

The Need to Copy the South Korea TVET Success Model to Secure Educational and Social Security in Nigeria

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Abstract: This paper examines the impact of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Nigeria, the challenges limiting its effectiveness, and a comparative analysis with South Korea's successful TVET system, which has significantly contributed to its industrial and economic transformation. Using a qualitative approach based on document analysis of policy reports, academic literature, and case studies, the study identifies key weaknesses in Nigeria's TVET system, including inadequate funding, outdated curricula, weak industry linkages, poor infrastructure, and negative societal perceptions. In contrast, South Korea's TVET success is attributed to strong public-private partnerships, sustained government investment, skills development levies, performance-based funding, a dual training system, curriculum modernization, and robust infrastructure. The paper argues that Nigeria can reposition its TVET system by adopting and adapting these strategies within its socio-economic context. The study concludes that a coordinated multi-stakeholder approach involving government, industry, and individuals is essential for transforming Nigeria's TVET sector into a driver of sustainable development, employment generation, and educational security.

Keywords: Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET); Nigeria; South Korea; Educational Security; Skills Development; Curriculum Reform; Public-Private Partnerships; Meister Schools; Youth Unemployment; National Development; Comparative Case Study.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Entrenching and developing Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sustainably in Nigeria can significantly improve educational security through several pathways: reduction of unemployment by equipping youths with employable and entrepreneurial skills (UNESCO, 2016; ILO, 2020); economic diversification through skill development in agriculture, manufacturing, and technology sectors (World Bank, 2025); reduction of out-of-school youth by providing alternative vocational pathways (UNESCO, 2016); increased productivity and innovation through practical skill acquisition (UNESCO, 2016; ILO, 2020); poverty reduction through income-generating vocational skills (UNESCO, 2016); reduction of social vices by engaging youths in productive activities (UNESCO, 2016; ILO, 2020); and alignment with global labour market demands, especially in digital and green economy sectors (World Bank, 2025).

MacLean and Wilson (2009) emphasize that TVET is a critical tool for promoting educational security by improving employability and reducing inequality. Similarly, UNESCO (2016) highlights TVET's role in social inclusion, lifelong

learning, and poverty reduction. TVET integrates general education with technical knowledge and practical skills relevant to occupational fields (UNESCO, 2016). It is widely recognized as a practical education pathway that enhances workforce readiness and economic participation (Hasanah, 2023; TVET Journal, 2023). Aubry (2016) further notes that TVET supports lifelong learning by equipping learners with skills for both work and life. UNESCO Beirut (2023) also emphasizes that TVET develops competencies that support sustainable development and global citizenship.

Despite these benefits, Nigeria continues to experience structural and policy-related challenges that hinder TVET effectiveness, while countries such as South Korea have successfully transformed their economies through well-structured TVET systems. Nigeria's unemployment crisis remains deeply troubling, with 2024 data from the National Bureau of Statistics reporting youth unemployment at over 53 percent (Scott, 2025). The broader picture reveals an estimated 2 million graduates produced annually, yet a significant proportion leave tertiary institutions lacking practical skills or technical expertise demanded by modern industries (Scott, 2025). This paradox of millions of unemployed graduates coexisting with growing job

vacancies represents a profound structural impediment to national growth. Vital private industries—particularly in technology, energy and manufacturing, and agribusiness—face acute challenges in finding competent, job-ready local talent (Scott, 2025).

II. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative comparative case study design to examine Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) systems in Nigeria and South Korea. A comparative case study approach is appropriate because it allows for in-depth exploration of contextual factors influencing TVET effectiveness and enables identification of transferable lessons from a country that has successfully transformed its economy through strategic TVET investment (Yin, 2014). South Korea was selected as the comparator due to its remarkable economic transformation from a developing nation in the 1960s to a global economic powerhouse, with TVET widely recognized as a key driver of this success (OECD, 2012; UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2018).

