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Mainstreaming TVET for Employability Skills Development of Undergraduates in Tertiary Institutions as a Solution to Social Economic Challenges.

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Abstract

Over the years, there have serious needs for man-powers with employability skills development to proffer solutions to numerous societal social economic challenges. This justifies “Mainstreaming TVET for employability skills development of Business Education undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Rivers State as a solution to social economic challenges in Nigeria.” Three specific objectives, research questions and hypotheses guided the study. Descriptive survey research design was adopted. From the population of 69 lecturers, census survey sampling was adopted. A four-point response options questionnaire was used for data collection, and it was validated by three experts. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach’s alpha which yielded alpha coefficient of 0.90. Mean was used to answer the research questions, while one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and t-test were used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings, including other ones revealed that the lecturers possessed types of employability skills development needed to be mainstreamed through TVET at a high level, challenges confronting mainstreaming TVET for employability skills development were at high level, and the roles of mainstreaming TVET for employability skills development as a solution to social economic challenges were at very high level too. It was concluded that if TVET is properly mainstreamed, learners will be able to acquire the needed employability skills which will lead to overcoming social economic challenges. Therefore, among other things, it was recommended that, TVET institutions should invest massively in routine and periodic capacity- building training and retraining of lecturers to get them acquainted with the best methodologies in mainstreaming TVET for employability skills development to serve as a solution to social economic challenges in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Mainstreaming TVET, employability skills development, undergraduates, tertiary institutions, solution to social economic challenges.*

Introduction

The process of passing on and acquiring knowledge, experiences, and abilities that lead to beneficial changes in people and societies is known as education. Education fosters the qualities and ideas that make for good citizenship at all levels, including honesty, selflessness, tolerance, devotion, hard work, and personal integrity. It offers a fertile ground for cultivating potential leaders who can offer answers to social and economic problems. Asian School of India (2018) viewed education is a tool that equips people with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to grasp their rights and responsibilities in helping to find answers to the social and economic difficulties facing their family and country. Kingdom and Maekae (2013) posited that education is the only way to pique people's curiosity, interest, attitudes, values, and abilities to function as autonomous adults with the capacity to think critically about and make sound judgments about the difficulties facing the country. By enabling people to tap into their creative potential and use it to carry out specific tasks effectively and efficiently for increased personal, organizational, and national productivity in offering solutions to societal challenges, education promotes the development of human employability skills and the culture of productivity (Ukata, 2019).

Employability skills developments training have been identified as a variable tool for wealth creation, employment generation, national security and rural transformation agenda of any society (Okanya & Odewale, 2020; Ukata & Silas-Dikibo, 2020). Unfortunately, in the last decades, Nigeria has witnessed epileptic economic growth, high incidence of poverty, conflict and minimal wealth creation for worthwhile stability (Ochu, 2012). Perhaps these among other social economic challenges exacerbated youth's unemployment, restiveness, hooliganism, cultism and unprecedented security challenges, occasioned by the insurgency caused by the Boko Haram religious sect, armed bandits, kidnapping among other social economic challenges (Okanya & Odewale, 2020). Nigeria with a very high rate of social economic challenges such as insecurity, unemployment, poverty, hooliganism, cultism, needs to provide Business Education undergraduates that are already an integral part of Technical and Vocational Education with Technical and Vocational Education and Training for employability skills development to provide solutions to the endemic social economic challenges bedevil the country.

TVET has been recognized by the world over as tools for empowering people, especially the youth for sustainable livelihood and socio-economic development via skills development (Okanya & Odewale, 2020). TVET is understood as comprising education, training and skills development relating to a wide range of occupational fields, production, services and livelihoods. UNEVOC (2015) posited that policy attention to technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is increasing worldwide in recognition of the fact that skills are very vital for poverty reduction, wealth creation, global security and sustainable economic development. Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is vital to sustainable economic and social development in many ways. First, it provides youth with technical and vocational skills that are needed for enterprise productivity and profitability, national growth as well as economic development and

wealth creation. Secondly, the skills enable the individuals to increase their productivity and income (Yusuf & Soyemi, 2012). Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) also contribute to economic development of the nation in several other ways such as work force development, poverty reduction and increased standard of living/wealth creation among others (Aniedi & Namekere, 2012).

