

# POVERTY AND UNEMPLOYMENT IN NIGERIA: THE CASE FOR ADVANCEMENT OF TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (TVET)

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## **Abstract**

*One of the main reasons for increasing levels of poverty and unemployment in Nigeria is the lack of skilled human capital. Thus, Nigeria has remained slow in its development trajectory not only because of lack of technology but also due to the fact that the country's large population does not possess relevant skills required for development in a fast globalising world. Despite successive governments' programmes towards ameliorating the conditions of the citizens by reducing poverty and unemployment, the rising cases reveal that much still needs to be done. There is therefore need for more studies aimed at proffering meaningful suggestions for informing policies to address these problems in Nigeria. This is imperative because of the country's growing population and also the consequences of poverty and unemployment for peace, security, stability and development of Nigeria. This paper furthers the discourse on strengthening Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) as strategy for addressing the issues of poverty and unemployment in Nigeria. Its argument is anchored on the Human Capital Theory of Gary S. Becker. The objective of the paper is to examine the connection between TVET, human capital and skills development; and to highlight the challenges and prospects of TVET in Nigeria's skills development agenda.*

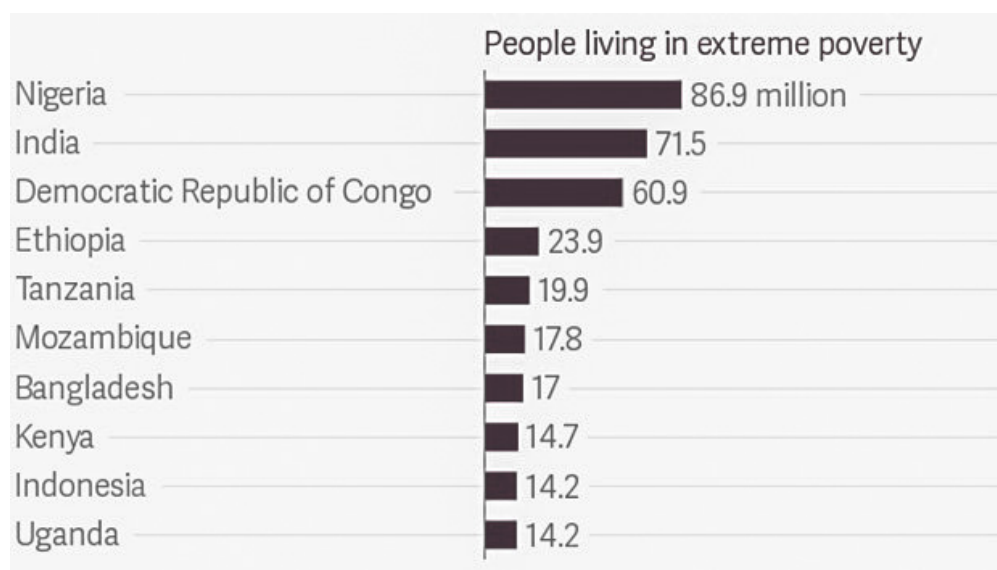
**Keywords:** Democracy; Development; Human Capital; Skills; Skills Development; Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET).

**JEL Codes:** E24, F64, F68.

## 1. Introduction

Nigeria is endowed with vast natural and material resources, yet the country has been described as the poverty capital of the world with an estimated population of 87 million people in extreme poverty (see, Demuren, 2018; Iheonu and Urama, 2019). The increasing level of poverty shows that the issue of poverty reduction has remained a challenge in Nigeria despite the policies of successive governments (Figure 1).

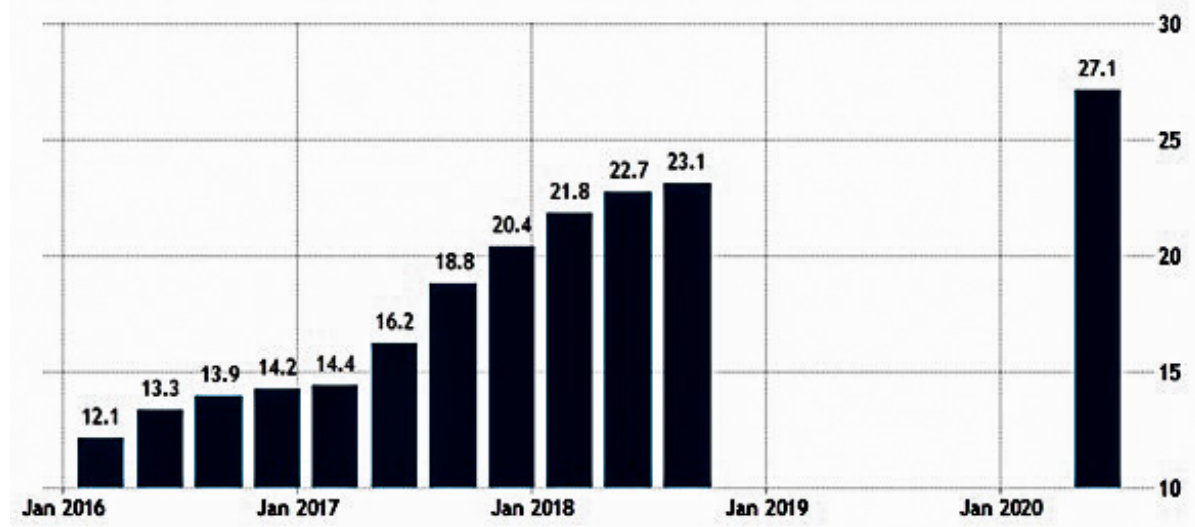
Figure 1– Nigeria’s poverty level – 2018