➤ Data Sources

Data were drawn from three categories of documents:

- Policy Reports: Official government documents, national development plans, and TVET strategy papers from Nigeria and South Korea, including Nigeria's Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (NES Group, 2017), NBTE policy documents (Leadership, 2024), and Korean Ministry of Education reports (OECD, 2012).
- Academic Literature: Peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and conference proceedings on TVET in both countries, identified through systematic searches of Google Scholar, Scopus, and institutional databases.
- Institutional Publications: Reports from international organizations including UNESCO, UNESCO-UNEVOC, ILO, OECD, and the World Bank.

➤ Search Strategy and Inclusion Criteria

Sources were identified using the following keywords: "TVET Nigeria," "vocational education Nigeria," "TVET South Korea," "Meister schools," "technical education challenges Nigeria," "TVET funding," and "curriculum reform TVET." Searches were conducted between January and May 2026 across multiple databases.

• Documents were Included if they:

- ✓ Were published in English;
- ✓ Addressed TVET policy, implementation, or outcomes;
- ✓ Were produced by authoritative sources (government, international organizations, peer-reviewed journals); and
- ✓ Were published between 2009 and 2026 to ensure contemporary relevance while capturing foundational studies.

Documents were excluded if they focused exclusively on non-TVET education sectors, lacked clear authorship or institutional affiliation, or were opinion pieces without empirical or policy grounding.

➤ Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring themes across the documents, following the six-phase framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The following steps were undertaken:

- Familiarization: All documents were read and re-read to gain overall understanding.
- Coding: Key passages were coded according to emerging themes.
- Theme Development: Codes were grouped into broader analytical categories corresponding to the paper's structure (funding, curriculum, perception, infrastructure, policy initiatives).
- Comparative Analysis: Findings from Nigeria and South Korea were juxtaposed to identify similarities, differences, and transferable lessons.
- Synthesis: Findings were integrated to formulate conclusions and recommendations.

➤ Trustworthiness and Limitations

To enhance trustworthiness, the following strategies were employed:

- Triangulation: Multiple source types (policy reports, academic literature, institutional publications) were used to corroborate findings;
- Source Verification: All cited sources were verified against original documents to ensure accuracy; and
- Peer Debriefing: Drafts were reviewed by colleagues familiar with TVET in both countries.

This study is limited by its reliance on secondary sources. Primary data collection (e.g., interviews with policymakers, institutional visits) was beyond the scope of this paper. Additionally, the comparative analysis is limited to two countries, which may reduce generalizability to other contexts. Future research should incorporate primary data collection and expand the comparative scope to include other countries.

III. THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF TVET IN NIGERIA

Nigeria's TVET development has been shaped by policy reforms and institutional frameworks aimed at improving skills development. Key developments include:

Establishment of regulatory bodies such as NBTE and NABTEB to ensure quality standards (Akanbi, 2017). According to Akanbi (2017), "the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) was established by Act No. 9 of 11th January, 1977 ... specifically created to handle all aspects of Technical and Vocational Education falling outside of University Education." Similarly, the National Business and Technical Examinations Board (NABTEB) was established under Decree No. 70 (now Act 70) of 1993 to conduct technical and business innovation certificate examinations (NABTEB, n.d.). The NBTE currently supervises, accredits, and regulates the TVET sector,

covering over 700 institutions (Tribune Online, 2025).

Rejuvenation of Technical Colleges. The federal government has recently embarked on a major initiative to rejuvenate Nigeria's technical colleges. As of 2025, Nigeria has a total of 129 technical colleges (federal, state, and private) compared to over 15,000 senior secondary schools—a proportion of less than one percent, indicating that TVET has been poorly attended to historically (Tribune Online, 2025). To reverse this, the government is converting Federal Science and Technical Colleges to purely technical colleges, where every student will now run technical programmes under NABTEB supervision (Tribune Online, 2025).

