

Reimagining Technical Education and Technical and Vocational Education and Training for a Skill-Based Nigeria

Benson Peter IRABOR Ph.D.¹, Dahiru Muhammad², Zaccheaus Oluyemi DIYA³

¹Part-time Lecturer, St Augustine College of Education, Akoka, Lagos
benpet1@yahoo.com

²Umaru Musa Yar'adua University, Katsina State
Dahiru.muhammad@umyu.edu.ng

³Lagos State University

Abstract

On March 22, 2025, the Federal Government of Nigeria, through the Minister of Education, Dr. Tunji Alausa, officially announced the conversion of all 33 Federal Science and Technical Colleges (FSTCs) to Federal Technical Colleges (FTCs), with implementation and free education scheduled to begin in the 2025/2026 academic session. This policy marked a renewed effort to revitalize Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to reduce youth unemployment, bridge the skills gap, and build a technologically driven economy. The initiative was designed to address longstanding challenges that had beset Nigeria's educational system, particularly the disconnect between theoretical instruction and practical skills, as well as issues of inadequate infrastructure, limited industry collaboration, and insufficient funding. To this end, the study explored the evolving trajectory of technical education in Nigeria, focusing on the policy shift from FSTCs to FTCs and its broader implications for the future of TVET. Adopting a hermeneutical and critical analysis methodology, the research was grounded in critical and postcolonial theoretical frameworks to examine the structural and ideological forces that shaped educational reform. It investigated whether this proposed transformation would lead to meaningful skills development or merely result in a nominal change in institutional identity. The findings suggested that while the FTC initiative held considerable promise for promoting entrepreneurship and practical competence among Nigerian youth, its success depended on systemic reforms and sustained political commitment. The study contributed to existing scholarship by presenting TVET as a transformative model for economic empowerment rather than a fallback option for the academically marginalized. It also questioned the sustainability of tuition free education within a policy environment known for inconsistency and underfunding. The study recommended investment in infrastructure, strong industry linkages, and the adoption of critical pedagogies that combined theory with hands on learning. These measures were considered essential for positioning TVET as a strategic tool for national development and long-term employment generation.

Keywords: TVET, FSTC, FTC, Science, Competence Based Education, Youth Empowerment, Vocational Training

INTRODUCTION

Education remains the cornerstone of national development, serving as a critical driver of human capital formation, social mobility, innovation, and economic empowerment. In Nigeria, where a youthful population presents both opportunity and challenge, the relevance of education is heightened by the urgent need to equip learners with practical, employable skills. However, for decades, the Nigerian education system has struggled with deep structural issues—most notably the overemphasis on theoretical knowledge, inadequate infrastructure, and the persistent

disconnect between school curricula and industry demands. These shortcomings have contributed to rising youth unemployment, a growing skills gap, and declining confidence in the system's ability to deliver meaningful outcomes (Irabor & Damilola, 2020, p.39-48).

Against this backdrop, the present administration, under the leadership of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, has shown a renewed commitment to reforming and revitalising the education sector. The Nigerian Education Sector Roadmap (2024–2027) outlines a four-year strategic plan built around 13 foundational pillars aimed at achieving 23 ministerial deliverables. These pillars—ranging from addressing out-of-school children and promoting youth and adult literacy, to strengthening Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), tertiary education, and educational support services—are all focused on enhancing access, quality, relevance, and system-wide accountability.

A key highlight of this reform agenda is the transformation of the 33 Federal Science and Technical Colleges (FSTCs) into Federal Technical Colleges (FTCs), coupled with the announcement of tuition-free technical education beginning in the 2025/2026 academic year. This move signals a strategic shift in policy, positioning TVET not as an educational afterthought, but as a central pillar in Nigeria's development vision. The transition from FSTC to FTC is more than a change in nomenclature; it represents a national effort to institutionalize competence-based education, foster entrepreneurship, and create a skilled workforce capable of driving industrial and technological advancement.

