succeed in the job market. This is one of the infrastructural deficits that impede the successful implementation of vocational-education policies.

Another theme highlighted in the study was the inability of vocational-education curricula to change according to the demands of the labour-market. Most of the programmes still focus on outdated skills and theory instead of industry-related practical skills. The lack of industry input in the development of the curriculum also contributes to the lack of connection between education and jobs. Although there have been some attempts to reform the curriculum, these reforms have not been adequate to address the fast evolving requirements of other sectors like the technology, manufacturing and renewable energy. These gaps have not been properly addressed by the government policies though they recognize the importance of vocational education.

Recommendations

On the basis of the above, the study recommended that:

- 1) Curriculum Reform and Industry Collaboration: Vocational-education institutions in Nigeria are advised to revise their curriculum on a regular basis to capture the current trends in the industry and technological changes.
- 2) Greater Investment in Infrastructure: Government must focus on investment in the infrastructure of the vocational-education institutions by availing modern facilities, equipment and technology.
- 3) Enhancing Government Policies and Funding: The Nigerian government should increase its investment in vocational education and introduce policies that will facilitate its development.

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