

ASSESSING THE ROLE OF TETFUND INTERVENTION IN VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

TETFund is an intervention agency set up by the federal government to provide additional funding to the public tertiary institutions, with the main objective of applying funds for the renovation, reconstruction, and consolidation of tertiary education in Nigeria alongside project management. The paper is aimed at examining the role of TETFund intervention in vocational and technical education in Nigeria, and also evaluates the impacts of the interventions in reducing the problems disturbing vocational and technical education in Nigerian tertiary educational institutions. TETFund intervened in vocational and technical education programs in tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria through funding, project facilitation, as well as staff training and development. Therefore, through TETFund intervention, the Federal Government of Nigeria is gradually tackling the problems of inadequate facilities for learning, teaching, and research in Nigerian tertiary educational institutions. The role of TETFund Interventions in vocational and technical education has positively impacted the infrastructure, teaching and learning equipment, instructional materials, and human development in all of the technical schools and others. Consequently, the management of TETFund, tertiary educational institutions, and politicians need to give maximum support to the agency so as to operate in accordance with the rules and regulations governing the agency without any kind of selfish interference.

Introduction

Education is the process of training a person to understand himself, other people around, his environment, and the ways different things happen in society so as to help the individual to achieve his goals through the maximum use of his senses. Balogun (2010), as reported by Okolocha and Baba (2016), described education as a light; without it, the world would be in darkness. In other words, education can be described as all the efforts of the school, parent, and the society to produce a successful individual in the society by going through a step-by-step training. A successful person in society is an individual that fulfilled the goals of education by becoming useful to himself, other people around him, and the society in general. According to Okolocha and Baba (2016), education unlocks the development of personal and national potentials of citizens or a country and serves as a basis for scientific, modernity, and technological advancement. Therefore, the universal aim of education is the ability to make an individual think critically and act creatively.

Vocational and technical education in Nigeria has its roots back to the pre-colonial period when it started to witness missionaries' intervention. The missionaries, in their efforts to provide training in vocational trades and teacher training to the Africans, establishing institute for the first time

Hope Waddell Institute Calabar and later other technical colleges across the regions. Vocational and technical education, however, witnessed active government interventions in terms of policies, facilities, personnel, and material resources.

At the tertiary level of education, the Federal Government in 1993 established the Education Trust Fund (ETF), which was later in 2011 converted to the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund). The agency was given the responsibility to oversee the monitoring of the tertiary system of education in Nigeria and provide support to upgrade Nigerian tertiary education.

Vocational and Technical Education

Vocational and Technical Education (VTE) plays a vital role in developing the economy, technology, education, security, and political and moral development of any nation. According to Ebeten and Usoro (2017), vocational and technical education is the bedrock of technological, industrial, and economic breakthroughs in all Countries of the world. Prioritizing and promoting the vocational and technical education system by the world's developed countries is what made their economy, technology, and politics succeed.

Key areas, fields, and programmes regarded as vocational and technical include:

1. Engineering and Technical Trades

These fields focus on manufacturing, maintenance, and technical operations.

- i. Electrical/Electronic Technology: Electrical installation, wiring, and maintenance; electronics repair, solar PV installation, and telecommunications.
- ii. Mechanical Engineering Trades: Auto-mechanics, diesel mechanics, machine operation, Computer Numerical Control (CNC) machining, and Mechatronics.
- iii. Welding and Fabrication: Arc welding, gas welding, metal fabrication, and panel beating.
- iv. Refrigeration and Air-Conditioning: Servicing and installation of cooling systems.

2. Building and Woodwork Trades

These trades focus on construction and infrastructure development.

- i. Building Construction: Bricklaying, block laying, concreting, floor tiling, and plastering.
- ii. Wood Trades/Carpentry: Carpentry and joinery, furniture making, and upholstery.
- iii. Drafting/CAD: Computer-Aided Design (CAD) for architecture and product design.

3. Vocational and Creative Arts

These areas focus on service-oriented or craft-based skills.

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- i. Hospitality and Culinary Arts: Cooking, catering management, bakery, pastry making, and hotel/restaurant management.
- ii. Fashion and Design: Fashion design, dressmaking, garment making, and textile technology.

- iii. Beauty Therapy and Cosmetology: Hairdressing, skin care, makeup artistry, and nail services.
- iv. Fine and Applied Arts: Painting, decoration, and graphics.