This study critically examines the policy shift from FSTCs to FTCs within the broader context of TVET reform in Nigeria. Anchored in postcolonial and critical theoretical frameworks, it interrogates whether this transformation will lead to genuine systemic change or merely superficial restructuring. It also considers the sustainability of government initiatives in the face of chronic underfunding and institutional fragility. Ultimately, the study aims to contribute to ongoing discourse on educational reform, offering evidence-based insights into how Nigeria can align its education system with its developmental aspirations through practical, inclusive, and industry-aligned learning pathways.

What Is Education in the 21st Century?

Education is universally recognized as a fundamental instrument for personal advancement and national development. It serves as the bedrock upon which societies build their capacity for innovation, economic productivity, and social cohesion. In the 21st century, education more than the simple acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills, education encompasses the transmission of

values, development of critical thinking, cultivation of civic responsibility, and acquisition of practical competencies. It is this holistic approach to education that enables individuals to contribute meaningfully to the growth and transformation of their communities.

It is on this note that Julius Nyerere (1967) emphasises education as a key tool for liberation and self-reliance. In his seminal work *Education for Self-Reliance*, Nyerere argues that true education must be functional, relevant, and rooted in the social and economic realities of the people it serves. He criticises colonial models of education that were designed to alienate rather than empower, and insists that a purposeful education system must aim to produce citizens who are productive, cooperative, and capable of contributing to national development (Nyerere, 1967, p. 27). His view highlights the transformational role of education—not as a mere academic pursuit, but as a practical instrument for societal progress.

In line with this functional view of education, Akinkotu defines education as a process of inculcating societal norms, values, and skills into individuals to enable them to function effectively within their society. He argues that education serves as a conduit for cultural transmission and the development of individual potential, ultimately leading to the economic and social advancement of the nation. For Akinkotu, education is both a personal and collective asset—it enhances individual life chances while simultaneously driving national progress (Akinkotu, 2013, p. 56). This perspective reinforces the idea that development cannot occur in the absence of a well-educated and socially aware populace.

In the same token, Ocho underscores the transformative capacity of education by highlighting its role in shaping human behaviour, improving productivity, and facilitating technological innovation. According to him, education is central to the development process because it enhances the quality of human resources—the most critical factor in economic development. A well-educated workforce is more innovative, more efficient, and better equipped to adapt to changing technological and global trends (Ocho, 1988, p. 14). His argument supports the notion that investment in education yields long-term dividends in terms of poverty reduction, improved health outcomes, and increased national competitiveness.

Further emphasising the integration of theory and practice, Fafunwa contends that education must be both intellectually enriching and practically empowering. In his view, education should go beyond book knowledge to include the acquisition of vocational and technical skills that prepare individuals for real-world challenges. He asserts that a curriculum that fails to address the economic and practical needs of society cannot foster meaningful development (Fafunwa, 1972,

p. 18). His emphasis on practical, skill-based learning aligns with the goals of national self-reliance and sustainable economic growth.

Taken together, these perspectives converge on a central truth: education is not a luxury or an accessory to development—it is its foundation. When designed and implemented to be relevant, inclusive, and skill-oriented, education becomes a powerful engine for both individual upliftment and national transformation. It equips citizens with the knowledge, values, and skills necessary to drive economic productivity, civic responsibility, and social progress. In essence, without a robust and purpose-driven educational system, the dream of sustainable development remains elusive

Building on this foundation, the present Nigerian administration has shown renewed commitment to repositioning education as a tool for national development through Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). A major stride is the conversion of Federal Science and Technical Colleges (FSTCs) into Federal Technical Colleges (FTCs), aimed at strengthening skill acquisition, entrepreneurship, and innovation. This shift reflects a strategic move to align education with labour market needs, reduce youth unemployment, and enhance national productivity. It affirms that a practical, skills-driven education system remains central to achieving inclusive growth, economic self-reliance, and sustainable development in Nigeria.

FSTC vs FTC: Transition, Differences, and Educational Benefits

The aim of this paper was to explore the transformation of Federal Science and Technical Colleges (FSTCs) into Federal Technical Colleges (FTCs) within Nigeria's educational landscape, and to examine the origin and purpose of FSTCs, the reasons behind their conversion to FTCs, and the distinctive features that set them apart. It also analyses what FTCs now offer in terms of technical and vocational education, including free tuition, boarding, recognized certification, and practical training opportunities. This section highlights the educational and developmental benefits of the 33 FTCs established across Nigeria as part of the federal government's drive toward strengthening Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET).