Source: ATLAS/Data World Poverty Clock

On another note, Nigeria has an estimated population of 206,786,196 million people in 2020 ([Worldmeters.info/world-population/Nigeria-population/](https://worldmeters.info/world-population/Nigeria-population/)). Its population could trigger industrial production and also provide a large workforce for economic development if a large percentage were ‘appropriately skilled’. However, the country lags behind in economic and social progress (Figure 2). For instance, despite being the country with Africa’s biggest economy, “Nigeria’s Human Development Index for 2018 was 0.534 which put the country in the low development category – positioning it at 158 out of the 189 countries and territories” (UNDP, 2019: 2). Education for all has remained elusive despite annual budgetary allocations (Leke et al, 2014). Healthcare facilities are out of reach of the majority (AU/APRM, 2009: 274-318; Obokoh, 2019); housing is a far cry from the desire of many (AU/APRM, 2009: 274-318; Emiedafe, 2015); food is yet on the table of all (USAID, 2020), and as figure 2 shows, unemployment is rising (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020).

Figure 2 – Unemployment in Nigeria



Source: TradingEconomics.com/National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria, 2020.

The authors observe that while the large population of China and India have made these countries to become emerging markets and their skills have become advantageous and are being exported all over the world (Cong and Wang, 2012), this is not the case with Nigeria. This paper therefore aims to examine why Nigeria has failed to produce adequate manpower in the country, with the large number of universities (Federal, State as well as Private) and other skills development institutions established in the country. Skills shortages and mismatches abound in the industrial and service sectors and over 60 per cent of the labour force is classified as unskilled and untrained in Nigeria (Ahmed Rufai, 2012; Industrial Training Fund/UNIDO, 2016). An issue of concern in this paper is how the increasing levels of poverty and unemployment, and the country’s challenge in developing skilled human capital could be addressed.

Some analysts have argued that national industrial skills development is of utmost importance to Nigeria’s quest for development (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2009; Gyang, 2011; Ogundele and Abiola, 2012; Ogbunaya and Udoudo, 2015; Akanbi, 2017; Rufai, 2020). The multiplier effects of skilled manpower for a society is far beyond physical employment and economic growth but manifest in several aspects of the social life of the people. These results are consistent across a wide range of countries, confirming that skills have a profound relationship with economic and social outcomes across a wide range of contexts and institutions (OECD, 2012a; Ghalandarzahi and Safdarie, 2012; Perepelkin, Perepelkina and Morozova, 2016). Skills are keys to tackling inequality, promoting social mobility and inclusive growth (Cong and Wang, 2012; OECD, 2012a). However, while investments in basic education and skills have positive correlations with economic development in other parts of the world, the experience is not the same in Nigeria. The question raised in this paper is: Why has inadequate skilled human resource remained a problem in many sectors in Nigeria despite the country’s efforts at ensuring skills and human resource development. Employing a thematic discourse analysis, the main finding in this paper is that several problems confronting the educational sector and other skills development institutions particularly with regards to TVET in Nigeria, have triggered poverty and unemployment in Nigeria. The paper concludes that issues of poverty and unemployment in Nigeria (which retards the country’s development efforts) will

be ameliorated if all stake-holders in the educational sector and skills development institutions work towards strengthening and repositioning TVET in the country.

## 2. Theoretical and Empirical Literature

### 2.1 *The Salient issues of Poverty and Unemployment*

Poverty has been defined by different scholars, writers and agencies from different perspectives, as such there is no unified definition of the concept. However, the most conventional approach for defining poverty is to measure it in monetary term, by comparing an individual's income or consumption with some defined threshold below which they are considered to be poor (World Bank, 2005; World Vision, 2020). The United Nations (2017:63-85) notes that often poverty is defined in relative or absolute terms. Absolute poverty measures poverty in relation to the amount of money necessary to meet basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. Relative poverty defines poverty in relation to the economic status of other members of the society. People are poor if they fall below prevailing standards of living in a given societal context.

Ravellion and Bidani (1993:3) look at poverty as the inability to have command over basic needs of life such as clothing, food, shelter, among other things. It should be noted that the inability of individuals to access these basic needs has negative consequences on their physical and socio-psychological wellbeing. Poverty, however, is not about money alone, it includes issues of access to services such as health care and education, marginalization and exclusion (World Vision, 2020). Poverty represents a socio-psychological state that is undesirable (Jiboku and Jiboku, 2009). It is an undesirable state one can find himself in because of its multiplier effects that are negatively inclined. Socially, poverty tends to alienate an individual from others. The poor has little relationship with their fellows. A poor person does not see himself or herself fitting with others and as a result does not see himself or herself as having ideas that are relevant to the development of society (Mood and Jonsson, 2016). With an individual's partial self-ostracization from the society, avenues for empowerment which can emanate from different interactions and associations are lost. Contributions that the poor ought to make in decision making that relates to their wellbeing are made by others who may not fill the pinch of the shoes like they would have ordinarily felt (Sida, 2002). Among several reasons adduced for poverty are an exorbitant cost of living as a result of inflation, high rate of unemployment, government's failure to provide basic social amenities, early and child marriages, ill-health, lack of storage facilities, crude implements, reckless spending and above all illiteracy, and low level of education (Abimbola, Orembi and Adekeye, 2005; Ajakaiye and Olomola, 2003; Odumosu et al., 2003).

