

Changes in Ghana's Technical and Vocational Education and Training since its Independence: From the Perspective of Educational Policy

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ABSTRACT: *Ghana's technical and vocational education and training have gone through many policies changes since the country's independence indicating how important successive governments recognize the crucial role of TVET in Ghana's social-economic development. The main purpose of this study was to examine the changes in Ghana's TVET since its independence from the perspective of educational policy. The main source of information for this study is secondary data collected from existing literature that is related to the objective of the study. Documents such as the Government of Ghana's education policy documents, ministry of education documents, journals, books were consulted. The rigorous analysis of literature found that efforts have been made to increase and improve TVET institutions to provide more opportunities for young people through skills development for all levels of TVET institutions. Despite all the efforts, to be able to have effective and efficient human resources to compete in the global world, there is a need to develop career guidance systems to assist learners in choosing appropriate pathways including the provision of up-to-date labor market information to stakeholders, self-assessment tools to identify aptitudes and interests and promote the acquisition of career management skills.*

KEYWORDS: educational policy, technical and vocational education and training, Ghana.

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) says solid, coherent policies and plans are the foundation on which to establish sustainable education systems, achieve educational development goals and contribute effectively to lifelong learning. Ghana's education system since its independence in 1957 has gone through various reforms in terms of policy changes and that includes TVET in the nation's education. TVET in Ghana is mainly included in all educational reforms together with general education, in other words, it is part of the general education system.

The term TVET has been defined by many authorities on the subject but for our study, Boateng 2012 will be adopted: the educational processes that involve the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills and knowledge aimed at discovering and

developing the individual for employment in various sectors of economic and social life (Boateng, 2012). TVET contributes to a country's human resource needs, creates employment for people working in both the formal and informal sector of the economy and it reduces poverty. With these contributions, Technical and Vocational Education and Training has been seen as the key to technological advancement, rapid industrialization, wealth creation, and poverty reduction, entrepreneurship development (Afeti, 2018). Because of the important role TVET play in a country's social-economic development, it has been the focus of governments around the world.

In Ghana, successive governments over the past sixty years have made several educational policies to strengthen the delivery of TVET to serve its purpose in society. Education policy is the set of ideas, plans, laws, or regulations that governs the operation of the education system. Despite these efforts, changes in population, technology, and the role of education in modern times demand the reassessment of TVET educational policy. It is against this background that the article analyzes changes in Ghana's TVET past educational policies to find out what has been done, what has not been done, and what needs to be done to promote TVET in the future.

Technical and Vocational Education and Training

According to UNESCO-UNEVOC, Technical and Vocational Education and Training deals with the acquisition of knowledge and skills for the world of work. Since the inception of TVET education, different terminologies have been used to describe elements of the field that is popularly known as TVET today. These terms include apprenticeship training, vocational education, technical education, technical-vocational education, occupational education, career and technical education, workforce education, workplace education, etc. depending on the specific geographical area.

(UNESCO, 2002) also defines TVET as the type of education that emphasizes the application of skills, knowledge, and attitudes required for employment in a particular occupation or cluster of related occupations in any field of social and economic activity. In addition to technical knowledge and aptitude, increasing emphasis is on "softer" skills communication, negotiation, and teamwork. TVET is offered by the public and private educational establishments, or other forms of formal or informal instruction aimed at granting all segments of the society access to life-long learning resources. TVET also refers to "deliberate interventions to bring about learning which would make people more productive (or simply adequately productive) in designated areas of economic activity (e.g., economic sectors, occupations, specific work tasks). This is the distinctive purpose of TVET.

Alam, (2015) wrote that one of the most important components of Human Development is the technical vocational education and training (TVET) that is gaining tremendous popularity in recent literature and that TVET is vital for economic progress however its need may be varied from country-to-country depending on the level of development and demand for skills. Finch, (1999) refer to this subject to education and training that prepares people with requisite skills, knowledge, and training for employment and makes them more productive in various economic fields. Goel, (2015) asserts that skills and knowledge are the most significant elements of the social development of any nation and thus play a vital role in the economic growth of a country. Goel's assertion is in line with Afeti's assertion when he stated that TVET is the key to the

development of the skilled manpower that is needed to meet the challenges of the rapid change in technological advancement in Africa (Afeti, 2010).