Federal Science and Technical Colleges (FSTCs) were established by the Federal Government of Nigeria as part of its strategy to develop middle-level manpower through the integration of academic learning with technical and vocational training. These institutions aimed to equip students with foundational scientific and technological knowledge necessary for industrial growth and national development (Federal Ministry of Education [FME], 2020, p. 12). Initially, FSTCs functioned like secondary schools with added emphasis on science and basic technical skills.

However, the evolving global workforce demands and the need to strengthen Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) led to a policy shift. This shift culminated in the transformation of FSTCs into Federal Technical Colleges (FTCs), a move that reflects the government's commitment to competency-based education tailored to meet the requirements of industry and entrepreneurship (FME, 2021, p. 18).

Unlike FSTCs, which leaned more toward general education, FTCs are fully TVET institutions offering structured skill-based education with a focus on practical competencies. FTCs award the National Technical Certificate (NTC) and National Business Certificate (NBC) after a three-year program, under the regulation of the National Business and Technical Examinations Board (NABTEB) (NABTEB, 2019, p. 9). These certifications are nationally and internationally recognized, enabling graduates to either join the workforce or continue into higher technical institutions.

One of the major advantages of FTCs is that they offer free education, boarding, and feeding, ensuring inclusivity and access for students from low-income backgrounds (FME, 2022, p. 25). This distinguishes them significantly from the FSTCs, where such provisions were not fully institutionalized.

Currently, there are 33 FTCs spread across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones. These colleges offer diverse vocational and technical programs such as electrical installation, ICT, catering, welding and fabrication, motor vehicle mechanics, and more (FME, 2023, p. 30). The benefits of FTCs include reduced youth unemployment, promotion of self-reliance, encouragement of entrepreneurship, and provision of skilled manpower needed to drive Nigeria's industrialisation agenda (UNESCO, 2021, p. 43).

In line with the Renewed Hope Agenda of the current administration, the conversion of FSTCs to FTCs is a bold step toward achieving inclusive, functional, and sustainable education for national development. It reflects the federal government's focus on empowering the youth with the right skills, reducing poverty, and creating jobs through quality TVET delivery (FME, 2023, p. 34).

By enrolling into FTCs program, students will gain the following:

1. Industry-Relevant Skills for Immediate Employment
2. Job Readiness as Courses are Aligned with Labor Market Needs
3. Self Employed Opportunity as Graduates can work for themselves
4. Free Tuition for the 3 years of Training in the College
5. Free Accommodation for the 3 Years of Training

6. Free Meals for the 3 Years of Training
7. Students shall be paid Monthly Stipends for their upkeep.
8. Upon Completion of Studies in 3 years, Students Shall Have Access to Federal Grants or Loans to Start Their Enterprise
9. Students upon graduation will obtain a National Business and National Technical Certificate.
10. Students upon graduation will obtain the Second Certificate in National Skills Qualification Certification (NSQ).
11. The Two Certificates Shall Have Worldwide Acceptability for Those Who Want to Practice Their Enterprise or Vocation Overseas.

TVET: Meaning and Benefits

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) refer to structured educational and training programs that equip individuals with the practical skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for specific trades, occupations, or careers in the labour market. TVET goes beyond traditional manual or technical skills, encompassing entrepreneurial, digital, and technological competencies that are increasingly essential in a dynamic, knowledge-driven global economy. According to UNESCO (2016, p. 12), TVET promotes the acquisition of knowledge and skills for the world of work and lifelong learning, advancing both employability and personal empowerment.

TVET plays a pivotal role in addressing some of the most pressing developmental challenges in Nigeria, particularly youth unemployment, poverty, and the mismatch between education and labour market needs. By aligning educational content with real-world demands, TVET ensures that learners graduate with competencies that are immediately applicable in various economic sectors. As Okoye and Okwelle (2014, p. 23) observe, TVET is instrumental in building a skilled workforce capable of driving industrialization, fostering innovation, and promoting national self-reliance, especially in developing contexts like Nigeria.