4. Business and Information Technology (IT)

These programs prepare individuals for office and digital roles.

- i. Business Studies: Bookkeeping, office administration, and accounting.
- ii. Information Technology: Computer repair, networking, GSM/mobile phone repair, coding, website design, and cyber security.
- iii. Marketing and Sales: Retail management and digital marketing.

5. Agriculture and Allied Fields

Focus on mechanized and productive farming techniques.

- i. Mechanized Agriculture: Operations and maintenance of agricultural machinery.
- ii. Livestock Production: Poultry farming, fishery, and beekeeping.
- iii. Horticulture: Landscaping and plant management.

Therefore, Nigeria and other underdeveloped countries can only develop if proper attention in terms of human and material resources is given to educational institutions to promote the vocational and technical education system of the countries. According to Usman (2012), training, acquisition, and utilization of relevant skills by the people are indispensable for economic growth and national development. Through effective engagement in vocational and technical education, the society would have a very conducive atmosphere for living and enhancement in the society's level of participation in socioeconomic development of the country.

The National Educational Research and Development Council (2013) stated that the ability of Nigeria to realize the vision of becoming one of the 20 largest economies in the world by the year 2020 is largely dependent on the capacity to transform the youth into highly skilled and competent citizens through vocational and technical training. Also, the National Policy on Education (2004) described vocational and technical education as the aspects of the educational processes that involve general education, the study of technologies and related sciences, as well as the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding, and knowledge relating to occupation in various sectors of economic and social life. Okoh (2000) agreed that vocational and technical education is that part of the total experience that an individual learns successfully how to carry out a certain occupation, which involves the development of skills, knowledge, and attitudes required for success in the occupation. Additionally, the Federal Ministry of Education (2007) described vocational and technical education as the system of education that has a specific relation to working life and is also closely related to but not identical with the concept of vocational and technical training, which tends to focus on learning specific skills that are required in particular

workplaces. Once again, Olaitan (1992) sees vocational and technical education as a process of getting people ready and keeping them ready for the types of services needed.

Vocational and Technical institutions have the responsibility of producing a variety of technical manpower to guarantee a technological base for the 21st Century in Nigeria. These institutions are also expected to liaise with industries to ensure the relevance of their curricula and to introduce new courses in response to the socioeconomic needs of the nation (FRN, 2013). Vocational and Technical Education cannot achieve its objectives without the engagement and support of the private sector as well as capable citizens who develop interest in different skills acquisition and development. Collaboration between technical institutions and industries in terms of students' industrial training (attachment), excursion, exhibition, and staff training, among others, helps the schools towards proper implementation of the curriculum. In a recent development, the Federal Government of Nigeria has approved free education on vocational and technical programs in all government secondary schools across the nation. As stated by Okeke (2025), the Federal Government has announced that students at the federal and state technical colleges of Nigeria will henceforth enjoy free tuition fees, feeding, and accommodation as part of its efforts to support the technical and vocational education and training initiative (TVET).

NBTE and Vocational Education in Nigeria

The National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) is the primary Federal Agency regulating Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Nigeria. Established in 1977, it oversees polytechnics, monotechnics, and vocational institutions, focusing on curriculum development, accreditation, and producing skilled manpower. NBTE ensures training meets industrial standards to enhance employability and economic growth.

National Board for Technical Education (NBTE).

Key Aspects of NBTE and Vocational Education:

- **Mandate and Scope:** The NBTE regulates all vocational and technical institutions outside universities, focusing on middle-level manpower production.
- **Accreditation and Standards:** It sets minimum standards and accredits programs in Polytechnics, Colleges of Agriculture, and vocational training centers.
- **Curriculum Development:** The Technical Trades Division (TTD) of the NBTE designs and updates curricula in collaboration with industry stakeholders to align with market needs.
- **National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF):** The NBTE drives the implementation of NSQF in Nigeria, establishing standards to recognize skills acquired in both formal and informal sectors.

- **Recent Initiatives:** The NBTE is heavily focused on transitioning to digital learning, implementing Open Distance and Flexible e-Learning (ODFeL) in vocational education. NBTE ensures vocational training aligns with the National Development Plan by creating a competent workforce for industries such as agriculture, ICT, and engineering. National Board for Technical Education (NBTE).

TETfund and the Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

The Federal Government of Nigeria provided different agencies with the aim of establishing proper management of the tertiary system of education in the country. Some of these government agencies established to supervise the monitoring of the tertiary system of education are the National Universities Commission (NUC), National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), and the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETfund). TETfund is an intervention agency that was established under the Education Tax Act No 7 of 1993 and amended by Education Tax Act No 40 of 1998, as Education Tax Fund (ETF) with the aim of improving the quality of education in Nigeria. As reported by Ogunde (2011), TETFund came into existence in 2011 after it metamorphosed from the Education Trust Fund (ETF), which was established in 1993. Therefore, TETFund replaced the Education Trust Fund (ETF) in 2011 and was charged with the responsibility of providing all necessary support to not only universities but to all government tertiary institutions in Nigeria and also to ensure that the tertiary institutions meet their desired goals. TETFund is an intervention agency set up to provide supplementary support to all levels of public tertiary institutions with the main objective of applying funds alongside project management for the rehabilitation, restoration, and consolidation of Tertiary Education in Nigeria (TETFund 2013).

TETFund generates its income from the two percent (2%) education tax paid by the assessable profit of companies registered in Nigeria and some special grants from the government as its sources. The education tax is collected by the Federal Inland Revenue Service, and then TETFund administers and disburses the fund to the federal and state tertiary educational institutions in the country and also monitors the projects executed with the funds given to the beneficiary institutions. Such projects should be specifically for the provision and maintenance of:

- Essential physical infrastructure for teaching and learning;
- Instructional material and equipment;
- Research and publication;
- Academic Staff Training and Development;

TETFund distributes education tax collected to public tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria through intervention on academic staff training and development (ASTD). TETFund intervention in this area involves disbursement of funds for sponsorship of teaching practice, conference attendance, and sponsorship for local and international study for master's and doctoral degrees. In

his words of satisfaction on the activities of the TETfund, former President Muhammad Buhari once described the interventions of TETfund as the catalyst for achieving the desired knowledge based economy for Nigeria, not only remained apt but a tacit endorsement of an earlier held view that the vision that informed its establishment, is not only profound but wholesome and the most welcomed change in the education sector (Leadership Newspaper 2018). In a recent development, TETfund in a circular dated 24th March 2025, addressed to heads of the beneficiaries tertiary educational institutions across the nation has announced the implementation of the TETfund scholarship for academic staff (TSAS) intervention allocation with some changes in the area of local scholarships as result of the suspension for the foreign scholarship component due to the rising costs of foreign training caused by inconsistent exchange rate. According to the circular, TETfund has given updated guidelines on the approved fields of study and authorized educational institutions for the local scholarship program.

The Role of TETFUND Intervention in Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria

Despite the important roles that vocational and technical education play in national development, the system is still experiencing numerous challenges in the tertiary institutions of Nigeria. Examples of these challenging issues are inadequate funding, lack of personnel and material resources, outdated equipment, and poor electricity supply, among others. As a result, vocational and technical education programs in the tertiary institutions of Nigeria have hardly made an impact on the youth, and the desired goals of the program are yet to be achieved. In relation to that, Bogoro (2019) stated that lack of necessary facilities for teaching, learning, and research is one of the key reasons for the incessant strike actions by the Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities (ASUU) and the Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics (ASUP), and this situation had literally crippled tertiary education system in Nigeria.

Government efforts toward solving the problems of tertiary educational institutions across the country resulted in the establishment of TETfund. According to Bogoro (2019), worried about the challenging issues in tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria and in the quest to revamp the tertiary education in the country, the federal government set up the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETfund). In order to enhance the quality and standard of education, particularly at the tertiary level, the TETfund was primarily established to ensure adequate funding to the tertiary institutions as a prerequisite in providing quality and standard education background for people by solving the problems (Muhammad 2012). Therefore, TETfund was considered to be the alternative means of funding the tertiary institutions by the government, and these contributed toward amelioration of the challenging issues of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The role of TETfund Interventions in Nigerian tertiary institutions, particularly vocational and technical education, has positively impacted the infrastructure, teaching and learning equipment, instructional materials, and human development, among others. These also had a positive impact on vocational and technical education in Nigerian tertiary educational institutions.

TETfund came at a time when vocational and technical education in tertiary educational institutions had suffered many years of neglect by some government policies, which contributed

to the decay of institutional facilities, equipment, and poor infrastructure. Many policies have been put in place to address the aforementioned problems in Nigerian tertiary educational institutions. Therefore, the Federal Government, through TETFund interventional measures, is gradually tackling these problems in the tertiary institutions and in the vocational and technical education system in particular. Vocational and technical education, among other areas of specialization in different tertiary institutions, has benefited from these interventions of the TETFund. On the other hand, at the lower level of education, basic and senior secondary education is also benefiting from the TETFund intervention fund in the areas of providing ICT centers in some primary and secondary schools in Nigeria. According to Ogunde (2011), the major task of TETFund has been in the areas of distributing and monitoring funds among tertiary institutions in the country, but the agency takes other responsibilities for funding lower levels of education within the country. Over the years, TETFund has strategically intervened in key areas of academic needs in tertiary institutions, some of which are physical infrastructure, academic staff training and development, research, publications, laboratory and library development (Bogoro 2019).

The areas of TETFund intervention in tertiary educational institutions of Nigeria are categorized into three different areas, which include

- i. Funding
- ii. Projects facilitation
- iii. Staff training and development

Therefore, through these areas, TETFund intervened in vocational and technical education programs in government tertiary educational institutions. These three key areas are drawn based on the analysis of the activities of the agency, and these are the basic key responsibilities of the agency. Vocational and technical education programs, like other fields of education, benefited from TETFund intervention in the areas of:

i. Funding: TETFund interventions assisted in reducing the financial challenges in tertiary educational institutions of Nigeria, and that impacted positively on vocational and technical education programs in schools. The TETFund mode of disbursement of funds to the tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria is organized as follows: normal intervention, library intervention, teaching practice, staff training and development, research grant, publication of journal, conference attendance, publication of scholarly manuscript, and entrepreneurship development (TETFund 2014). All these areas of TETFund intervention allocation have positively impacted vocational and technical education programs in Nigerian tertiary educational institutions. The intervention has improved the international ranking of public tertiary institutions in the country and has continued to have a great impact in tertiary institutions and beyond (Bogoro 2019).

ii. Project Facilitation: Project facilitation is another way of intervention by the TETFund through which the agency assists tertiary educational institutions in the facilitation of projects that are being carried out with a zero exclusion ratio in monitoring and ensuring project execution. The

agency also monitors projects to ensure that they are qualitative and effective in contributing to the administration of the tertiary educational institutions. TETFund intervention is based on certain criteria to ensure the standard of projects. Therefore, the provision of quantitative and qualitative projects that are up to standard is an important role that has positively impacted vocational and technical education programs in tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria. Apart from the provision of infrastructure commonly used in schools such as lecture theaters, laboratories, halls, offices, hostels, as well as the provision of good water, electricity, and internet, vocational and technical education programs benefited from additional technical structural facilities such as workshops, studios, galleries, among others.

TETFund projects facilitation program assists tertiary institutions in facilitating projects that meet the criteria of the National University Commission (NUC) and the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE). The criteria laid down by these agencies are to ensure that the institutions provide available and adequate facilities such as classrooms, laboratories, studios, workshops, libraries, office spaces, galleries, among other things that cater for the running of programs in the institutions. The main objective of TETFund project execution in the tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria is to add value to teaching, learning, research, and community development among the institutions. Facilities in teaching and learning, according to Ogunode (2023), help educational personnel in the discharge of their respective schedule of duties in schools.

iii. Staff Training and Development:

Staff training is the act of upgrading the capacity of workers on recent developments in service to keep them updated as well as to meet the requirements of service. According to the United Nations Committee on Human Resources Development (2009), personnel resource development is a procedure of empowering workers by developing their capabilities so as to improve their abilities to perform well in their service to humanity. Academic staff in the tertiary educational institutions are exposed to the current update practices of their respective fields through the role of TETFund intervention in staff training, which is mainly concerned with academic staff. Ogar (2012) stated that most academicians demanded that the activities of the TETFund in terms of human capital should be extended to non-academic staff. With reference to all these, the role of TETFund intervention in staff training and development has positively impacted vocational and technical education in Nigerian tertiary educational institutions.

Problems and Solutions of Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria.

Vocational and Technical Education (VTE) in Nigeria faces severe challenges, including inadequate funding, obsolete infrastructure, and a shortage of qualified instructors. These issues result in poor training quality, negative societal perceptions favoring white-collar jobs, weak industry linkages, and high youth unemployment, hindering technological and economic growth. (ERIC – 2025)

Key Problems of VTE in Nigeria:

Inadequate Funding: Insufficient government investment leads to poorly maintained facilities, lack of modern equipment, and poor remuneration for staff, causing brain drain.

Lack of Infrastructure/Facilities: Most technical institutions lack modern workshops, laboratories, and functional ICT tools necessary for practical skill acquisition.

Shortage of Qualified Teachers: There is a dearth of skilled, experienced vocational teachers, and in some cases, unqualified instructors are employed.

Negative Societal Perception: Vocational education is often viewed as a second-class option for less academically talented students, creating apathy among youths.

Outdated Curriculum: The curriculum often fails to align with current industrial demands and modern technological advancements, rendering graduates unemployable.

Weak Industry Partnership: Lack of collaboration between technical institutions and industries limits opportunities for student internships (SIWES) and practical training.

Erratic Power Supply: Inconsistent electricity undermines practical training and the use of technical machinery in laboratories.

These bottlenecks prevent VTE from fulfilling its role as a driver of self-employment and sustainable industrial development in Nigeria.

Solutions to the Problems of Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria:

Solutions to vocational and technical education (VTE) challenges in Nigeria include substantially increasing funding to upgrade facilities and modernize workshops, revising curricula to meet industry standards, providing consistent staff training, and fostering stronger public-private partnerships for apprenticeship opportunities. Improving staff welfare is also crucial.

Key Solutions for Revamping VTE in Nigeria:

Enhanced Funding & Infrastructure: The government must allocate more funds to upgrade vocational workshops and laboratories, and provide modern, functional equipment to replace obsolete facilities.

Curriculum Realignment: Revise the VTE curriculum to focus on practical, industry-needed skills rather than theoretical knowledge, ensuring it is competitive, flexible, and relevant to the modern labour market.

Strengthening Public-Private Partnerships: Encourage partnerships with industries for student industrial work experience schemes (SIWES), ensuring training environments match professional workplaces.

Staff Development and Welfare: Provide training, workshops, and better incentives for technical teachers to prevent brain drain and ensure high-quality instruction.

Empowering Entrepreneurship: Focus on cultivating self-employment skills within vocational programs to reduce youth unemployment.

Improved Quality Assurance: Establish strict quality control mechanisms to evaluate vocational training centers and ensure they adhere to standards. (ERIC – 2025)

Recommendation.

- i. Special consideration by the TETFund in terms of structures, materials, and equipment should be given to vocational and technical education programs in the tertiary institutions due to their practically oriented nature.
- ii. TETFund should be organizing exhibitions for the vocational and technical tertiary institutions in Nigeria to present their talent and creativity to the general public, and the best works should be awarded.
- iii. The recent changes in local scholarship intervention to the academic staff of government tertiary educational institutions that outlined the approved fields of study and authorized universities by the TETFund should be modified to include all vocational and technical-related courses, as well as increase the number of authorized universities for the intervention in Nigeria.
- iv. The registered companies in Nigeria should increase their donation from 2% to 2.5% of their assessable profit paid as education tax through the Federal Inland Revenue Service due to economic challenges and the rising cost of things in Nigeria.

Conclusion.

The establishment of TETFUND came as a result of the huge number of problems surrounding the educational system in the tertiary educational institutions of Nigeria. Lack of necessary facilities for teaching, learning, and research is one of the key reasons for the incessant strike actions by the Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities and other academic staff unions. These situations in Nigeria, according to Bogoro (2019), had literally crippled the tertiary education system, which put Nigerian universities, colleges of education, and polytechnics among the worst centers of tertiary education in the world. Therefore, the federal government set up the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) with the hope of revamping the tertiary education system in the country. Almost all the government tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria felt the presence of (TETFund) intervention in one way or the other. Despite all these developments, vocational and technical education programs in the tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria are still in a state of coma technologically when it comes to the teaching methods of the 21st century that recommend the use of modern technological instructional materials, equipment, and facilities.

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