Since education is key to providing solutions to social economic challenges and vital to effective development strategies, mainstreaming technical and vocational education and training (TVET) must be the master key to alleviate poverty, promote peace/security, conserve the environment, improve the quality for all and help to achieve sustainable economic development (UNEVOC, 2015). Similarly, Onyegbuli (2018) said that since TVET is concerned with the preparation of learners for employment through the provision of knowledge, skills and attitudes desirable in the world of work, it contributes directly in eradicating social economic challenges like poverty, crimes and criminalities in the country and ensuring global security. With respect to the enhancement of the standard of living, TVET enhances individual creativity, improved participation in economic and social roles and improvement in the quality of life via employability skills (UNEVOC, 2019).

Employability skills are skills that facilitate creative and productive application of disciplinary skills and knowledge in the workplaces (Jackson & Chapman, 2012). Employability skills are the traits and abilities of attitude, behaviour including technical knowledge with positive aptitude. It is a transferrable skills that are useful in everyday world of work. Employability skills include; Technical Skills, Agricultural Skills, Domestic Skills, Information and Communication Technology Skills among others, which enable learners become employee or employers of labour (Ukata & Nmehielle, 2021). Employability skills development is influencing learners to acquire and creating in them those skills necessary for getting, keeping and doing the job well through enabling teaching and learning environment (Enyekit & Ukata, 2022). Employability skills development is also imparting into the learners sets of technical and vocational skills, achievements skills, understanding and personal attributes that make learners upon graduation to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations in the world of work via mainstreaming TVET in appropriate environment which serves as solution to social economic challenges either as an employer or employee. Areas in which employability skills development could be carried to provide solutions to social economic challenges in Nigeria includes but not limited to Technical Skills, Agricultural Skills, Domestic Skills, Information and Communication Technology Skills.

Mainstreaming TVET is the practice of deliberate placing of Business Education undergraduates or undergraduates who are in general education with special education needs for employability skills development in areas like Technical Skills (Electrical Installation, Air Conditioning Repairs, Furniture Making), Agricultural Skills (Fish Farming/Aquaculture, Poultry Farming (Birds), Piggery), Domestic Skills (Fashion Designing, Soap

Making, Food/Catering Services). Others are Information and Communication Technology Skills (ICT) (Software Design, Computer Operation, Networking, Website Design) (Deebom & Zite, 2020 ; Zite & Deebom, 2017; Okoye & Okwelle, 2013) to provide solutions to social economic challenges identical to unemployment, restiveness, hooliganism, cultism, insecurity, insurgency, armed bandits, kidnapping, thuggery, poverty and drug abuse.

Undergraduates in tertiary institutions are learners in the colleges of education, polytechnics, and universities who are studying as a courses that has TVET or related contents. They are learners in years 1, 2, 3, and 4 in the colleges of education and universities or National Diploma I and II, and Higher National Diploma I and II in the polytechnics.

They are youths and sometimes adults who are usually expose to social economic challenges such unemployment, thuggery, cultism, poverty, crimes and criminality, therefore, need appropriate employability skills development for employment either as employee or employer of labour in the world of work.

Ukata and Nmehielle (2021), and Kprschools (2020) posited that socio-economic challenges are factors that have negative influence on an individuals' economic activity including: lack of education, cultural and religious discrimination, overpopulation, unemployment and corruption. Poverty is also a factor that determines one's socio-economic status, meaning, an individual's or group's position within a hierarchical social structure which depends on a combination of variables, including occupation, education, income, wealth, and place of residence. United Nations (1998) posited that "poverty is a fundamentally denial of choices and opportunities, and a violation of human dignity. It means lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to feed and clothe a family, not having a school or clinic to go to, not having the land on which to grow one's food or a job to earn one's living, not having access to credit. It means insecurity, powerlessness and exclusion of individuals, households and communities. It means susceptibility to violence, and it often implies living on marginal or fragile environments, without access to clean water or sanitation." All over the world, education is seen as the cornerstone of development as it forms the basis of literacy, knowledge and skill acquisition, technological advancement, and ability to harness the human and natural resources of the environment to overcome challenges (Ukata & Nmehielle, 2021; Kprschools, 2020). This can be achieve via mainstreaming TVET for employability skills development as a solution to social economic challenges as a programme with global contents.