A key advantage of TVET lies in its direct pathway to employment. Graduates of TVET institutions typically possess hands-on experience that aligns with employer expectations, making them highly employable. Moreover, TVET nurtures entrepreneurship by equipping individuals with the tools to initiate and manage small enterprises. In doing so, it contributes to job creation and reduces dependence on limited opportunities within the formal employment sector (Federal

Ministry of Education, 2020, p. 44). It also supports inclusive education by accommodating diverse learners, including those who may not thrive within conventional academic frameworks.

In the Nigerian context, reforming and expanding the TVET sector, including the strategic conversion of Federal Science and Technical Colleges (FSTCs) to Federal Technical Colleges (FTCs) is a deliberate policy response to the nation's need for a skilled, innovative, and adaptable workforce. This aligns directly with key priorities of the 13-Pillar Education Roadmap, particularly those focused on skills development, entrepreneurship education, and national productivity.

Reflecting this renewed commitment, the Federal Ministry of Education officially launched its TVET application portal on May 30, 2025. The program offers young Nigerians access to tuition-free skills training, N45,000 monthly stipends, and start-up support. Open to school leavers, job seekers, and graduates irrespective of educational background, this initiative is designed to bridge Nigeria's widening skills gap and foster a generation of self-reliant, economically productive citizens.

The Four Pillars of TVET at FTCs in Nigeria

This section examines the four foundational pillars of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) as implemented in Federal Technical Colleges (FTCs) in Nigeria. It explores how tuition-free access, economic stipends, entrepreneurial development, and self-reliance programs work together to equip students with practical skills, promote productivity, and support national goals for education, employment, and economic transformation.

1. Expanding Access through Tuition-Free Education

The introduction of free education in Federal Technical Colleges (FTCs) in Nigeria marks a significant step in aligning national education policy with the goals of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). The Federal Government's decision to make FTCs tuition-free starting from the 2025/2026 academic session is not only strategic but deeply philosophical, drawing from Nigeria's historical advocacy for education as a tool for empowerment and social transformation.

Chief Obafemi Awolowo, a foremost nationalist and educationist, laid the ideological foundation for this movement decades ago. In his address to Nigerian youth on the 25th anniversary of the introduction of free primary education in Western Nigeria, he emphasized: "*we are offering free education so that every man and woman can stand up for himself or herself and find the way for the good of society*" (Awolowo, 1981). This statement remains relevant today, particularly in the

context of FTCs, where practical skills, technical competence, and entrepreneurial readiness are being prioritized.

Recognizing the long-term benefits of education to both the individual and the nation, Awolowo further advocated for increased investment in human capital. As he stressed, “*as far as possible, expenditure on services which tend to the welfare and health and education of the people should be increased at the expense of any expenditure that does not answer the same test*” (Awolowo, 1960, p. 263). His vision was reinforced after returning from the Cambridge Conference on Education, where, alongside his Minister of Education, S.O. Awokoya, he initiated the policy of free and universal primary education in the Western Region—a policy that later shaped national practice when Awolowo became the Federal Minister of Finance (Iraabor, Olofuwobi & Adidi, 2019, pp.102-117).

This legacy of equitable access to education is being revived through the government’s commitment to free FTC education, which includes tuition waivers, feeding, accommodation, and certification recognized by industry and government bodies. This initiative directly supports Pillar 1 (Access, Inclusivity, and Equity) and Pillar 2 (Quality and Relevance of Curriculum and Instruction) of the 2024–2027 Nigerian Education Roadmap, which seeks to enhance inclusive and equitable quality education, particularly through skill-based learning frameworks (FME, 2024, pp. 6–9).

Furthermore, the emphasis on TVET under the roadmap also reflects the broader commitment to Pillar 9 (Skills Development and TVET Expansion) and Pillar 10 (Alternative and Flexible Learning Pathways). These pillars prioritize the expansion of technical and vocational opportunities to reduce youth unemployment, close the skills gap, and build a workforce ready for innovation and economic competitiveness (FME, 2024, pp. 14–15). As Akinsanya (2015, p. 120) notes, Awolowo remains fondly remembered as the *Father of Free Education in Nigeria*—a title that symbolizes a national aspiration now being reignited through the evolving FTC and TVET frameworks. In essence, the policy of free education at FTCs is not merely a welfare gesture but a strategic component of a broader national development agenda.

