

REJUVENATING NIGERIA'S ECONOMY BY ENHANCING TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN GOMBE STATE.

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Abstract

This paper titled, "Rejuvenating Nigeria's Economy By Enhancing Technical Education in Gombe State", examined three purposes and answered three research questions. The study was descriptive survey which collected its data from a population of 100 technical teachers from the two technical colleges in Gombe State through a questionnaire titled, Rejuvenation through Technical Education (RtTE) structured on a four Likert-type scale from Highly Agreed to Highly Not Agreed. The data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation from a statistical software SPSS version 20. The result showed that Technical education is crucial for Nigeria's economic adaptability, providing practical skills that reduce unemployment by aligning with industry demands. The study also found that, Restructuring technical education in Nigeria is imperative to address the skills gap, as industry-specific knowledge acquired through such programs is essential for ensuring workforce competence. The study recommended that government should prioritize a comprehensive review and enhancement of technical education curricula in Government Science Technical Colleges in Gombe State to ensure they align with current industry demands and Integrate entrepreneurship education into the technical curriculum to instill an entrepreneurial mindset among students.

Keywords: Rejuvenating, Nigeria's Economy, Enhancing, Technical Education

Introduction

Nigeria, a country with immense potential and a burgeoning youth population, stands at a crucial juncture in its economic development. To unlock sustained growth and prosperity, there is a pressing need to prioritize and invest in technical education. Okafor and Helen (2018) noted that rejuvenating the Nigerian economy through a strategic focus on technical education is not merely a policy choice; it is a transformative imperative that can empower the workforce, foster innovation, and propel the nation towards sustainable development.

Jude and Olamide (2017) believed Nigeria's economic rejuvenation through technical education represents a transformative strategy aimed at addressing critical challenges and unlocking the nation's full potential. This initiative recognizes the pivotal role that technical education plays in fostering innovation, economic diversification, and sustainable development (Suleiman, 2019), Nigeria faces multifaceted challenges in its economic landscape, including high unemployment rates, dependence on oil revenues, and a growing need for skilled workers in emerging industries. Traditional education systems have often fallen short in equipping the workforce with the practical skills demanded by the evolving job market. To address these challenges, a paradigm shift towards prioritizing technical education is essential (Adebola, 2019).

Among the courses offered in tertiary institutions is vocational and technical, hence vocational and technical education is globally recognized for its role in preparing people for dynamic engagement in occupations of functional value and effective source of skilled workforce. Godwin and Ahmed (2017), described vocational and technical education as the form of education which

leads to the acquisition of practical and manipulative skills desired to produce and retain manpower. In another development, Okifo and Efe (2018) noted that vocational education or vocational education and training and/or technical training or retraining prepares learners for careers that are based in manual or practical activities, traditionally non-academic and totally related to a specific trade, occupation or vocation. It is a programme designed to equip learners with vocational skills for employment in various field of human endeavour.

This means that the programme enables an individual to learn about, explore and prepare for trade. It refers to systematic learning experiences which are designed to fit individual for gainful employment in recognized occupations and semi-skilled workers or technicians or subprofessionals. It includes guidance and counseling with the training and other instruction directly related to an occupation. It excludes programmes designed primarily to fit individuals for employment in occupations which are considered professional, require a bachelor's higher degree or are designed primarily as general education (Gordon & Akuste, 2019).

To further buttress the above, Tampa (2019), TVET programme involves the acquisition of skills and competencies that make an individual function productively in industrial and commercial occupations. In the words of ILO as opined by Jegede and Olamide (2019) vocational and technical education is a vehicle for the development of marketable and entrepreneurial skills and engineering of development Onyia (2019) deposited that technical education as the training of individual at the adult post-secondary and higher school level and highly skilled technicians. Similarly, Auwal (2017) has it that vocational and technical education as that education which provides students with "Life Skills" to become productive entrepreneurs as it engenders creative and innovative ideas, enlarge the economic pie, and increase personal freedom for entrance into employment in occupations which are defined as technical by industrial, scientific, commercial and government agencies.