The subjects for this study are male and female lecturers with different levels of educational attainment and years of teaching experience in state and federal public tertiary institutions in Rivers State that teach TVET or related contents. The moderating variables include; educational attainment, institution ownership (federal and state), and years of teaching experience. Institution ownership will be federal and state tertiary institutions. This is because lecturers in federal institution may mainstream TVET for employability skills development of Business Education undergraduates better than those in state. Educational attainment as a moderating factor is the level of education a lecturer attained as at the time of this investigation. This may be National Diploma (ND), Higher National Diploma (HND), Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.), Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.), Master of Science (M.Sc.), Master of Education (M.Ed.), and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD).

The institutions ownership are federal and state governments. They are tertiary institutions owned by federal and state governments that run Business Education either as a course or an option. The federal institution is Federal College of Education (Technical) Omoku (FCET- Omoku), while the state institutions are Rivers State University (RSU), Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE), Kensaro Wiwa Polytechnic (KENPOLY) and Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic (CEAPOLY). These are the only government's tertiary institutions that run Business Education programme as a course or an option.

The researcher decided to use these variables because they are likely to influence the topic, "Mainstreaming TVET for employability skills development of undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Rivers State as a solution to social economic challenges."

For example, a lecturer with Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) may perform better than a lecturer with Master of Science and Bachelor of Science in mainstreaming TVET for employability skills development, while federal institution lecturers may be able to mainstream TVET for employability skills development more than the state tertiary institutions, perhaps as a result of funding or otherwise (Ukata & Udeh, 2022). Taiwo and Ade-Ajayi (2015) revealed that teachers' educational attainment can have great influence on perceived factors affecting effective teaching and learning. Taiwo and Ade-Ajayi (2015) further advanced that educational attainment of teachers can have influence on their understanding of the subject matter, selection of tools, use of appropriate instructional strategies and classroom management skills applied in teaching. Top Education Degrees (2020) averred that, institution ownership play major roles in mainstreaming TVET for employability skills development of the students. This is because federal institutions may provide better salary packages, better teaching environments, aids, laboratories, motivation, worker-friendly policies, compensation and staff development programme than state institutions. Scholars (2013) affirmed that teaching experience and age are among the factors that influence lecturers' level of modern instructional competencies because younger and experienced lecturers are more likely to perform at a higher level than older and less experienced ones. So, they are variables of interest in this investigation.

Statement of the problem

All over the world, manpower training and developments through TEVT employability skills development have been identified as a variable tool for wealth creation, employment generation, national security and rural transformation agenda. Unfortunately, in the last decades, Nigeria seems to have witnessed social economic challenges such epileptic economic growth, high incidence of poverty, conflict and minimal wealth creation for worthwhile stability (Ochu, 2012). Perhaps these among other factors may have exacerbated social economic challenges such as youth's unemployment, restiveness, hooliganism, cultism and unprecedented security challenges, Boko Haram religious sect, armed bandits and kidnapping. Most African nations today, and Nigeria in particular seems to have been are faced with terrific social economic challenges such as unemployment, slow economic development, and prevalence of poverty, insurgency, terrorism, and diseases despite the inclusion of TEVT in their curriculum. Different nations of continents are best engaging their teaming youths in TEVT skills development as an effort which many researchers appears to agree as a panacea for many of the ills

plaguing African region (Udoh, 2019; Yusuf & Soyemi, 2012). But the case of Nigeria seems different. The problem of this study is that, there seems to be high level of social economic challenges despite the fact that TEVT for skills development have been imbedded in the educational system of Nigeria. Furthermore, perhaps the appropriate strategy for transferring TVET employability skills development have not been adopted. Besides, it appears that the potentials of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector are not fully recognized in Nigeria. As such, the need of mainstreaming TVET for employability skills development of undergraduates in tertiary institutions as a solution to social economic challenges.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine mainstreaming TVET for employability skills development of undergraduates in tertiary institutions as a solution to social economic challenges in Nigeria. The specific objective of this study was to find out:

1. The level of lecturers' possessed competencies needed to be applied when mainstreaming TVET for employability skills development of undergraduates in tertiary institutions to serve as a solution to social economic challenges.

Research Questions

The following three research questions guided the study, thus:

1. What is the level of lecturers' possessed competencies needed to be applied when mainstreaming TVET for employability skills development of Business Education undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Rivers State to serve as a solution to social economic challenges in Nigeria?

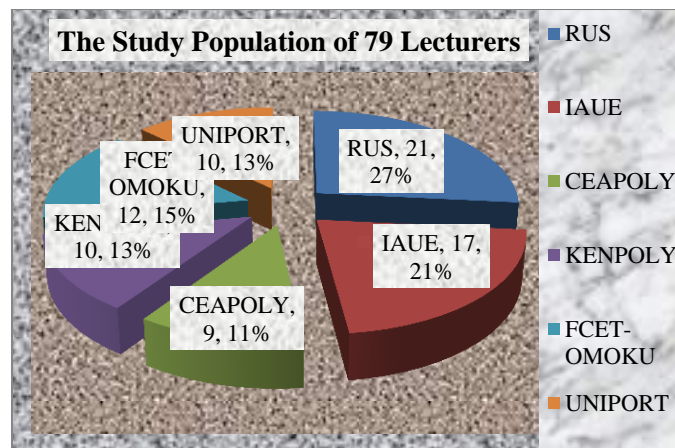
Hypotheses

The following null hypothesis were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in lecturers' mean ratings on their level of possessed competencies needed to be applied when mainstreaming TVET for employability skills development of undergraduates in tertiary institutions as a solution to social economic challenges based on (PhD, M.Sc. /M.Ed., and B.Sc./B.Ed./HND).

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey research design on mainstreaming TVET for employability skills development of Business Education undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Rivers State as a solution to social economic challenges in Nigeria. The population of the study was all the 79 Business Education lecturers from the five public tertiary institutions (two universities, two polytechnics and one college of education) in Rivers State that offer Business Education programme. The population distribution, including their percentages are displayed using Exploded Pie in 3-D below:



Source: (Researchers' creation, 2023)

Census survey was adopted to sample all the 69 lecturers because it was manageable size.

The instrument used for data collection was a self-designed four-point response options questionnaire titled, "Mainstreaming TVET for Employability Skills Development of Undergraduates (MTVETES - DU)" It contains 53 items in sections 1 with scale of very high level (4.50 - 500), high level (3.50 - 4.49), moderate level (2.50 - 3.49), and low level (1.50 - 2.49). The questionnaire was subjected to face and contents validation by three experts from the Faculty of Education in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka and Rivers State University, Port Harcourt. The measure of internal consistency method was established through the administration of the instrument to 20 lecturers from the University of Uyo who were not part of the population of the study. The Cronbach's alpha was applied to compute the reliability coefficient which yielded alpha value of 0.90. This high reliability coefficient values show that the instrument was reliable for the study as recommended by Nworgu (2015) that a research instrument with a reliability index of 0.70 and above is reliable. The researchers personally administered the copies of the questionnaire to the respondents in their schools with the assistance of four research assistants who were adequately briefed on the modalities to follow. The researchers first visited each of the tertiary institutions and sought consent from the relevant Heads of Department for the study. Thereafter, the researchers and assistants visited each school and handed over the required number of copies of the instrument to the Heads of the Department to distribute to the lecturers for completion and, revisited after five working days to retrieve the completed copies. Sixty-five copies of the instrument were correctly filled, retrieved and used for data analysis. The validation, reliability, administration and retrieval of instrument took two months. The arithmetic mean and standard deviation were used to answer the three research question and ascertain how homogeneous or heterogeneous the respondents' opinions were relative to the questionnaire items and the aggregated mean. The one-way analysis variance (ANOVA) and independent sample t-test were used to test the three null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The ANOVA was used for null hypotheses 1 because it measured one categorical independent variable with three levels. A null hypothesis was accepted where the calculated significant (Sig.) value, (p- value) was greater than or equal to (\geq) the alpha value of 0.05. Otherwise, the null hypothesis was not rejected. The data analysis was carried out using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.

Results Presentation

Research Question 1: What is the level of lecturers' possessed competencies needed to be applied when mainstreaming TVET for employability skills development of undergraduates in tertiary institutions to serve as a solution to social economic challenges?

Table 1: Respondents' mean ratings on level of lecturers' possessed competencies needed to be applied when mainstreaming TVET for employability skills development to serve as a solution to social economic challenges.