Curriculum Reforms Incorporating ICT and Entrepreneurship Education. The Honourable Minister of Education disclosed that *"Artificial Intelligence, data science and emerging digital technologies are being integrated into Nigeria's curriculum from basic to tertiary levels, while entrepreneurship education is being expanded through the Entrepreneurship, Innovation, Business and Certification (EIBC) Programme to produce job creators rather than job seekers"* (Alausa, as cited in Federal Ministry of Information, 2026). In a significant reform initiative, NABTEB has commenced validation of 26 technical trade syllabi covering sectors pivotal to Nigeria's economic diversification, including robotics, coding and machine learning, cinematography, medical laboratory technology, mechanized agriculture, and fisheries and aquaculture (The Cable, 2025).

Promotion of Public-Private Partnerships to improve Funding and Training Quality. A study on PPPs in TVET found that *"PPPs have significantly contributed to providing sustainable funding, modernizing curricula, improving infrastructure, and enhancing employability through industry-relevant skills"* (Zenodo, 2025). The Nigeria Employers' Consultative Association (NECA) and the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) have collaborated through the Technical Skills Development Project to provide training in industry-demand skills, recently graduating 75 youths trained in artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, 3D animation, and data analytics at no cost (The Guardian, 2025).

Youth empowerment programmes such as NYSC-SAED. According to the official NYSC SAED programme portal (2026), the programme provides *"free practical skills training in 20+ vocational and entrepreneurial tracks during orientation camp and throughout the service year. Tracks include: software development, AI and mobile app development."*

These reforms have contributed to skills acquisition and employability. However, implementation gaps continue to limit impact (Akhuemonkhan & Raimi, 2013).

IV. CHALLENGES HINDERING TVET IN NIGERIA

Despite Policy Efforts, Several Constraints Limit TVET Effectiveness:

- **Inadequate Funding:** Funding limitations affect infrastructure, equipment, and staff development (Okoye & Arimonu, 2016). Oviawe (2020) notes that reliance on enrolment-based funding weakens TVET quality and sustainability. The Executive Secretary of the NBTE informed the House of Representatives Committee that a major challenge is *"inability to review ND/HND curricula within the five years' time frame due to poor funding,"* noting that *"2024 was our worst budget with Curve-outs at NASS"* (Leadership, 2024).
- **Outdated Curriculum:** Studies show a persistent mismatch between industry needs and TVET curricula, resulting in graduates lacking relevant skills for modern industries (Ladan, 2023). Despite NBTE reforms promoting "skills over qualifications," challenges persist, including weak industry linkages and outdated curricula (Koce, 2025). Curriculum development remains slow and reactive rather than proactive, with regulatory bodies operating without real-time labour market data.
- **Poor Public Perception:** TVET is often regarded as inferior to university education, reducing student enrolment and societal support (Akhuemonkhan & Raimi, 2013). The Executive Secretary of NBTE identified the *"stigmatisation of TVET graduates including HND as being inferior (more of a mind set)"* as a significant challenge (Leadership, 2024). In Nigerian society, education has historically evolved as a strategy for avoiding manual labour, creating a cultural bias against technical and vocational pathways (Olisa & Ogbe, 2025).
- **Inadequate Infrastructure:** Many institutions lack modern workshops, laboratories, and equipment necessary for practical training (Allen, 2020). The NBTE has identified *"lack of modern tools and equipment and use of obsolete equipment in TVET Institutions"* as a critical constraint (Leadership, 2024). In Delta State, findings reveal *"inadequate infrastructure and equipment for practical training"* as a major challenge constraining TVET's effectiveness (Olisa & Ogbe, 2025).
- **Weak Industry-Academia Collaboration:** Industry-academia collaboration remains largely anecdotal and unsystematic (Scott, 2025). Genuine, structured internship programmes are scarce, with many institutions lacking the modern equipment or sustainable industry partnerships essential for meaningful hands-on training (Koce, 2025).
- **Low Enrolment and Limited Access:** TVET enrolment remains disproportionately low compared to general academic enrolment (Tribune Online, 2025). Nigeria has

only 129 technical colleges compared to over 15,000 senior secondary schools, meaning TVET has been poorly attended to (Tribune Online, 2025).

- **South Korea's Successful TVET Model:** South Korea's TVET success is driven by a combination of policy consistency, funding mechanisms, and strong industry integration. The Korean government has played a key role in establishing the skills development system since the 1960s, with government intervention addressing both the public and private sectors (Inter-American Development Bank, n.d.).
- ✓ **Public-Private Partnerships:** Industries actively participate in training design and implementation, ensuring alignment with labour market needs (OECD, 2012). The Korean system has evolved from a government-led, supply-driven model toward a locally based, demand-driven model to align training programmes with local business needs (Inter-American Development Bank, n.d.). Government legislation incentivized private employer investment in in-plant training by providing financial support until the late 1990s (Inter-American Development Bank, n.d.).
- ✓ **Government Investment:** The government prioritizes TVET funding in national development plans, ensuring infrastructure and curriculum quality (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2018). The Korean government has provided extensive financial aid and regulatory autonomy, allowing schools to tailor curricula and operations (Park & Lee, 2025).
- ✓ **Skills Development Levy System:** Employers contribute to training funds through mandatory levies, ensuring sustainable financing (ILO, 2023). The levy-grant system under the Employment Insurance Act has been effective since 1995, helping employers bear costs related to training prospective and existing employees (Inter-American Development Bank, n.d.). National qualification systems have also helped job seekers undertake vocational training in high demand throughout the labour market (Inter-American Development Bank, n.d.).
- ✓ **Dual Education System:** Students alternate between classroom instruction and industry-based training, improving employability (OECD, 2014).
- ✓ **International Cooperation:** Global partnerships supported Korea's early TVET reforms and capacity building (World Bank, 2013). The ASEAN-ROK TVET Mobility Programme leverages Korea's successful economic transformation experience to bridge the skills gap and equip ASEAN member states with tools to thrive in the era of Industry 4.0 (Pyo & Hyun, 2024).
- ✓ **The Meister High School Model:** A transformative initiative in Korea's TVET landscape is the Meister High School (MHS) programme, introduced in 2010, aiming to cultivate a professional, technically skilled workforce

prepared for quality employment immediately upon graduation (Park & Lee, 2025). Unlike regular vocational high schools, MHS operates with full autonomy in designing curricula and school systems to align with local industry needs, offering comprehensive student support including free tuition, dormitory accommodations, and scholarships (Park & Lee, 2025). Since its inception, MHS has consistently produced strong employment outcomes, maintaining high employment rates: 90.3% in 2013, 91.2% in 2015, 71.2% in 2020, and 73.7% in 2023 (Park & Lee, 2025). As of 2024, 54 Meister high schools operate nationwide, specializing in traditional industries as well as emerging fields such as robotics, semiconductors, smart manufacturing, and smart farming (Park & Lee, 2025). The MHS system has gained international recognition, with countries like Malaysia, Indonesia, and Saudi Arabia exploring the model for secondary VET reform (Park & Lee, 2025).

V. IMPROVED CURRICULUM AND ITS ROLE IN SOUTH KOREA'S TVET SUCCESS

South Korea's curriculum reforms are central to its TVET effectiveness. Key features include:

- **Industry-Aligned Curriculum:** Curriculum is regularly updated with industry input (Park & Kim, 2020). MHS operates under school-based management, granting autonomy over curriculum design, hiring, and industry partnerships, with additional features including small class sizes, extensive financial support, and industry-level facilities (Park & Lee, 2025).
- **Technology Integration:** Emerging technologies such as AI and robotics are embedded in training (KRIVET, 2022).
- **Competency-Based Training:** Focus is placed on demonstrable skills rather than theoretical completion (Kim & Jung, 2021). The Korean system is developing flexible and competency-based qualification systems to support diversified careers (Inter-American Development Bank, n.d.).
- **Modular Learning System:** Flexible learning pathways support lifelong learning (Choi & Lee, 2022).
- **Entrepreneurship and Soft Skills:** Training includes communication, teamwork, and business skills (Ra et al., 2019).
- **STEM and Green Economy Focus:** Curriculum supports renewable energy and sustainable technologies (Lee et al., 2023).