Emmanuel (2019) stressed that, Emphasizing technical education in Nigeria aligns with global trends where knowledge-based economies thrive on skilled labor and advanced technological capabilities. By prioritizing technical education, Nigeria seeks to bridge the existing skills gap, ensuring that its workforce is equipped with the expertise needed to compete in a rapidly evolving global landscape.

The rejuvenation process involves strategic partnerships between government bodies, educational institutions, and industry stakeholders. Monbiot (2000), Collaborative efforts aim to tailor technical education curricula to meet industry demands, fostering a seamless transition for graduates into the workforce. This approach not only enhances employability but also fuels entrepreneurship, encouraging the creation of innovative solutions to address local and global challenges. Investments in state-of-the-art infrastructure and technology within educational institutions further underscore the commitment to revitalizing the economy. Upgrading facilities, providing modern equipment, and integrating cutting-edge technologies empower students to acquire hands-on experience, ensuring they are well-prepared for the demands of a technology-driven economy (Gabriel 2019, Mustapha 2018 and Uzoka 2017).

The Role of Technical Education in Economic Rejuvenation

The following are the role of Technical Education in economic rejuvenation as posited by James (2021), Musa (2019) and Gabriel (2019) ;

1. **Skill Development for Industry Relevance:** Technical education emphasizes practical, hands-on skills that align with the needs of industries. By fostering a workforce equipped with relevant technical competencies, Nigeria can bridge the existing skills gap and enhance its global competitiveness.
2. **Entrepreneurship and Innovation:** Technical education cultivates an entrepreneurial spirit by encouraging problem-solving and critical thinking. By nurturing innovation and

creativity, Nigeria can foster a culture of entrepreneurship, leading to the development of homegrown industries and the generation of employment opportunities.

3. **Diversification of the Economy:** The over-reliance on oil revenues has made Nigeria vulnerable to global market fluctuations. Technical education can play a pivotal role in diversifying the economy by promoting sectors such as technology, agriculture, renewable energy, and manufacturing.
4. **Global Collaboration and Investment:** A robust technical education system attracts global partnerships and investments. International collaborations can bring in expertise funding, and advanced technologies, further propelling Nigeria towards economic rejuvenation.

Need of Innovative techniques in school education system:

Nowadays all educational institutions strive to provide their students best quality education not only in urban but also in rural areas. Government technical colleges situated in rural areas are also using innovative techniques to enrich their students' knowledge and to make them confident. Below are some of the needs as put by Gabriel, (2021).

1. The teaching would be highly effective, if innovative techniques are used to teach students.
2. The innovative technique makes the teaching 'teacher centred' to 'student centric' and increases their participation in the classroom.
3. Interactive teaching methods improve the communication skill of students and also develop leadership qualities in the students.
4. Innovative techniques provide an effective support system to the teachers while teaching in the classroom.
5. Innovative techniques can play as an important tool while providing formal classroom teaching and motivational education to the students.

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria's economic landscape is marred by persistent challenges that hinder its growth and development. High unemployment rates, over-reliance on volatile oil revenues, and a widening gap between the skills of the workforce and industry demands underscore the urgent need for strategic interventions. The current state of technical education in the country faces significant limitations, including outdated infrastructure, infrastructure deficits in technical education institutions hinder the delivery of practical, hands-on learning experiences, limiting the effectiveness of these programs in preparing students for real-world challenges (Usman, 2019 and Jegede, 2021). Additionally, the lack of a systematic approach to curriculum development and industry collaboration leads to a disconnect between educational offerings and the ever-evolving needs of the job market, the inadequacy of technical education to nurture an entrepreneurial spirit and foster innovation and curricula that fail to keep pace with dynamic industry requirements. As a result, Nigeria is grappling with a skills gap that exacerbates youth unemployment and impedes the nation's ability to compete effectively in the global economy.

In light of these challenges, there is an urgent need for a comprehensive strategy to rejuvenate Nigeria's economy through technical education. Addressing the issues surrounding infrastructure, curriculum development, educator competency, and fostering effective public-private partnerships is paramount to unleashing the full potential of technical education in propelling Nigeria towards sustainable economic growth and global competitiveness, hence the need for the study.