On the other hand, unemployment is the condition where a person who is educated or uneducated is without work in order to earn a living (Agaba, 2018). The International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2019a) states that "persons in unemployment are defined as all those of working age who were not in employment, carried out activities to seek employment during a specified recent period and were currently available to take up employment given a job opportunity" (ILO, 2019:6). Okafor (2011:361) defined unemployment simply as describing a condition of people who are without jobs. This condition is prevalent among youths in Nigeria who constitute a majority of the population. As such youth employment has been described as the "conglomerate of youths with diverse background, willing and able to work, but cannot find any" (Okafor, 2011:361). Drawing from these definitions, it is possible to deduce that unemployment does not have to do only with those that are educated and possessed necessary certificates, the uneducated and unskilled individuals are also affected (Agaba, 2018). In Nigeria, the unemployment rate has increased as many graduates churned out from the different universities are without jobs. Even so, while some of the graduates who applied for the white-

collar jobs were subjected to different forms of screening processes before they were offered employment, others among the applicants were described derogatorily as unemployable after four years of rigorous training obtained from the universities. With their university degrees, some graduates have remained unemployed for many years while a few others are engaged in menial jobs and other ‘undeserving’ jobs (which is tantamount to underemployment) in order to survive (Sobowale, 2015). Okafor (2011:359) notes that many youths who ordinarily would have been productively engaged in some enterprise are engaged in hawking on the Nigerian streets in order to make ends meet. Even the self-employed individuals experience several challenges in the country due to inadequate infrastructure required for them to carry on in their trades (Okafor, 2011; Akande, 2014).

It is important to highlight some forms of unemployment which have been identified in literature.

- *Cyclical unemployment* occurs when there is lack of demand for labour as a result of the fact that the economy is not viable enough to provide jobs for everyone who wants to work. It is found during periods of economic recession or very sluggish economic growth. Firms cut back on their production and engage fewer workers or lay off workers (Agaba, 2018; Skenderi and Uka, 2015).
- *Structural unemployment* arises as a result of change of the structure of the economy and the labour market cannot provide jobs for everyone that seeks employment. It also happens as a result of labour demand and supply mismatch (Skenderi and Uka, 2015).
- *Frictional unemployment* implies that some people are between jobs. Some leave one job to look for a better one while some others have just entered the labour market (Skenderi and Uka, 2015). According to Agaba (2018:202), frictional unemployment occurs between the time an individual is searching for a job and the time such individual finds one. It is a temporary condition (Adesina, 2013). It is like a structural unemployment but it is short run in nature while structural unemployment has lasting effect (Akeju and Olanipekun, 2014).
- *Classical unemployment* takes place when real wage for a job are kept above the equilibrium or market clearing level. When this happens the number of job seekers tends to exceed the available job vacancies (Agaba, 2018). Voluntary employment as the name implies is attributed to an individual’s decision not to take a job (Agaba, 2018).
- *Seasonal unemployment* occurs because work cannot continue throughout an entire period. It could be due to lack of demand for manufactured goods, weather conditions and so on (Skenderi and Uka, 2015).
- *Residual unemployment*, according to Adesina (2013:148) is caused by personal factors such as old age, physical or mental disability, poor work attitudes and inadequate training”.
- *Disguised unemployment or underemployment* is a situation where an individual is not in full employment making full use of his/her skills and abilities. Such employment could be part-time (Adesina, 2013:148). According to Dhanani (2004:22), “underemployment includes all individuals who worked less than normal hours and who, in addition, wanted to work more hours”.

Poverty and Unemployment are global problems. However, they remain much more endemic among Third World Countries, particularly those in Africa with rising cases in Nigeria (Okafor, 2011; Sileika and Bekeryte, 2013). Different studies have found a strong connection with poverty and unemployment and establish that both variables reinforce each other. In other words, poverty is a social problem partly caused by unemployment and unemployment leads

to, and worsens poverty (Sileika and Bekeryte, 2013; Udeh, Okoroafor and Ihezue, 2013; Okorie and Anowor, 2017). The seeming link between poverty and unemployment shows how each variable affects the other since countries recording high unemployment rates especially in the double digit are bedevilled with high rates of poverty (Egunjobi, 2014).

Scholars have identified that issues of poverty and unemployment (which has been seen to take an increasing dimension in form of youth unemployment) pose threats to the peace, stability and development of nations in different dimensions and this calls for concerted efforts to manage and address them (Egunjobi, 2014; Nwagwu, 2014; Omoju and Terfa, 2014; Olotu, Salami and Akeremale, 2015; Usman, 2015; Okorie and Anowor, 2017). Okafor (2011:362) asserts that “unemployment has attendant social, economic, political and psychological consequences”. Jiboku and Jiboku (2019) associated poverty, with its trend of unemployment to electoral violence and democratic failures. The effects are bad governance, bribery and corruption, political and social instability. Poverty and unemployment negatively affect security and national economic development. For instance, these problems have been associated with the Boko Haram crisis in Nigeria and other ethno-religious conflicts involving a large number of youths (Udeh, Okoroafor and Ihezue, 2013; Ighodalo, 2012; Onapajo and Uzodike, 2017; Evans and Kelikume, 2019; Elem, 2020). Poverty and unemployment have also been connected to negative social vices such as prostitution (Alobo and Ndifon, 2014), crime (Sileika and Bekeryte, 2013) including “rape, kidnapping, murder, burglary, fraud, terrorism, robbery, cyber-crimes, bribery and corruption, money laundering and so on” (Oguntunde, Ojo, Akagbue and Oguntunde, 2018:1242).

A recurring cause of poverty and unemployment in literature (apart from other reasons provided), is the lack of relevant skills and scholars have advanced skills acquisition and entrepreneurship as measures to empower individuals and address these challenges (Ahmed Rufai, 2012; Akande, 2014; Egunjobi, 2014; Jiboku and Jiboku, 2019; Rufai, 2020). The issue of skills development needs to be given priority attention not only because of the centrality of skills in development discourses but also the demands and challenges which a fast globalising world presents to all nations and their peoples. This issue is further expatiated with the Human Capital Theory in the next section in this article.