VI. PUBLIC PERCEPTION AND TVET IN SOUTH KOREA

Public perception has significantly contributed to TVET success in South Korea. TVET graduates are widely respected due to high employability (Lee, 2016). Strong alignment with labour market needs improves attractiveness (OECD, 2012). Media campaigns improved societal acceptance of vocational education (UNESCO, 2015). A

cultural shift toward valuing technical skills strengthened enrolment (Lee & Kim, 2014).

In Korean society, where academic achievement has often been excessively prioritized, vocational education had long faced societal stigma (Park & Lee, 2025). The MHS programme has addressed this by creating an opportunity structure that enhances the quality of vocational education and nurtures a competitive, technically skilled workforce (Park & Lee, 2025). By placing MHS within the special purpose high school category that offers gifted education, the programme has enhanced the perception of vocational education among students, parents, and industry stakeholders (Park & Lee, 2025). Research on MHS effectiveness highlights its role in enhancing career readiness, self-efficacy, and employment outcomes such as wages, job retention, and employment status (Park & Lee, 2025).

➤ *Modern Infrastructure in South Korea's TVET System*

South Korea's investment in infrastructure enhances training quality. Modern workshops simulate real industrial environments (KRIVET, 2014). Digital classrooms and simulation technologies support advanced learning (UNESCO, 2019). Industry-specific training centres improve specialization (OECD, 2012).

➤ *The Nexus Between TVET, National Security, and Social Stability in Nigeria*

A critical dimension of TVET's importance lies in its capacity to address Nigeria's escalating insecurity challenges. Security has become a topical issue in Nigeria, with the majority of security breakdowns increasingly perpetrated by youth (Lasisi et al., 2025). The occupation areas available in TVET can equip individuals with the skills necessary for productivity and self-reliance (Lasisi et al., 2025). When individuals are self-reliant, their conditions of living improve, insecurity reduces, industrialization is enhanced, and there is total revitalization of the economy—all of which are ingredients of national development (Lasisi et al., 2025).

TVET offers more than skills—it offers hope, purpose, and stability (Uduafemhe, 2025). When young Nigerians are equipped with practical competencies in fields like mechanical engineering, building technology, electrical installation, ICT, hospitality, agriculture, and plumbing, they are less likely to be lured into criminal networks (Uduafemhe, 2025). Across many conflict-prone regions of Nigeria, young people who would have been idle or vulnerable to radicalization are becoming auto technicians, electricians, agripreneurs, and coders—trades that provide income, restore dignity, foster inclusion, and build peaceful coexistence (Uduafemhe, 2025).

TVET aids in the development of profitable or lawful business activity, yet the programme does not appear to receive the required attention in Nigeria (Lasisi et al., 2025). This appears to be a contributing cause to the rising rates of poverty and unemployment, which have significantly impacted Nigeria's insecurity issues, as graduates lack the

necessary skills to take advantage of Nigeria's plentiful natural resources (Lasisi et al., 2025). Nigeria faces significant challenges from insecurity, including terrorism, kidnapping, farmers-herders disputes, armed robberies, and ethno-religious conflicts (Lasisi et al., 2025).

VII. NEW POLICY INITIATIVES IN NIGERIA'S TVET SECTOR

Despite the challenges, Nigeria has recently launched several promising initiatives. The federal government has introduced a comprehensive TVET programme structured into three components (Tribune Online, 2025):

- TVET 1, 2, and 3: These are technical colleges rebranded to be equivalent to SS1, SS2, and SS3, where students receive monthly stipends, free accommodation, and free feeding. Their industrial attachments are also paid for because skills training cannot be done in classrooms and workshops alone—students must practice in real-life situations (Tribune Online, 2025).
- Master 6: A six-month training course offered in skills centres accredited by NBTE. Nigeria has almost 800 accredited skills training centres, with a target to reach 1,000 (Tribune Online, 2025). Students receive a monthly stipend of N22,500, with tuition fees paid up to approximately N150,000 to N180,000 for the six months. No educational qualification is required—even an out-of-school child or almajiri can register with only a National Identification Number (Tribune Online, 2025).
- Master 12: A 12-month training limited to vocational enterprise institutions (VEIs). Nigeria has about 84 VEIs nationwide, with only fully accredited institutions eligible to participate (Tribune Online, 2025).

The funding for these initiatives currently comes from the Tertiary Education Trust Fund, which has provided N100 billion for the programme in the first year as a takeoff fund (Tribune Online, 2025). For long-term sustainability, an executive bill is being prepared to establish a National Skills Fund that will drive the TVET agenda and other skills interventions (Tribune Online, 2025). As the NBTE Executive Secretary noted, "*Nigeria must strive to make skills an important currency of its economy*" (Tribune Online, 2025).

Additionally, the NBTE has introduced a new Sector-Wide Policy Framework on Certificate Security and Integrity to safeguard the credibility of academic qualifications issued by TVET institutions, aiming to eliminate forgery, establish tamper-proof certificate systems with advanced security features such as holograms, QR codes, and watermarking, as well as a centralized Digital Certificate Verification System (The Sun, 2026).

VIII. CONCLUSION

TVET has the potential to significantly enhance educational security and economic development in Nigeria. However, systemic challenges such as inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, outdated curricula, and negative societal

perception continue to limit its effectiveness. The Nigerian government has recently demonstrated commitment to reforming the sector through new initiatives including stipends for TVET students, conversion of science and technical colleges to purely technical institutions, and the development of a National Skills Fund. However, these promising steps must be sustained and expanded.

In contrast, South Korea demonstrates how strategic investment, strong governance, industry collaboration, and curriculum innovation can transform TVET into a powerful driver of national development. Korea's Meister High School model, with its industry-aligned curriculum, school-employer-government partnerships, and robust performance management, offers valuable lessons for Nigeria. The Korean experience shows that addressing the social stigma associated with vocational education through creating clear career pathways and demonstrating strong employment outcomes can transform public perception and increase enrolment.

Nigeria must therefore adopt a coordinated, multi-stakeholder approach to reform its TVET system in order to achieve sustainable development, employment generation, and global competitiveness. The correlation between skills development and national security must be amplified, as equipping young Nigerians with market-relevant skills offers hope, purpose, and stability—transforming potential threats into contributors to national development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the comparative analysis, Nigeria should implement the following targeted actions:

- Increase and stabilize funding for TVET institutions by moving away from strictly enrollment-based allocation models.
- Strengthen public-private partnerships to formally involve private industries in curriculum drafting and structural feedback mechanisms.
- Reform curricula to align with industry needs, explicitly transitioning to competency-based frameworks over theoretical mastery.
- Improve infrastructure and training facilities to build modernized technical workshops that mimic contemporary corporate environments.
- Rebrand TVET to improve public perception, implementing awareness models that spotlight success paths to change the regional bias against manual labor.
- Adopt elements of South Korea's dual training system, ensuring a structured balance between institutional learning and field attachment.
- Promote lifelong learning and digital skills development by ensuring emerging modules like robotics, AI, and data management are permanently sustained.
- Establish and sustainably fund the National Skills Fund through legislative support to guarantee operational continuity past immediate budget setups.

- Create clear career pathways for TVET graduates to enhance social mobility and systematically eliminate institutional parity friction between technical certificates and traditional degrees.
- Develop a national awareness campaign to combat the stigma against technical education, positioning manual and vocational arts as high-status socio-economic paths.

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