S/N	Lecturers' possessed competencies	\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
A	Information and Communication Technology Skills			
1	Software Design	3.63	.94	High Level
2	Computer Operation	3.58	.91	High Level
3	Computer Programming	3.75	.92	High Level
4	MS Word operation	3.67	.92	High Level
5	Computer Repairs	3.75	.81	High Level
6	Networking	3.76	.78	High Level
7	Website Design	3.72	.85	High Level
B	Technical Skills			
8	Electrical Installation	3.60	.88	High Level
9	Air Conditioning Repairs	3.67	.92	High Level
10	Refrigerator Repairs	3.75	.81	High Level
11	Driving	3.76	.78	High Level
12	Building Technology	3.72	.85	High Level
13	Welding and Fabrication	3.56	.84	High Level
14	Electrical Instrumentation	3.47	.88	Moderate Level
15	Furniture Making	3.64	.89	High Level
16	Pipe Fitting	3.55	.88	High Level
17	Aluminium Work	3.52	.83	High Level
18	Plumbing	3.33	.94	Moderate Level
19	Arts/Printing & Graphics	3.58	.91	High Level
20	Electronics Repairs	3.75	.86	High Level
21	Interlocking	3.60	.88	High Level
22	Tilling	3.67	.92	High Level
23	Painting	3.75	.81	High Level
24	Vulcanizing	3.76	.78	High Level
25	Brick Laying &	3.72	.85	High Level

	Masonry			
26	Carpentry & Joinery	3.56	.84	High Level
27	Shoe Making	3.47	.88	Moderate Level
28	Tinkering	3.64	.89	High Level
29	Gold smitten	3.55	.88	High Level
C	Agricultural Skills			
30	Fish Farming/Aquaculture	3.53	.94	High Level
31	Horticulture	3.58	.91	High Level
32	Poultry Farming (Birds)	3.75	.87	High Level
33	Animal Husbandry	3.60	.88	High Level
34	Tomato Production	3.67	.92	High Level
35	Snail Production	3.75	.81	High Level
36	Veterinary Technology	3.76	.78	High Level
37	Animal Incarceration	3.72	.85	High Level
38	Livestock (Mammals)	3.56	.84	High Level
39	Gardening	3.47	.88	Moderate Level
40	Piggery	3.64	.89	High Level
D	Domestic Skills			
41	Fashion Designing	3.52	.83	High Level
42	Soap Making	3.52	.94	High Level
43	Food/Catering Services	3.58	.91	High Level
44	Hair Styling/Cosmetology (Barbing, Dressing)	3.75	.87	High Level
45	Bead Making	3.60	.88	High Level
46	Hat Making	3.67	.92	High Level
47	Tailoring	3.75	.81	High Level
48	Music	3.76	.78	High Level
49	Musical Instrumentation	3.72	.85	High Level
50	Photography	3.56	.84	High Level
51	Video Coverage	3.47	.88	Moderate Level
52	Laundry/Dry Cleaning	3.64	.89	High Level
53	Net Making	3.55	.88	High Level
	Aggregate Mean	3.63		High Level

Table 1: Lecturers' possessed competencies (Fieldwork, 2023)

Table 1 shows that 48 out of the 53 items on lecturers` possessed competencies needed to be applied when mainstreaming TVET for employability skills development to serve as a solution to social economic challenges, have mean scores ranging from 3.52 to 3.76 which means that the lecturers possessed them at a high level. The remaining five possessed competencies have mean scores of 3.33 to 3.47, which means that the lecturers possessed them at a moderate level. However, the aggregate mean score of 3.63 shows that lecturers possessed the competencies needed to be applied when mainstreaming TVET for employability skills development of undergraduates in tertiary institutions to serve as a solution to social economic challenges at a high level. The standard deviations for 48 out of 53 listed items ranged within 0.78 to 0.94 which shows that respondents were homogeneous in their opinions. Standard deviations of 1.03 to 1.07 for the remaining two items indicated that respondents were heterogeneous in their opinions on those items.