## ***2.2 Human Capital Theory***

The fundamental role of human capital for socio-economic transformation is well espoused in the literature (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961; Ogunade, 2011; Keita, 2016). Conceptually, the foundation of human capital is based on knowledge and skills acquired by an individual through education, vocational training or other learning activities (Kwon, 2009). Human capital implies investments that are made in people or that people make in themselves to improve their creative potentials or skills, empower themselves in the labour market and by extension increase productivity (Asaju, Kajang and Anyio, 2013; World Economic Forum, 2016). In effect, training and capacity building measures invested in people (employees) for better productivity are all embodiments of human capital. Frank and Bernanke (2007:355) explain that human capital is “an amalgam of factors such as education, experience, training, intelligence, energy, work habits, trustworthiness, and initiative that affect the value of a worker’s marginal product”.

The concept of human capital has been used by scholars in different ways and is subject to diverse interpretations and applications. However, the focus in this paper is on Gary S. Becker’s perspective. Becker’s (1964, 1975, 1993) work titled: “*Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis with Special References to Education*” analysed the concept of human capital within the context of the labour market and viewed employees to be of prime importance in wealth creation, economic prosperity and the survival of society. Arguing from the same perspective and emphasising the core importance of human capital, Schultz (1961:3) stated that

to discuss social and economic growth and development outside the concept of human capital would be as paradoxical as to discuss the former Soviet Union without the doctrine of Karl Marx. Human capital is similar to what Marx (1890) referred to as the infrastructure of society upon which the other superstructures rest (see, Woods, 2013). It serves as the foundation for societal transformation. Schultz (1961:1) observes that even though it is obvious that people acquire useful skills and knowledge, many are not conscious that these skills and knowledge are a form of capital. He emphasised that this capital is a substantial part of a product of deliberate investment that has helped the growth of Western societies at a much faster rate than conventional (non-human) capital, and that its growth may well be the most distinguishing feature of the Western economic system (see also Porter, 1990; Perepelkin, Perepelkina and Morozova, 2016). For developing countries, therefore, Schultz (1961), Kwon (2009), Gyang (2011), Rufai (2020) and other scholars advocate investment in human capital as a way of enhancing the quality of human efforts for improvement in productivity.

Both Becker (1964) and Schultz (1961) agree that investments in education, training and skills developments generate externalities for firms and they conclude that such investments remain the most distinguishing feature of the modern economic system. Without training and improvement in skills, there would only be manual work and many, except for those who have inherited property, would be poor. As Schultz (1961:16) asserts, “the man without skills and knowledge is leaning terrifically against nothing”. Becker (1964:30-31) notes also that many workers increase their productivity by learning new skills and perfecting old ones while on the job. On-the-job Training, therefore, is a process that raises future productivity. Skills acquisition is another form of job security, and Becker (1964:31-40) observed that employees with specific training have less incentive to quit, and firms have less incentive to retrench them than employees without specific skills or general training, which implies that quit and layoff rates are directly related to the level of training and skills acquired.

In essence, the acquisition of skills has multiplier effects on the employees who have been trained to improve their efficiency on the job. On the flip side, lack of skills portends grave consequences for the society (African Union Commission, Directorate of Information and Communication, 2017). For instance, this arguably, accounts for poverty, unemployment and associated criminal activities in the Nigerian society such as the Niger Delta. The Boko Haram Terrorism ravaging the North East of the country that is accredited to be the poorest region in Nigeria, could also be the aftermath of lack of skills, unemployment and poverty. Development of skills especially of the youth might be a sustainable approach to a lasting peace necessary for development in Nigeria (Ladipo, Akhuemonkan and Raimi, 2013; Ayonmike, Okwelle and Okeke, 2015; Ezenwafor, 2015; Okoye and Arimonu, 2016). Human capital is seen by Ghalandarzahi and Safdarie (2012:164) as a prerequisite for development because the extent of growth and rate of development depends on the quality and quantity of an efficient workforce. Human capital provides a springboard for change and improvement, optimises the use of physical and tangible capital, increases the efficiency of production, and accelerates the rate of economic growth (Ghalandarzahi and Safdarie, 2012; Agabi and Ogah, 2010; Olaniyan and Okemakinde, 2008). The Human Capital Theory is useful because of its strength in analysing the importance of training and skills development in the socio-economic transformation of any country. In this paper, human capital theory is used as an analytical tool for understanding Nigeria’s skills situation as well as advancing the repositioning of TVET in efforts of the government to address the skills challenge.

### **3. Data and Methods**

#### ***3.1 Data description***

This is a theoretical paper and based on desk research. Secondary data were used in analysing scholarly arguments on the following discourses: Education; Skills development through TVET; Challenges and potentials of TVET for achieving socio-economic development and technological transformation with particular reference to Nigeria. Data were obtained from relevant texts; journal articles; conference, workshop and seminar reports and institutional lectures. Secondary data obtainable from reliable internet sources were also used. Secondary data are compiled data that are now easily accessible for research purposes. It is an acceptable approach to undertake the use of secondary data in social research and this type of data allows for flexibility in utilisation. However, systematic procedure and evaluation must be guided (Johnston, 2014). The authors ensured the currency of information employed in this paper by selecting journal articles, books chapters and institutional documents up to the year 2020. In addition, data incorporated in this paper were those of scholars from developed and developing countries who have written and published their works on credible national and international journals. The journal articles and book chapters are those of high repute scholars, mostly academics who are experts in their different Institutions. These scholars are experienced and have contributed extensively on issues of education, skills, skills development and training, human capital formation and development, among others. They have also facilitated various national and international conferences, workshops and seminars and have promoted scholarship in their areas of expertise across various parts of the world.

In addition, the institutional documents (both national and international) from which data were extracted were those of the United Nations, World Bank, African Union Commission, International Labour Organisation, National Bureau of Statistics, and Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). These Institutions have, over the years, been concerned with skills development and human capital development issues and challenges and have contributed immensely to charting way forward for improvement in different countries.

#### ***3.2 Data analysis Tool***

The paper undertook a thematic discourse analysis. Its approach was descriptive and analytical. Discourse analysis is a “methodology for analysing social phenomenon that is qualitative, interpretive and constructionist” (Hardy et al. 2004:19). The interest in undertaking discourse analysis is exploring social reality and, in doing so, focusing on the relation between text and context. It enabled the researchers to connect the issues examined in this paper with previous discourses. Also, data collected from various sources were subjected to expansive and extensive reviews with the use of content analysis as a veritable tool of data analysis adopted in many studies based on the qualitative research methodology. Content analysis, according to Hsieh and Shannon (2005), is “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns”.

### **4. Data Analysis and Discussion**

#### ***4.1 TVET as a Strategy for Skills Development***

The enormous contribution of education to the collective development and well-being of individuals and nations is well documented. Studies suggest that education is the key that



unlocks individual and group potentials. It opens up individuals' thinking faculties, transforms individuals and, by extension, the society (Odukoya, Bowale and Okunlola, 2018; Faiz, 2019). Education creates an avenue for every child to reach its potential to lead a productive, healthy life and to acquire a decent job (OECD, 2012b). According to Bloom (2014:60), "education also promotes the ability to learn new skills and adapt to new circumstances, the need for which is heightened in a rapidly changing world."

This paper emphasizes Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET). According to the United Nations, Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (2001) Revised Recommendation concerning Technical and Vocational Education (2001), "technical and vocational education is used as a comprehensive term referring to those aspects of the educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences, and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life". Technical and vocational education according to this international organization is further understood to be:

- (a) "An integral part of general education;
- (b) A means of preparing for occupational fields and for effective participation in the world of work;
- (c) An aspect of lifelong learning and a preparation for responsible citizenship;
- (d) An instrument for promoting environmentally sound sustainable development;
- (e) A method of facilitating poverty alleviation".

Technical Vocational Education and Training is a special form of education and training because it combines the following: technical education, vocational education, vocational training, on-the-job training, and apprenticeship training or any of the combination of these forms (Tripney and Hombrados, 2013). Despite the combination of the terms - technical and vocational education, they are different in form and content. Vocational Education (VE) as the name implies denotes skill based programs which are intended for the acquisition of skills at lower level of education and focuses on exact vocations for entry into defined workplace (Okoye and Arimonu, 2016). It is considered suitable for the following professions: automobile mechanics, plumbers, electricians and other similar vocations (Cong and Wang, 2012). On the other hand, Technical Education (TE) is a training that facilitates acquisition of practical skills, applied technical skills and basic scientific knowledge that would empower students for workplace/industry after graduation (Ladipo, Akhuenonkan and Raimi, 2013; Okoye and Arimonu, 2016). Technical education, Okoye and Arimonu (2016:113) observe, contributes to fields ranging from electrical and electronics technology, metal work technology, mechanical/automobile technology, building technology, woodwork technology, and others. The Nigerian revised National Policy on Education looks at technical vocational education as that aspect of education which leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge relevant for survival especially in this new age of technological advancement (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004).

The aim of TVET is to encourage what Cong and Wang (2012:68) describe as "application-oriented talents that have related technical theoretical knowledge and practical ability". Nwogu and Nwanoruo (2011), Egbri and Chukwuedo (2013), Ladipo, Akhuenonkan and Raimi (2013); Ayonmike, Okwelle and Okeke (2015); Ezenwafor (2015), Okorafor and Nnajiifo (2017); Oladejo (2019) and other scholars in their different studies have identified that TVET is that form of education that leads to development of practical skills. Those who acquire such skills would not find it difficult to be gainfully employed in a chosen occupation. TVET will make an individual to become self-reliant and hence contribute to overall national development (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2009). Okoye and Okwelle (2013:134) emphasize that:

*TVET is the form of education that advocates development of the head (knowledge), training of the hand (dexterity) and enriching the heart (consciousness and painstaking) – the 3Hs. TVET is a total deviation from the previous emphasis on 3Rs – reading, writing and arithmetic, which was fundamentally a form of credentialising entry into elite status with its graduates/products roaming about seeking for the non-existing white-collar jobs.*

The UNESCO-UNEVOC (2006:11) has emphasized that the impact of technology as well as the transformation of different sectors such as agriculture, fishing, forestry, industry, mining and even the service sectors into knowledge based sectors in most developed countries is a pointer that those who would operate in these sectors need targeted education and training to be able to operate computer-controlled equipment. Thus, with the demand for more skills as a result of technological revolution and the challenges posed by a knowledge and information-based economy, there is an increasing demand for skilled labor. These factors are also responsible for the disparities of wages of skilled and unskilled labor (Cong and Wang, 2012). Some of the consequences of this situation are the skills-gap scenario, skills shortages and skills mismatches experienced in the world of work (International Labor Organization, 2019b). This is particularly the scenario in many African countries (African Union Commission, Directorate of information and Communication, 2017). Okoye and Arimonu (2016:114) point out for instance, that “in Nigeria, the too much emphasis on university education has always reduced the economic opportunities of those who are more work oriented than academics”. This again directs our attention to the issue of TVET which many scholars and analysts agree has not been accorded the priority attention it deserves in Nigeria (Yusuf and Soyemi, 2012; Ladipo, Akhomonkan and Raimi, 2013; Ezenwafor, 2015; Okoye and Arimonu, 2016; Okorafor and Nnajiifo, 2017). These scholars are among those who argue that while several empirical studies have established a positive nexus between human capital and national development through specialized education like TVET, in Nigeria, this form of education and training is confronted with a lot of problems.