Accordingly, TVET is the learning process linking in addition to general education, the study of technologies, and the attainment of practical skills relevant to occupations in the various sectors of the economy such as energy, tourism, transport, etc. Mclean, (2009) refer to TVET as the attainment of knowledge and skills to enhance opportunities for socioeconomic development in consonance with a rapidly changing work environment. Uwaifo, (2009) spells out TVET importance to economic growth as the training of technical personnel who are in lead to initiate, facilitate, and implement technological development. The goal of TVET is quite plausible in the sense that it equips people not only with technical and vocational skills but with a wide range of awareness that are obligatory for meaningful participation in working place and daily life. However, there is a concern that these skills necessary for economic growth in this new century, especially those in new processes and services, are not yet available in general education institutions (e.g., schools, universities), especially in the least developed countries (Fien, 2009).

Technical and Vocational Education and Training are also seen as a solution to poverty reduction and economic development and that technical knowledge must be accompanied by social skills to build harmonious societies (Wals, 2009). These shreds of evidence show that effective policies and implementation of TVET contribute to the development of a country by reducing unemployment, poverty, and raising the standard of living of the people.

Study's Methodology

The main source of information for this study is secondary data collected from existing literature that is related to the objective of the study. Documents such as the Government of Ghana's education policy documents throughout history, ministry of education documents, journals, books were consulted. These materials were carefully chosen based on their relevance to the objective of the study, which is changes in Ghana's TVET since its independence, from the perspective of educational policies. The information was selected because they have had a great impact on Ghana's education and in this case TVET and can be used to examine what has been done, what has not been done, and what should be done when it comes to TVET in Ghana.

TVET in Ghana

The field of TVET contributes to the greater part of Ghana's human resource needs. For this reason, its importance on the Ghanaian economy cannot be underestimated. It is for this reason that TVET has been given much priority in Ghana's education system from primary education to tertiary education. Technical and Vocational Education and Training education in Ghana in recent times has not undergone rapid development as compared to the pre-colonial period, the missionary period, the colonial period as it was the main form of education and provided jobs for citizens during that time compared to the general form of education today which has made so many graduates unemployed. Apprenticeship or hands-on training which was more practical covers areas such as wood carving, basketry, blacksmithing, kente-weaving, soap making, carpentry, building or masonry, cooking, etc.

The fast-changing world of work through technological changes has improved on or eliminated these forms of work by replacing them with a far more sophisticated method of work, (Oppong, 2017). Ghana needs highly skilled technical personnel to fill the vacuum that the new method of work has created and to drive the agenda of creating value addition to their primary resources. Furthermore, the proliferation of industries in Ghana now requires an education system that combines education, training, and skills development that meets industrial labor demands. TVET since Ghana's independence has evolved to include almost every field of education.

History of Education Reforms and Policies in Ghana after Independence

Ghana had its independence in the year 1957. After the nation's independence, there had been much change of government through many coup d'état and democratically elected governments. It is well known that all governments made educational policy their biggest priority as they envision its importance in the nation's economic and social development. Governments through various committees and educational stakeholders have reformed and formulated many educational policies in all levels of education.

According to (Adu-Gyamfi, 2016). The first of such reforms and policies is the 1961 Act, (87) started by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah the first President of Ghana with the mandate of achieving free universal primary education. The Act made education at the primary level compulsory and free. Section two of the Act provided that every child who has reached the school-going age (six years) as determined by the minister shall attend a course of instruction as laid down by the minister in a school recognized for the minister. The structure of the Ghanaian education system at that time (end of the 1960s) comprised six years of primary education, followed by four years of secondary education. At the end of the four years, suitable students went on to do a two-year sixth form course that could lead to a three-year University course, and students who were not suitable to continue completed two years of pre-vocational classes.

The second reform started in year 1987 with the help of several developmental partners such as the world bank department for international development (ODA) and international grants the education system was reviewed to serve the following objectives:

1. Increase access to basic education.
2. Shorten the pre-university education structure from 17 years to 12 years.
3. Make education cost-effective.
4. Improve the quality of education by making it more effective for socio-economic conditions.

Some of the key policies introduced in that reform include the nine 9-year basic education. The first six 6 years were for primary school and the last three 3 years were for Junior Secondary School (JSS). also, a three 3 year senior secondary school was introduced. The academic year consisted of three terms for both JSS and SSS with each term ending with a terminal exam. However, Junior Secondary School pupils were mandated to write the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) and the West African Senior Secondary Certificate

Examination (WASSCE) for Senior Secondary School leavers. these reforms were enacted to replace the General Certificate of Examination (G.C.E.).

Evans Anfom Committee was tasked to shift the educational system to a more vocational (science and technology) oriented rather than focusing on the academic-oriented field. Again, the reforms diversified the secondary school programs into five 5 curriculums. Namely: Agriculture, General Arts, and Science, Business, Technical, and Vocational. students were allowed to select three 3 or four 4 elective subjects also. However, the reforms proposed the upgrade of polytechnics into tertiary institutions. More importantly, the National Council for Tertiary Education contributed to the establishment of the University for Development Studies (Tamale) and the University College of Education (Winneba) Ghana (Adu-Gyamfi, 2016).