Testing of Hypotheses

Table 4: ANOVA summary on lecturers' mean ratings on the level of their possessed competencies needed to be applied when mainstreaming TVET for employability skills development as a solution to social economic challenges in Nigeria based on **based on educational attainment.**

Sources of Variance	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F-cal.	Sig.	Decision
Between Groups	2.258	2	1.129	1.298	.383	Accept H_{01}
Within Groups	54.357	63	.877			
Total	56.615	65				

Table 4 shows a calculated F-value of 1.29 with a significant (sig.) p-value of 0.38 which is greater than the alpha value of 0.05 ($0.38 > 0.05$) at degrees of freedom of 2 and 63. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) was accepted. This means that there is no significant difference in lecturers' mean ratings on their level of possessed competencies needed to be applied when mainstreaming TVET for employability skills development of Business Education undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Rivers State as a solution to social economic challenges in Nigeria based on their educational attainment.

Discussion of Findings

Findings of the study show that the lecturers` possessed competencies needed to be applied when mainstreaming TVET for employability skills development of undergraduates in tertiary institutions to serve as a solution to social economic challenges were at a high level. This finding disagrees with Nwaukwa (2015) who lamented that majority of Business teachers lacked computer skills and other vocational skills development required to integrate new technologies for successful instructional delivery as required for implementing ICT-based curriculum and TVET for skills development of the learners. Besides, finding of the study differed from Fadare (2014) who identified problems and bewailed that Business teachers and lecturers in tertiary institutions are not adequately utilizing computer and other practical vocational education materials for instructional delivery due to their lack of new technology skills and modern instructional competencies. The findings of the study further show that the level of lecturers` possessed competencies needed to be applied when mainstreaming

TVET for employability skills development of undergraduates in tertiary institutions to serve as a solution to social economic challenges was based on educational attainment. The finding corroborates the postulations of Taiwo and Ade-Ajayi (2015) which revealed that teachers' educational attainment can have great influence on perceived factors affecting effective teaching and learning. Taiwo and Ade-Ajayi (2015) additionally advanced that educational attainment of teachers can have influence on their understanding of the subject matter, selection of tools, use of appropriate instructional strategies and classroom management skills applied in teaching.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that the lecturers` possessed competencies needed to be applied when mainstreaming TVET for employability skills development of undergraduates in tertiary institutions to serve as a solution to social economic challenges in Nigeria at a high level. It was further concluded that, the level at which lecturers` possessed competencies needed to be applied when mainstreaming TVET for employability skills development was based on educational attainment.

It was also concluded that if TVET is properly mainstreamed, learners will be able to acquire the needed employability skills which will lead to overcoming social economic challenges in Nigeria.

Recommendations

1. TVET institutions should invest massively in routine and periodic capacity- building training programmes for Business Educators and lecturers as it keep them informed of best practices and methodological changes in the field to be able to mainstream TVET for employability skills development.
2. Adequate resources should be allocated to technical and vocational education. Inadequate funds affect the provision of essentials such as well – equipped laboratories and workshops, relevant textbooks and training manuals.
3. Exchange programme between Industry and TVET institutions is inevitable for effective TVET outcomes that meet industry's needs and needs of individuals for self-employment and improved productivity. Exchange arrangements often bridge the gaps between theory and practice as well as acquaint the trainers (business educators) and trainees in higher institutions with the present needs and expectation in the industry.
4. There is the need for our technical institutions to establish good relationship and linkages with similar institutions abroad as this will promote cross – fertilization of ideas and enhance technology transfer. By doing this the technical institutions will have access to new developments, exchange programmes and other numerous benefits available at those institutions whose technical programmes are well developed.
5. Government should incorporate TVET skills into tertiary institutions curriculum for all students so that these skills can be assessed by under-graduates before graduation

6. The Ministry of Education in collaboration with the supervisory agencies should embark on sensitization campaign through the mass media to enrich public understanding and perception on the socio-economic benefits of TVET. This is needed to correct the negative stereotyping of students on different TVET programmes.
7. The curriculum taught in our vocational education institutions should be regularly reviewed to meet the current demands of the labour market.
8. Government should urgently begin the implementation of the removed dichotomy that has existed between University and technical institution. Polytechnic institutions should be made to award degrees. This will not only attract more qualified students to vocational/technical education but will also encourage exchange of qualified lecturers/instructors between the two systems.
9. Any officer verified to have embezzled the TVET funds should be adequately punished according to the law to serve as lesson to others.

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