#### ***4.2 TVET Approach for Socio-Economic Growth and Development***

Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is widely recognized as a vital strategy for the socio-economic growth and technological development of nations (Yusuf and Soyemi, 2012; Ladipo, Akhomonkhan and Raimi, 2013; Tripney and Hombrados, 2013; Ayonmike, Okwelle and Okeke, 2015; Ezenwafor, 2015; Ogbunaya and Udoudo, 2015). This is evidenced by the experiences of developed countries of the West, as well as East and South-East Asia, Russia, India and China (Ladipo, Akhomonkhan and Raimi, 2013; Cong and Wang, 2012). The wide acceptance of the usefulness and impact of TVET is also portrayed by its prominence on developmental agenda of different nations (both developed and developing) and its inclusion as a topical issue at Conferences, Think-tanks and Workshops organized to deliberate on issues about development both at national, regional and global levels in recent times. In particular, the needs, demands and challenges of a progressing globalization era have made TVET a matter of urgency for nations, and have heightened the imperative of human capital formation as an economic imperative (Cong and Wang, 2012). There are several factors responsible for this development. For instance, the UNESCO-UNEVOC (2006:10) assert that the labor market is undergoing the transformation from the industrial age to the information age. With this trend, there would not only be job shift, but also the need for retraining and dislocation of workers. Hence, a worker who hopes to maintain his/her skill and competencies in the labor market and

sustain his/her employment needs more training to update skills. Again, Cong and Wang (2012:67) draw attention to the competition in economic markets which has become more intense in a rapidly globalizing world. This phenomenon pushes the demand for expertise and high-quality workforce in various fields of the whole society making new round of development of vocational education imperative. UNESCO (2016:7) asserts that TVET can improve responsiveness to changing skill demands by companies and communities; it can increase productivity and increase wage levels.

There is a growing literature on the vital role of education and skills development through specialized education like TVET in promoting economic growth and development of nations (Yusuff and Soyemi, 2012; Ladipo, Akhuesonkan and Raimi, 2013; Maclean et al, 2013; Ayonmike, Okwelle and Okeke, 2015; Okorafor and Nnajofo, 2017). Yusuf and Soyemi (2012), Tripney and Hombrados (2013), Ogbunaya and Udoudo (2015) and others emphasize that TVET has been recognized by governments of different countries as a tool for empowering people with practical job skills especially the youth not only to enable them explore different job opportunities but also for them to be self-employed and in turn contribute to national socio-economic development. In addition, UNESCO (2016:7) identify that “in ensuring that skills gained are recognized and certified, TVET can also offer skills development opportunities for low-skilled people who are under or unemployed out-of-school youth and individuals not in education, employment and training (NEETs)”. Following these perspectives, TVET plays a critical role in ensuring peace and social stability in nations as it will assist in mitigating the negative socio-political and economic consequences of increasing levels of unemployment and poverty. As such, governments and policy makers in different countries are carrying out different reforms in their educational sectors in order to enhance TVET. Hollander and Mar (2009:4) cautions, however, that it may be difficult to explore these potentials of TVET if for instance, there is no labor market to absorb TVET graduates and provide them with decent work.

Instructively, the World Bank (2018) identified that “over the last two decades, sub-Saharan African countries experienced significant growth as a result of the rapid transformations and foreign investments which helped boost the demand for greater technological skills”. This demand is yet to be met as the World Bank noted that there is large gap in the demand and supply of technical and vocational skills in these countries and that the shortage of an adequately educated workforce identified by industries is a major obstacle to further growth and development. This is the scenario in Nigeria. Despite the country’s enormous natural and material resources which could be explored for economic development, Nigeria is still struggling with achieving development objectives and continues to grapple with increasing levels of poverty with its attendant tendencies of unemployment and illiteracy. The country also has a large number of out of school children and adults with limited or no skills (World Bank, 2015; Industrial Training Fund/UNIDO, 2016). These negative trends have been associated with different internal political conflicts and social instability experienced in the country. With a large number of universities (Federal, State as well as Private) and other skills development institutions established in Nigeria to produce adequate manpower for the country, skills shortages and mismatches abound in the industrial and service sectors and over 60 per cent of the labor force is classified as unskilled and untrained (Ahmed Rufai, 2012). This is as a result of the kind of education that have been passed on in the different classrooms apart from the technical knowledge and practical skills required in the world of work.

Different scholars observe with concern the problems confronting the educational sector and other skills development institutions particularly, with regards to TVET in Nigeria which have led to failure of graduates to secure employment amidst other challenges (Yusuf and Soyemi, 2012; Egbri and Chukwuedo, 2013; Ayonmike, Okwelle and Okeke, 2015; Akanbi,

2017). These problems are pointers that Nigeria is yet to benefit from the potentials of TVET and reveal further particular missing-links in Nigeria's education and skills development agenda which are unpacked in this paper.

### ***4.3 TVET: The Experience of Nigeria***

Nigeria, like most nations of the world has acknowledged the role of TVET in enhancing technological transformation and sustainable development (Ezenwafor, 2015; Akanbi, 2017; Okorafor and Nnajiifo, 2017). This is demonstrated by the good intentions of successive Nigerian governments in putting in place policy and institutional frameworks to ensure skills development through TVET. However, scholars, policy analysts, some national and international agencies which handle issues related to TVET observe that the country is yet to reap the potentials of TVET with increasing records of illiteracy, unemployment and poverty (World Bank, 2018; UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2019, African Union Commission Directorate of Information and Communication, 2017).