Lastly, the educational reform of 2007. The main focus of this reform includes the formation of human capital for industrial growth, preservation of cultural identity/traditional indigenous knowledge or creativity, and also improvements in science and technology. The John Agyekum Kuffour led administration introduced a new education system that did not only review the content of the system but also extended the duration of Senior High School from three years to four years. The first year in the SHS was dedicated to studying “core subjects” such as English Language, Mathematics, Integrated Science, Information Communication Technology (ICT), and Social Studies. Recommendations made by the Anamuah-Mensah report were not different from that of the 1987 reforms by Evans Anfom.

The only difference was the inclusion of two years of Kindergarten into the Universal Basic Education hence making it eleven years of Universal Basic Education. The Universal Basic Education was structured into two years of kindergarten, six years of Primary Education, three years of Junior High School (JHS) (Adu-Gyamfi, 2016). All these educational reforms and policies came about because of the political changes and the problems associated with the educational system, such as the long duration of schooling, changes in the school curriculum, equity, and accessibility of education for all Ghanaian citizens and among others.

TVET Educational Policy in Ghana since Independence

Education policy refers to the actions taken by governments concerning educational practices, and the way governments address the production and delivery of education in each system, (Viennet, 2017). The Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2003-2015 which was formulated in the year 2002 contains the TVET policy framework. Concerning TVET, the ESP plan aims “to increase and improve technical and vocational education and training” (GoG, White Paper on the Report of the Education Reform Review Committee, 2002, p. 8)

The specific plan of action was to extend and provide more opportunities for young people especially out-of-school children and dropouts by engaging them in technical and vocational opportunities. This was to be achieved by increased diversification and greater, skills development for the world of work through the use of effective technical and vocational curriculum and increasing the number of TVET institutions while improving the already existing Polytechnics (GoG, White Paper on the Report of the Education Reform Review Committee, 2002, p. 14)

In terms of the law governing Technical and Vocational Education and Training delivery are the National Vocational Training Institute (NVTI) Act of 1970, the National Board for Professional and Technician Examinations (NABPTEX) Act, 1994 (Act 492), the Children's Act, 1998, the Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (COTVET) Act, 2006 (Act 718) and the Polytechnic Act, 2007 (Act 745). Because the successive government recognizes the contribution of TVET to the nation's human resource needs, TVET is been strengthening as the bedrock for rapid economic and industrial growth and for realizing the Ghana vision 2020. Given the vision 2020 plan, previous governments strategize to reform all technical and vocational education systems to conform with national goals and aspirations as well as meeting the changing global demands.

In 1991, the government's strong dedication to technical and vocational education and training was an indication of government willingness to create wealth for citizens, and to increase socio-economic development was outlined in the government White Paper on the university rationalization committee report. Again, when the White Paper on the reforms to the tertiary education system was published in 2004, much priority was given to TVET and it highlighted the role of the polytechnics in developing the skilled manpower that Ghana needed for its development. (Polytechnic Law, PNDC 321; MOE, 204).

Furthermore, in 2006 the council for technical and vocational education and training (COTVET) a national body set up by an Act of parliament of the Republic of Ghana was mandated to coordinate and oversee all aspects of technical and vocational education and training in the country. COTVET's major objective is to formulate policies for skills development across the broad spectrum of pre-tertiary and tertiary education, formal, informal, and non-formal sectors. It is worth mentioning, that COTVET is engaged in many projects such as the recently inaugurated sector Skills Bodies for the agriculture, construction, and tourism, and hospitality sectors which is part of the governments' overall strategy to change the face of TVET. MyTVET campaign is a COTVET initiative to debunk wrong perceptions about technical and vocational training whiles generating more interest among the youth for TVET.

Again, the introduction of the new free senior high school policy in September 2017 by the government of Ghana has had a huge impact on TVET programs conducted in these second-cycle institutions. The implementation of the free Senior High School policy has given full effect to the sustainable development goal (SDG) 4.1, the purpose of this policy for TVET is to prioritize and program support and reform of TVET institutions at the SHS level to facilitate skills acquisition (GoG, FreeSHSPolicy., 2019).

Lastly, (Boateng, 2012) gives an account of the TVET structure and its policy implications. According to Boateng, TVET starts from six years of primary school education, three years of junior secondary school, making up the basic education level; three years of senior secondary school, forming the secondary level and two to four years of tertiary level education. Vocational technical education is organized at all three levels in the country: primary level, secondary level, and tertiary level. Three different types of vocational-technical education are organized. These are pre-vocational, vocational, and technical.