Purpose of the study

The main aim of this paper is "Rejuvenating Nigeria's Economy By Enhancing Technical Education in Gombe State". Specifically, the study intends to;

1. To address technical education as a catalyst for fostering economic resilience in Nigeria
2. To address the pervasive skills gap in technical education in order to enhance Nigeria's global competitiveness
3. To promote innovation in technical education in order to drive economic diversification through targeted investment.

Research Questions

The following research questions guide the study;

1. How can technical education serve as a catalyst for fostering economic resilience in Nigeria?
2. What are the pervasive skills gap in technical education in order to enhance Nigeria's global competitiveness?
3. What are the innovations in technical education in order to drive economic diversification through targeted investment?

Methodology

A descriptive survey was adopted for this study research design, the choice was preferred for this research because it allows the analysis of various variables at a go and allows the researcher to give a description of conditions, variables, and situations and also gives the researcher a room for obtaining large data volume from a substantial population in an economical, very effective and efficient way by use of questionnaires (Erik & Marko, 2019).

Gombe state is located in the Sudan Savannah region of the country at the north-east of river Benue and east of Yankari Game Reserve bordering with Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno and Yobe states covering the total area of 52sq/km with a population of 268,000 at 2016 census. The approximate altitude of Gombe ranges from 400-500m above mean sea level. Topography is mainly mountainous, undulating and hilly to the southeast and open plains in the central north east, west and northwest (Bello, 2018). Gombe state is located between latitudes $10^{\circ}18'25.0''N$ and longitude $11^{\circ}10'29.6''E$. It shares common boundary with Akko LGA in the South and West; Yamaltu-Deba to the East and Kwami to the North. It is the capital of Gombe State and occupies an area of about 45km².

Population refers to a full set of objects, cases or individuals that have some similar observable features, (Mandy & Maggie, 2016). As well, Kombe and Tromp (2016) states, a population is a group of items, events, households, people, elements, and services under investigation for generalizing outcomes. The population included 100 teachers from two Government Science Technical Colleges within Gombe state (50 teachers from Government Science Technical Colleges Gombe and 50 teachers from Government Science Technical College Barundi drawn from the 5 departments in each technical college) and since the population was manageable, no sampling method was used.

The instrument for data collection was validated by three experts in technical education from all the departments in Federal College of Education (Techn) Gombe for face and content validation. Experts conveniently selected to assess the validity and reliability of the items observed and made necessary corrections and their corrections were adopted. A reliability coefficient (α) was calculated to be 0.86 using the Cronbach's Alfa

A questionnaire titled, "Rejuvenation through Technical Education (RtTE)" was designed by the researchers on a four point Likert type scale from Highly Agree to Highly Disagree. The Eighteen-item questionnaire was used to solicit responses from the respondents. The instrument covers items on state of rejuvenating Nigeria's economy through technical education.

The questionnaire was administered to the respondents with the help of two research assistants. Time was given to them to fill in their choices and assurance was given to them for utmost secrecy of their answers. At the end of the allotted time, all the questionnaires were collected signifying 100% return rate.

The data collected from the questionnaire were coded and captured into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 for Windows after which analysis was done to generate the descriptive and inferential statistics of the data gathered. Mean, Standard Deviation were used as the statistical tool for driving conclusion. Decision was taken to accept when the mean value $X \geq 2.50$ and when mean value is $X \leq 2.49$, that item statement will be reject, for all the research questions.

Results and Discussions

Research question 1; how technical education can serves as a catalyst for fostering economic resilience in Nigeria?

Table 1; Result showing how technical education serves as a catalyst for fostering economic resilience in Nigeria.

S/NO	Item statement	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Technical education provides practical skills crucial for navigating a changing economic landscape.	3.45	0.67	Agreed
2	Aligning educational programs with industry demands can effectively reduce unemployment rates.	3.05	0.54	Agreed
3	Strengthening technical education is essential for Nigeria to adapt to global economic shifts	3.60	0.56	Agreed
4	Technical education contributes to a resilient workforce capable of overcoming economic challenges.	3.01	0.79	Agreed
5	A focus on technical education is a strategic move for fortifying Nigeria's economic adaptability	3.56	0.78	Agreed
6	The practical skills acquired through technical education enhance overall employability	3.22	0-67	Agreed
Grand Mean		3.32	0.56	Agreed

Table 1 show the responses of teachers regarding how technical education serves as a catalyst for fostering economic resilience in Nigeria with grand mean = 3.32 and SD=0.56. The table revealed that the respondents agreed with all the items presented to them believing that Aligning educational programs with industry demands can effectively reduce unemployment rates, strengthening technical education is essential for Nigeria to adapt to global economic shifts and Technical education provides practical skills crucial for navigating a changing economic landscape.

The findings of this study is in consensus with what Adamu (2020) who opined that, Another perspective on how technical education serves as a catalyst for economic resilience in Nigeria lies in its ability to address specific challenges faced by the country. Technical education programs can be tailored to meet the needs of key sectors, such as agriculture, energy, and healthcare, which are crucial for sustainable development. By focusing on practical skills and industry-relevant knowledge,

technical education ensures that individuals are well-prepared to tackle real-world problems. This targeted approach not only enhances the overall productivity of the workforce but also contributes to the development of resilient and sustainable industries. Also agreeing with this finding, Gregory (2019) believed that, technical education fosters a culture of adaptability and continuous learning, essential traits in an ever-changing global economy. As Nigeria faces economic uncertainties, a workforce with a strong technical foundation is better equipped to navigate challenges and contribute to the country's long-term economic resilience.

Research question 2; What are the pervasive skills gap in technical education in order to enhance Nigeria's global competitiveness?

Table 2; results showing the pervasive skills gap in technical education in order to enhance Nigeria's global competitiveness.

S/NO	Item statement	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Restructuring technical education is crucial for reducing the skills gap in Nigeria	3.00	1.08	Agreed
2	Industry-specific knowledge gained through technical education is essential for workforce competence.	3.12	0.11	Agreed
3	A workforce with international-standard skills contributes to enhancing Nigeria's global competitiveness.	3.65	1.29	Agreed
4	Technical education plays a pivotal role in attracting foreign investments.	3.33	0.14	Agreed
5	Aligning education with industry needs enhances Nigeria's standing on the global economic stage.	3.54	0.18	Agreed
6	Technical education positions Nigeria as a competitive player in the global economy.	3.78	0.84	Agreed
	Grand Mean	3.40	0.61	Agreed

Table 2 show the responses of teachers regarding pervasive skills gap in technical education in order to enhance Nigeria's global competitiveness with grand mean = 3.40 and SD=0.61. The table revealed that the respondents agreed with all the items presented to them in the sense that Technical education positions Nigeria as a competitive player in the global economy, A workforce with international-standard skills contributes to enhancing Nigeria's global competitiveness and Aligning education with industry needs enhances Nigeria's standing on the global economic stage.

The finding is in consonance with what Emma (2019) presented, that addressing the skills gap in technical education involves leveraging technology to enhance learning outcomes. Integrating digital tools, online courses, and virtual simulations into technical education programs can provide students with hands-on experience and exposure to cutting-edge technologies. This not only bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application but also prepares students for the digital era. Moreover, by supporting private sector involvement in technical education through tax breaks or other mechanisms can encourage businesses to contribute to skill development initiatives. By embracing a tech-driven and industry-engaged approach, Nigeria can cultivate a workforce that is not only globally competitive but also adaptable to the rapid changes in the technological landscape, thus positioning the country as a hub for innovation and technical expertise on the global stage.

Research question 3: What are the innovation in technical education in order to drive economic diversification through targeted investment?

Table 3; result showing the innovation in technical education in order to drive economic diversification through targeted investment.

S/NO	Item statement	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Technical education instills an entrepreneurial mindset crucial for promoting innovation	3.44	0.84	Agreed
2	Nurturing innovation through technical education empowers individuals to contribute to emerging sectors.	3.88	0.76	Agreed
3	Technical education contributes to breaking away from the over-dependence on oil revenues	3.52	0.92	Agreed
4	Fostering a diverse, knowledge-based economy is a direct outcome of effective technical education.	3.50	0.80	Agreed
5	Technical education prepares individuals for roles in technology, renewable energy, and manufacturing	3.12	0.56	Agreed
6	Technical education is essential for fostering a culture of innovation and economic diversification.	3.94	0.71	Agreed
Grand Mean		3.57	0.77	Agreed

Table 3 show the responses of teachers regarding innovation in technical education in order to drive economic diversification through targeted investment with grand mean = 3.57 and SD=0.77. The table revealed that the respondents agreed with all the items presented to them where they all believed that, Technical education is essential for fostering a culture of innovation and economic diversification Nurturing innovation through technical education empowers individuals to contribute to emerging sectors and Fostering a diverse, knowledge-based economy is a direct outcome of effective technical education.

The result supports what James (2019) suggested, that promoting innovation in technical education involves partnerships between educational institutions and industries. Establishing innovation hubs or incubators within technical education campuses can facilitate collaboration between students, researchers, and businesses. Targeted investments can support the development of these hubs, providing resources for prototyping, experimentation, and real-world problem-solving. Moreover, offering financial incentives for businesses to engage with these hubs can stimulate a culture of entrepreneurship and industry-driven innovation. By connecting technical education directly to the needs of the market, this approach not only produces graduates with practical skills but also encourages the development of startups and businesses that contribute to economic diversification. In essence, targeted investment in fostering innovation within technical education creates a symbiotic relationship between academia and industry, driving economic growth and diversification

Findings of the Study

The following are some of the finding of this study;

1. Technical education is crucial for Nigeria's economic adaptability, providing practical skills that reduce unemployment by aligning with industry demands. Focusing on strengthening technical education not only enhances employability at an individual level but also contributes to building a resilient and adaptable workforce essential for overcoming economic challenges and maintaining global competitiveness.

2. Restructuring technical education in Nigeria is imperative to address the skills gap, as industry-specific knowledge acquired through such programs is essential for ensuring workforce competence. A workforce equipped with international-standard skills not only enhances Nigeria's global competitiveness but also plays a pivotal role in attracting foreign investments. The alignment of education with industry needs positions Nigeria as a competitive player on the global economic stage, emphasizing the critical role of technical education in the nation's economic development.
3. Technical education is essential for instilling an entrepreneurial mindset, fostering innovation, and empowering individuals to contribute to emerging sectors. By breaking away from over-dependence on oil revenues, effective technical education plays a crucial role in nurturing a diverse, knowledge-based economy. Preparing individuals for roles in technology, renewable energy, and manufacturing, technical education becomes a cornerstone for fostering a culture of innovation and economic diversification.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, the revitalization of Nigeria's economy through technical education in Government Science Technical Colleges in Gombe State stands as a strategic imperative for sustainable growth and development. By enhancing curricula to align with industry demands, investing in modern infrastructure, fostering collaborations with local industries, prioritizing teacher training, and promoting entrepreneurship, Gombe State can pave the way for a skilled and adaptable workforce. This approach not only addresses the immediate skills gap but also positions the state to actively contribute to Nigeria's economic resurgence. The commitment to technical education in Government Science Technical Colleges is a crucial step towards nurturing innovation, empowering individuals, and fostering economic diversification, thereby creating a robust foundation for the state's and the nation's prosperous future.

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study. It is recommended that;

1. Prioritize a comprehensive review and enhancement of technical education curricula in Government Science Technical Colleges in Gombe State to ensure they align with current industry demands. This should include incorporating emerging technologies, practical skills development, and entrepreneurship components.
2. Establish partnerships between Government Science Technical Colleges and industries in Gombe State. This collaboration can involve industry experts providing insights into the latest trends, offering internships, and participating in the curriculum development process to ensure relevance to the job market.
3. Integrate entrepreneurship education into the technical curriculum to instill an entrepreneurial mindset among students. Establish centers or partnerships with local business hubs to support students in developing and implementing their innovative ideas, contributing to economic rejuvenation at both local and national levels.

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