Nwogu and Nwanoruo (2011), Yusuff and Soyemi (2012) and Okorafor and Nnajiifo (2017) and others state that vocational technical education is a very important aspect of the Nigeria's formal educational system under the 6-3-3-4 program. At post-secondary/tertiary levels, technical and vocational colleges, polytechnics, monotronics and universities have been the institutional structures established to enhance the country's technical growth and development (Yusuff and Soyemi, 2012). Accordingly, the Federal Republic of Nigeria Report of the Vision 2020 National Technical Working Group on Education (2009), highlight that formal vocational education starts after Basic Education with three years of Technical Colleges or more recently, the Vocational Enterprises Institutions (VEIs), while the majority is found in non-formal training obtainable in Craft Vocational Schools, Skills Development Centers, as well as open Apprenticeship Workshops spread across the country. In Nigeria's educational system, the quality assurance agencies for TVET include the National University Commission (NUC), and National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), National Business and Technical Education Board (NABTEC). While the NUC's roles include the accreditation, monitoring and evaluation of universities programs, infrastructural facilities, teaching and non-teaching staff, and instructional materials, the NBTE performs similar task as that of NUC to polytechnics, technical colleges, and other certificate awarding TVET providers (Ayonmike, Okwelle and Okeke, 2015).

Notwithstanding, while studies have dwelt extensively on the socio-economic development and technological progress achieved by nations through TVET, some scholarly work have focused on the experience of developing African countries like Nigeria (which possess enormous natural and material resources) in promoting TVET in a fast globalizing technologically driven world. As such, Ahmed Rufai (2012), Egbri and Chukwuedo (2013), Ladipo, Akhuemonkan and Raimi (2013:16), Okoye and Arimonu (2016), Odukoya, Bowale and Okunlola (2018) and others assert that despite the relevance of TVET in Nigeria, this form of education, although embedded in the country's education policy, is yet to receive the prioritization which it deserves. In essence, TVET in Nigeria is confronted with different social, political and operational challenges (Okorafor and Nnajiifo, 2017; Odukoya, Bowale and Okunlola, 2018). Ladipo, Akhuemonkan and Raimi (2013) and Yusuf and Soyemi (2012) note that the first challenge affecting TVET is the poor perception of TVET by parents and wards. Several individuals view vocational education as a special education intended for drop-outs and less intelligent learners/people.

Ahmed Rufai (2012), Egbri and Chukwuedo (2013) and Ladipo, Akhuemonkan and Raimi (2013) identify problems of ill-equipped laboratories/workshop, inadequate tools and equipment and gross infrastructural deficiencies in technical colleges and Vocational Enterprise

Institutions (VEIs) culminating in poor skill acquisition. These have affected the actual functioning of skills development institutions and have also limited the learners' capacities in acquiring practical skills required for securing employment. Furthermore, Ahmed Rufai (2012), Ladipo, Akhuemonkan and Raimi (2013) and Okoye and Arimonu (2016) state that the problems affecting TVET in Nigeria range from development of policies which are not tailored or in line with the country's needs and challenges; in essence, the design of curricula that are not targeted towards realistically addressing the mismatch between training and labor market skill demand and problem of effective curriculum implementation. There is also the issue of embezzlement of fund meant for educational development purposes, lack of teacher motivation, poor funding, brain drain, poor staff training, leadership problem and bribery and corruption (Okoroma, 2006; Ahmed Rufai, 2012; Ladipo, Akhuemonkan and Raimi 2013; and Okoye and Arimonu, 2016).

Scholars lament the lack of follow-up and continuity of government policies in Nigeria and frequent change of government as part of the critical challenges facing the education sector in Nigeria (Okoroma, 2006; Ahmed Rufai, 2012; Nwogu and Nwanoruo, 2011). For instance, Odukoya, Bowale and Okunlola (2018:3) observe that the Nigerian government came up with the 9-3-4 system of education while the 6-3-3-4 system was not fully implemented. Ladipo, Akhuemonkan and Raimi (2013:19) state pointedly that at a point in time, technology education (TE) was separated from science education (SE). Then, sudden policy reversal led to a merger of TE and SE as Science and Technology Education (STE). The implication of embedding TVET under science education is believed to have undermined TVET subject vocations. Ayonmike, Okwelle and Okeke (2015) and Ezenwafor (2015) observe the acute shortage of competent TVET teachers/instructors; Ahmed Rufai (2012) and Nwogu and Nwanoruo (2011) note the issue of poor remuneration of vocational technical teachers while Yusuff and Soyemi (2012) decried poor supervision, monitoring and evaluation of TVET programs. In addition to these problems, Ahmed Rufai (2012), Yusuff and Soyemi (2012) and Odukoya, Bowale and Okunlola (2018) point to the ceiling on career progression of polytechnic staff, discrimination against graduates of technical schools and low enrolment at all levels of technical education. In addition, the pervasive nature of non-formal TVET in Nigeria which is the system of training of young boys and girls by self-employed artisans and technicians has been brought to the fore (Yusuf and Soyemi, 2012). For Ogbunaya and Udoudo (2015:143), TVET programs in Nigeria are ineffective and of very low quality.

## 5. Conclusion

The paper examined poverty and unemployment as salient issues that negatively affect the peace, stability and development of Nigeria. It argued that the rising rate of poverty and unemployment, particularly among the youth portend great danger for the Nigerian polity and furthered the position that Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) should be repositioned and strengthened as part of focused policies and concerted efforts aimed at redressing the rising trend.

The authors observed from empirical literature that technical and vocational skills are critical for development and technological advancement of nations and that skills generally contribute to national economies. Notwithstanding, TVET appears not to have been accorded priority attention in Nigeria. While the paper stressed that successive Nigerian governments have put in place policy and institutional frameworks to achieve national aspirations of education and skills development through TVET, this form of education is confronted with multifaceted problems. Importantly, the challenges facing TVET constitute missing-links in Nigeria's skills development agenda. The problems explain why the country is yet to benefit

fully from the deliverables of TVET and reflected in rising levels of illiteracy, unemployment, poverty, internal conflicts, political and social instability, among other problems.