The pre-vocational type of vocational-technical education occurs at the basic school level. The aim here is to expose pupils at the basic education level to a range of practical activities in the vocational field to make them familiar with and stimulate their interest in vocational subjects; This gives pupils at this level equal opportunity to choose their future careers in either the vocational-technical or general field. Also, it equips them with basic occupational skills that will enable those who do not seek further education to enter into gainful paid or self-employment in industry, agriculture, and commerce. Graduates from the basic level could also enter the informal sector for apprenticeship training.

At the secondary level, training is vocational. Ghana uses a combination of two approaches to organizing vocational-technical education at this level:

1. There is a parallel system where vocational-technical institutions exist alongside the senior high school system. Graduates from the basic level can enter technical institutes or senior high schools. In the technical institutes, the aim is to train and impart practical training and skills leading to the provision of artisans, craftsmen, technicians, and other middle-level personnel in commerce, agriculture, technology, science, and industry.

2. The core curriculum approach is also used in the conventional senior high school system. For those who enter senior high school after the basic level of education, there exists a core curriculum and a cluster of elective subjects, which could be vocational-technical. Any student interested in a career in vocational-technical could select at least three elective subjects in any particular vocational-technical field, which the individual will have to study in addition to the four core liberal subjects.

At the secondary level, vocational-technical education aims at equipping young men and women with relevant productive skill training that will enable them to fulfil the country's manpower needs in the field of technology, industry, commerce, agriculture, and business (Baiden, 1996) as cited by Boateng.

Vocational technical education at the tertiary level is technical. It is organized within post-secondary institutions or tertiary institutions. This is the highest level of vocational-technical education in the country. The Universities, Polytechnics, and other post-secondary pre-service training institutions, under sector Ministries, provide it. The other post-secondary institutions include Health Training Institutes, Nursing Training Colleges, Agricultural Colleges, Schools of Forestry, Teacher Training Colleges, Institute of Journalism, School of Communication, and Institute of Professional Studies. Courses generally last between two to four years and result in the awarding of a certificate, diploma, or degree.

Vocational technical education at the tertiary level provides personnel with the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial, scientific, technological, and economic development; while at the same time, pays attention to environmental issues. It aims at training human resources to match the supply of skilled labour with demand.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Ghana's technical and vocational education and training have gone through many policies changes since the country's independence indicating how important successive governments recognize the crucial role of TVET in Ghana's social-economic development. Efforts have been made to increase and improve TVET institutions to provide more opportunities for young people through skills development, effective technical and vocational education curriculum has been provided in the past, enactments of laws that properly governs the provision of TVET education, the establishment of COTVET as an independent body to coordinate and oversee the activities of TVET and to formulate policies that will ensure the development of TVET education must be lauded.

But despite these efforts, a lot remains to be done so that TVET can serve its purpose by meeting the human resource needs of the country in the future. (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2012) during the Shanghai, consensus made several recommendations to member nations that are designed to meet the changing needs of TVET around the world. Some of these recommendations have already been implemented but there is still the need for others to be implemented to meet the growing demand for TVET in Ghana.

First is the need to develop effective policies aimed at improving teaching and learning processes. Specifically, develop policies and frameworks for professionalizing TVET staff and develop and strengthen teaching standards for all levels. There is the need to develop frameworks and incentive mechanisms to promote the active involvement of relevant stakeholders in planning, governance, curriculum, qualifications development, and assessment, as well as school-enterprise cooperation and workplace learning. Again, there is the need to develop career guidance systems to assist learners in choosing appropriate pathways including by provision of up-to-date labour market information and self-assessment tools to identify aptitudes and interests and promote the acquisition of career management skills.

Also, there is the need to promote and integrate information and communication technologies (ICTs) in TVET to reflect the transformations taking place in the workplace and society at large. Finally, there is a need to update and develop mechanisms and tools to identify current and future skills needs, to ensure the relevance of TVET programs to rapidly changing labour markets, economies, and societies.

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Abbreviation

(BECE)- Basic Education Certificate Examination

(COTVET)- Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training

(GCE)- General Certificate Examination

(GOG)- Government of Ghana

(JSS)- Junior Secondary School

(MOE)- Ministry of Education

(NABPTEX)- National Board for Professional Technician Examinations

(NVTI)- National Vocational Training Institute

(SDG)- Sustainable Development Goals

(TVET)- Technical and Vocational Education and Training

(UNESCO)- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

(UNEVOC)- International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training

(WASSCE)- West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination