

Technical and Vocational Skills (TVS): A Means of Preventing Violence among Youth in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Technical and vocational skills are an important tool for reducing violence among youth, especially in Nigeria, who face security challenges due to different kinds of violence. This paper focusses on the policies and programmes intended to provide youth with skills that can help them improve their life instead of engaging in violence. The paper also studies youth participation in violence. The study shows that youth in Nigeria participate in violence because of unemployment and economic pressure. These youth are mostly from poor families and are mostly used by others to achieve their own unlawful ambition. The data were collected from various secondary sources such as textbooks, journals and conference papers that were carefully reviewed. The results obtained from the literature revealed that youth are not committed, sensitised and mobilised to taking advantage of the opportunities available to them. The results also revealed that almost all the programmes meant to provide youths with skills have failed. Poverty alleviation programmes established to create jobs, self-employment and self-reliance have been unsuccessful. Therefore, alternatives must be provided to help the younger generations. Based on the literature reviewed, the paper discusses related issues and outcomes and ends with recommendations to improve the situation.

Keywords: Technical and Vocational Skills (TVS), violence, youth, Nigeria

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INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, the main discourse is youth participation in violence that has resulted in loss and damage to life and property, especially in recent years. It has been observed that youth are active participants in most violence (Atienza, Kaltenthaler, &

Baxter, 2016). Therefore, solutions to this problem must be explored in order to stop or minimise youth participation in violence so that they can be engaged in different activities in order to live a meaningful life. Violence among youth can be solved in many ways, but this paper focusses only on the provisions enabled by technical and vocational skills as a solution to violence, if properly imparted and put into practice.

According to Leff and Leff (2016), people are always challenged by feelings of disappointment, frustration and anger when their life seems to be fruitless or purposeless. Technical and vocational skills enable youth to deal effectively with idleness. They can prevent hostility, instil a sense of commitment, boost educational accomplishment and improve job prospects. In Nigeria, violence seems to be increasing day by day. Therefore, extensive research must be done to understand the root cause of violence, especially among youth, and to search for possible solutions to this grave problem. A census taken in 2006 gave the youth population as 54.6% of the total population. About 90% to 95% of violence is committed by youth, mostly from poor families (Atienzo et al., 2016). Every year, about 200,000 youth are murdered, both as victims and perpetrators (Taft & Haken, 2015).

Macmillan's dictionary (2016) defines violence as the use or application of physical force to harm or injure someone and damage property. The Violence Prevention Alliance (VPA) defined violence as "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened

or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development, or deprivation" (VPA, n. d.).

Violence can be physical, sexual or psychological, among others (Butchart, Mikton, Ward, & Donnell, 2015). Violence is grouped into three subtypes as follows: (a) Self-abuse or suicide, also called self-directed violence, is violence against oneself, where the individual is both victim and perpetrator; (b) Interpersonal violence, which is violence directed at individuals in the family, close partners and members of the same community; and (c) Collective violence, which refers to violence committed by large groups of individuals such as social, political or economic groups.

Youth, which is the period between childhood and adulthood, is also called adolescence (Gielen & Roopnarine, 2016). According to Bersaglio, Enns and Kepe (2015), the United Nations (UN) classifies youth as young people between the ages of 18 and 30. Youth constitute the most significant human resource potential that can contribute meaningfully to the whole development of a nation. They are the driving force of any society, being life force of the present day and the hope of the future. Fox and Thomas (2016) noted that youth are socially active and should be engaged in different activities that can make them productive in their various communities.

Technical skills are abilities and knowledge needed to perform specific tasks.

Many technical skills require training and capability to master. Vocational skills are skills that individuals acquire in a specific area of interest. Vocational skills are practice orientated rather than theory orientated. Individuals acquire vocational skills from hands-on experience (Alison, 2016).

METHODOLOGY

The study is archival, with research based on a review of the literature on the provisions of technical and vocational skills in Nigeria. The policies, institutions and programmes of technical and vocational skills were tracked in order to assess their progress. This paper reviewed the status of youth in terms of education and social commitment in communities. Thus, the methodology employed in collecting the required data was to examine secondary sources of data obtained from academic journals, conference papers, articles, textbooks and the Internet. The results obtained from a review of the literature are discussed below, and a conclusion is provided, together with recommendations for improvements.

Technical and Vocational Skills (TVS) as a Solution to Violence among Youth in Nigeria

Various research into technical and vocational skills (TVS) in Nigeria were conducted; however, this research focussed on finding solutions to violence among youth in Nigeria as enabled by TVS. The country is faced with different levels of violence that causes much damage to life and property and creates insecurity within

the whole nation. The literature review was conducted as follows: focus was placed on unemployed youth, policies on the ground for the implementation of TVS through Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes, institutions involved in TVS, poverty alleviation programmes and youth participation in different categories of violence.

The National Population Commission ('Nigeria unemployment rates', 2013) stated that half the population is made up of youth between the ages of 15 and 35. As the youth population grows, so does the unemployment rate. Unemployed youth numbered about 11.1 million in 2013. The government of Nigeria has developed policies and educational and training programmes through colleges and several parastatals with the objective of creating jobs for the huge number of unemployed youth in the country.

Nigerian policy on education (NPE, 2013) intends for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to be used as a comprehensive term in the provision of technology, practical skills and correct attitude, understanding and knowledge relevant to occupations in the various sectors of economic and social life. TVET covers technical colleges, Vocational Enterprise Institutions (VIEs) and National Vocational Qualification (NVQF).

TVET's objectives are as follows:

- a. To provide trained labour in the applied sciences, technology and business particularly at craft, advance craft and technical levels,

- b. To provide technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development, and
 - c. To provide training and impart the necessary skills to individuals for self-reliance that is done economically.
- students may specialise in any field such as engineering, environmental studies, health, agriculture etc.

In addition, a National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) was established in 1977. The board regulates and accredits all TVET programmes and institutions. It is also involved with the funding of polytechnics owned by the Nigerian government. Many students graduate from these institutions every year across the country.

According to the National Board on Technical Education (NTBE) (<http://www.nbte.gov.ng/>), everywhere in Nigeria, young people are out of employment or under-employed, having terminated their education too early or graduated with inadequate skills; thus, they are at high risk of economic marginalisation and social exclusion. The challenge is enormous, depending on how Nigeria can transform its youth into highly skilled, competent citizens.

Institutions such as technical colleges, polytechnics and universities are committed to providing technical education to youth (Olaitari, 2016). The institutions offer a formal programme of courses and learning experiences with study or career options, for basic academic and life skills, leading to academic attainment for career preparation and advancement to higher education. Professional skills may be obtained at degree, diploma and certificate levels, and

Vocational skills are acquired through vocational education and training based on practical or manual activities. The skills learnt are specifically related to a particular trade, occupation or vocation; these are occupation skills (Nita, Solomon, & Mihoreanu, 2016). In Nigeria, different organisations have been established for the development of vocational skills. The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) was considered in this paper as a case study. According to Olaitari (2016), the NDE was established in 1986 to look into vocational skills as a means to developing functional and marketable skills among unemployed youth in the county. The NDE (n. d.) operates different centres such as skill acquisition centers, school-on-wheels, and partnership in skill training, to mention but a few. The NDE provides informal skills such as craft work and also provides workshops to train unemployed youth in rural areas. Generally, the aim of the NDE is to provide technical and vocational training for unemployed youth, to equip youth with skills that would enable them to be self-employed or to gain wage employment and to make youth self-reliant.

The organisation trains youth in different skills under different industries such as agriculture, mechanical repairs, electronics, pharmaceutical etc. The NDE accommodates all youth ranging from academic dropouts to the unskilled and the physically challenged. It includes youth of

both genders and from urban and rural areas, engaging them in different programmes. However, Onah (2015) observed that the NDE has now remained an absolute tool since its inception in 1986. The youth population grows progressively, and so does unemployment, in spite of the existence of the NDE. Therefore, violence involving youth is still a problem.

According to Edet (2015), some poverty alleviation programmes were launched with the intention of empowering youths and providing employment. Among these programmes was Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) by the Directorate of Food, Road and Infrastructure (DIFRRI), which provided immediate jobs to participants interested in agriculture. Another was the Subsidiary Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) by the Youth Enterprise with Innovations in Nigeria (YOU-WIN). The programmes were meant to create job opportunity and reduce unemployment among youth but the majority of Nigerian youth are still unemployed. Unfortunately, many youth do not realise the importance of activities that can improve their life.

Agriculture is a sector full of opportunity. Nevertheless, youth avoid it. Akpan, Patrick, James and Agom (2015) reported that the majority of youth view agricultural activities as unattractive and lacking in essential economic inducements to improve their well-being; however, this perception is false owing to the fact that Nigeria is an agrarian society. Edet (2015) added that Nigerian farmers were

not sufficiently empowered themselves to know farming skills that can enable them to employ skilled youth in the sector. John, Benedict, Kanayo and Ekenechukwu (2016) pointed out that youth are not engaged in technology entrepreneurship to transform the relationship between the educational system and the labour market. They concluded that youth unemployment is a threat in Nigeria and constitutes a real danger to social, economic, political and industrial development.

Nigerian youth were found to be active participants in religious violence. Sampson (2012) identified religion as being at the centre of most conflicts in Nigeria and the rest of the world, which is one of the prime security challenges confronting the country. The majority of perpetrators of religious violence, especially in Nigeria, are youth. Manu (2015) reported that religious violence is mostly perpetrated by dissatisfied young men and unemployed graduates.

People need to be engaged in useful endeavour of one kind or the other. If youth are not committed and involved in meaningful activities, they are likely to become involved in violence. Abdullahi and Issah (2016) noted that youth violence is rampant in Nigerian urban cities as well as rural areas. Youth violence appears to be rooted, especially among the socially disadvantaged, where economic deprivation, poverty and youth underemployment are ingrained. Some youth form groups or gangs that engage in organised crime and violence, generating anxiety, reducing social unity and harming lives (Higginson et al., 2015).

Regardless of skills acquired by individuals, if there is no commitment or a lack of jobs, youths can still fall into violent activities. Ehinomen and Afolabi (2015) postulated that when youth are qualified and willing to work but are not able to find jobs they become frustrated. They added that either greed or a feeling of deprivation can lead to violence and crime. Youth who feel helpless and frustrated can be used by the corrupt, who channel them to crime in order to lay hold of unlawful gains for their own benefit. This suggests that there is a close relationship between unemployment and violence.

Another reason for youth involvement in violence is the shortage of technical teachers. According to Adavbiele (2013), there is a deficiency of skilled technical teachers in the country. He added that mastery of technical skills among students is poor. The shortage of technical teachers has a negative impact on students in terms of acquiring and practising knowledge in real-life situations. Technical skills can lead to jobs, allowing people to live as productive citizens. Nigeria, however, has neglected this aspect of education (Eze, Ezenwafor, & Obi, 2015). If society lacks skilled technicians such as bricklayers, laboratory and pharmacy technicians, electric and electronic technicians and skilled nurses, just to mention a few examples, the social and economic aspects of the country would be jeopardised and this could push youth to turn to violent and criminal activities.

Youth are the future of any society. To help them achieve their potential and

participate actively in the life of the nation through legal employment, those who cannot find jobs should be given technical and vocational skills training. This would make them marketable. Eze et al. (2015) observed that the high rate of unemployment among youth in Nigeria has increased youth restlessness, insecurity, violence and communal clashes. These activities seem to be perpetrated by jobless, unskilled and uneducated youth.

RESULTS

It appears that Nigeria has good technical and vocational skills (TVS) policies and programmes for younger generations. TVET objectives are achievable if they are implemented well. Indeed, TVS can turn youth away from violence. However, Nigerian youth, in spite of the government's stated intention to reduce unemployment among youth, are still heavily involved in violence and crime. The National Directorate of Employment (NDE), which was given the responsibility of training youth in vocational skills, seems to have failed in this endeavour.

The Nigerian government introduces many different programmes like DIFRRI, OFN, SURE-P and YOU-WIN in the attempt to solve the problem of unemployment, which is believed would minimise violence perpetrated by youth. However, violence perpetrated by youth seems to be increasing. This suggests that there is poor implementation of such programmes. Such programmes were created in different political eras and under different military regimes but did not help to generate youth

employment and empowerment. It is important for proper evaluation of these programmes.

Nigerian has both human and natural resources. If Nigerian youth can be trained in technical and vocational skills, they can be a great resource for the country and youth participation in violence and crime would be reduced. As an agrarian society, Nigeria is replete with agricultural opportunities for both skilled and unskilled youth. It would be a huge waste if youth are not trained in skills that can make them productive as Nigeria has about 11.1 million youth. These youth should be channeled away from crime and violence by placing them in gainful employment.

DISCUSSION

The literature revealed that the active participants in violence in Nigeria are youth (Akpan et al., 2015; Higginson et al., 2015; Abdullahi & Issah, 2016; Manu, 2016). None of these scholars reported that skilled youth are engaged and participated in any kind of violence in the country. Mostly, participation in violence is due to unemployment. To solve this problem, youth should be trained in technical and vocational skills so that they can find jobs.

A sluggish economy and unemployment are the principal triggers of violence in Nigeria (Eze et al., 2015; Abdullahi & Issah, 2016; Akpan et al., 2015). Nigeria's economy has been impoverished by corruption and mismanagement of public funds. This has led to unemployment, restlessness, frustration and violence among

its youth. This state of affairs has led to other factors like religious intolerance and violence (Sampson, 2012; Manu, 2016).

CONCLUSION

Nigeria has good policies for youths to be trained in skills that can disengage them from violence. However, these policies are not implemented well, leaving youth unskilled and therefore frustrated and unemployed (NBTE, 2016). The active participation in violence among Nigerian youth is due to lack of engagement, empowerment and proper implementation of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) policies and programmes. Empowering youths by training them in these skills would improve their productivity, leading to national progress. Poverty alleviation programmes have been unsuccessful because of the lack of skills training facilities and social services. A sluggish economy and unemployment are the major factors leading to youth violence in the county. However, if youth are taught appropriate practical skills that could empower them, they could be turned away from violence, solving this problem.

The following recommendations are suggested as a means of solving the problem of violence among Nigerian youth:

- a. Society stakeholders should sensitise youth to the importance of technical and vocational skills as a means for self-employment, self-reliance and independence so that they are not manipulated by unscrupulous persons who encourage them to commit violent

- and criminal acts to forward their own agenda.
- b. Poverty alleviation programmes for youth must be monitored to ensure proper implementation and productivity.
 - c. Youth rights and responsibilities must be recognised to encourage them to commit to meaningful and profitable activities.
 - d. Youth should be engaged through different meaningful and useful activities in school as part of the curriculum as well as through co-curricular activities.
 - e. There should be career guidance for youth, which should include awareness on the fruitlessness of violence by pointing out its consequences. The career master should point out that young people are precious assets that a country cannot afford to waste.
 - f. The government should provide the necessary resources including funding for youth empowerment programmes, and the creativity and innovations of youth should be recognised.
 - g. The national curriculum must be revised to include awareness training for youth that will expose them to the positive religious teaching.
 - h. TVET teachers should enhance their skill and knowledge by participating in seminars, workshops and training to stay well informed of recent developments in TVET in order to be better trainers for their students.

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