The conclusion in this article is that Nigeria cannot afford to continue to neglect TVET and hope to make progress in reducing poverty and unemployment. Thus, there is the need for concerted actions aimed at improving the education sector generally and re-aligning missing-links in Nigeria's technical and vocational skills development agenda.

## 6. Recommendations

### 6.1 *Sincere commitment to the implementation of policies*

Nigeria is not lacking in policy; the problem lies in the area of implementation. Different policies formulated by successive governments aimed at reducing the hardships as a result of conditions of poverty and unemployment included: Accelerated Food Production Programs, Nigerian Agricultural and Cooperative Bank, Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Green Revolution, Agricultural Development Project (ADP), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), National Economic Reconstruction Fund (NERFUND) and National Poverty Eradication Program (NAPEP). These alleviation methods were set up in succession in order to take care of lapses and inadequacies of their predecessors. Since the return to democratic rule in May 1999, efforts of government has been made to reposition the Nigerian economy by implementing economic reforms and sound economic policies. The government has made efforts to restructure state enterprises; it introduced and implemented several reforms in different sectors of the economy; it put in place legislative, policy and institutional frameworks to rebuild the economy and ensure sound financial management. Measures to combat corruption and money laundering were also put in place (AU/APRM, 2009:142-149; Edo and Ikelegbe, 2014). President Olusegun Obasanjo's National Empowerment and Economic Strategy (NEEDS) initiative was meant to promote reforms. His successor, President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, introduced the Seven-Point agenda for Nigeria's development. President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan came up with his policy package tagged the Transformation Agenda which gave the people a lot of promises (Uche, 2019).

In the same dimension, the current Administration is also not taking the issue of poverty alleviation with levity, as existing measures on poverty reduction are being remodeled with more financial vigour under the National Social Investment Programmes (NSIP) such as the N-Power programmes (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2016). Therefore, the relevant policies aimed at poverty and unemployment reduction and those on technical vocational skills development need to be revisited and implemented with pragmatism as a way of filling the existing gaps in skills development. The governments at all levels need to be actively involved in improving TVET. There is need for adequate funding, supervision and coordination of the policies and programmes of the country's skills development institutions and stakeholders. While the efforts of the Federal Ministry of Trade and Investment through the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) is commendable, more Industrial Skills Centres of ITF need to be established in different parts of the country to focus on training of adults with tertiary educational qualifications.

### 6.2 *Improved funding for the education sector and TVET*

The Nigerian government should properly fund the education sector in line with the guidelines provided by UNESCO. Importantly, more funding is required to adequately equip the Technical Colleges to enable them to have state of arts equipment and facilities for training in line with the technology of the twenty-first century. The reality that stares Nigeria in the face is to urgently reform its education sector and revive its skills centers and TVET in line with global needs in order to develop the human capital that will be instrumental in developing local technology and promoting socio-economic development.

### ***6.3. Addressing issues of corruption and misappropriation of funds***

Tackling head on the issues of corruption and misappropriation of funds by the political leadership is important. These problems have continuously hindered Nigeria's socio-economic development. The funds which are improperly diverted by the state could properly be invested into priority areas such as education and skills development, improving infrastructures, among other legitimate areas.

### ***6.4 Increased enlightenment and sensitization***

There is need for reorientation of Nigerians to view technical vocational skills education and training as important and not for the less brilliant. As it is presently, technical schools are unattractive to many especially the literate ones in the Nigerian society. For the young ones who are just leaving secondary school, they need to be encouraged to go to Technical Colleges for acquisition of technical vocational skills to reduce the number of youths that roam about the streets who could be lured into engaging in unwholesome activities. Youth restiveness in different parts of the country would be arrested with TVET. The issue of the 'Almangiri' youth in the North with very little hope for the future will be turned around and the insurgency ravaging the North East of the country would have been stopped because a skilled individual will not be easily lured into the Boko Haram sect to boost their ranks and file in the insurgency.

### ***6.5 Incorporating and formalizing the informal apprenticeship system for training***

The informal apprenticeship system for training in different vocations could be incorporated and formalized for training of the youth to make them relevant in different vocations. This will require enactment of policy frameworks at the different levels of government, and with appropriate regulatory framework, a lot of revenue will accrue to the different tiers of government and reliance on craftsmen from neighboring countries would have been halted for national good.

Developing skills of the large population of the youth does not necessarily have to be limited to the formal educational levels. While formal education and training may be important, considering Nigeria's historical and colonial experiences, emphasizing formal educational setting based on attainment of specific academic level for training and skills development might exclude a substantial proportion of the Nigerian youth. Many of the youth in rural areas, townships and cities (for no fault of theirs but the socio-political and economic conditions in which they found themselves) are deprived of basic formal education (Jiboku, 2016; see also, Baah-Boateng, 2013). Therefore, training and skills development programs should emphasize employment generation, empowerment, and job creation. It should be realized that the government cannot provide jobs for all its citizens. In this respect, the informal apprenticeship skills development program needs to be revived and strengthened for the training of technicians and artisans to complement government efforts through the formal training institution.

### ***6.7 Suggestions for Future Research***

As this paper has shown, TVET is a viable strategy for Nigeria to achieve much needed sustainable development. There is therefore need for more studies to address persisting challenges in Nigeria's educational sector and skills development institutions. More scholarly attention and research could concentrate on coordination and harmonization of functions, policies and programs of the Nigerian government with those of other skills development institutions including the multinational corporations which claim to be involved in skills

development of their employees. The role of government institutions in monitoring and supervision of skills development programmes in the state needs to be explored.

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