2. Skills for Self-Reliance and Nation-Building

Self-reliance has emerged as a critical imperative in the quest for sustainable national development in Nigeria. The Federal Technical Colleges (FTCs) and the broader framework of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) stand as strategic pillars for achieving this goal. Rooted in Nigeria’s 13-Pillar Education Roadmap, these institutions are positioned to drive job

creation, innovation, productivity, and national consciousness. To strengthen this agenda, it is essential to engage with the philosophical foundations of self-reliance education, particularly through the insights of Julius Nyerere, John Dewey, Kola Ogundowole, and Ahmadu Bello—thinkers whose educational visions align strongly with the ethos and practical purpose of FTCs and TVET.

Julius Nyerere, the first President of Tanzania, advanced the concept of “Education for Self-Reliance” as a response to the colonial legacy of elitist and non-productive schooling. He criticized colonial education for its failure to integrate students into society and its disconnect from the productive realities of African communities (Nyerere, 1968:47; Kassam, 1994:247–259). Nyerere’s critique in 1967 of formal education—calling out its elitism, detachment from community life, certificate-centeredness, and neglect of productive labour—resonates strongly with current challenges faced by FTCs and TVET in Nigeria (Nyerere, 1968:267). In his framework, schools should become self-sustaining communities with integrated farms and workshops, where teachers are facilitators of communal productivity and students participate in decision-making (Akinsanya, 2015:114–115). This vision aligns seamlessly with the objectives of Pillar 6 (TVET, skills development, and entrepreneurship education) and Pillar 11 (curriculum and policy matters) of the 13-Pillar Roadmap.

Complementing Nyerere’s perspective is John Dewey’s philosophy of pragmatism and reconstructionism. Dewey’s view that education must be grounded in experience, experimentation, and practical relevance underlines the principle of “learning by doing” (Akinpelu, 1981:151; Aggarwal & Gupta, 2014:127–128). Dewey’s instrumentalism positions education as a tool for social efficiency and innovation (Shina, 1998; Dewey, 1899:19). His reconstructionist stance further advocates that education be a dynamic force for social transformation, emphasizing planning, problem-solving, and creative engagement—skills that FTCs and TVET institutions are uniquely designed to nurture (Ozomon & Craver, 1990:1528). Dewey’s child-centred, forward-looking educational model supports not only hands-on skill development but also the broader aims of Pillars 2 (Early Childhood and Basic Education), 6, and 11 of the education roadmap.

The philosophy of Kola Ogundowole adds a distinctly African dimension to the discourse on self-reliance. His idea of “Self-Reliance” emphasizes education as a deliberate, inward-driven process of self-realization and national development (Ogundowole, 1988:52). He argues that only a self-reliant educational and economic system can ensure meaningful and sustainable development (Ogundowole, 2007:28). Ogundowole advocates curricula that prioritize originality,

competence, creativity, and consciousness—qualities that directly reinforce the transformative role of FTCs and TVET in fostering national productivity. His contributions echo through Pillars 1 (Access, Equity and Inclusiveness), 6, and 13 (Education Data and Planning), highlighting education's role as the engine of self-driven, contextually relevant innovation.

Ahmadu Bello, drawing from pre-colonial African learning systems, emphasized vocational and indigenous knowledge systems rooted in utility and life-long relevance (Fafunwa, 1974:15; Enueme, 2000:50–51). He championed an education model integrated with community life and centered on practical skills—a vision that aligns directly with the practical and work-based focus of FTCs and TVET. Bello's pragmatist philosophy, which encourages critical thinking and self-reliant productivity, reinforces the need for education that serves the socioeconomic realities of its people. His ideas find full expression in Pillars 6, 8 (Teacher Education), and 11, which promote localized teacher development, vocational relevance, and contextualized curriculum reform.

A major component in actualizing self-reliance through technical education is entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship education provides learners with the competencies to identify community needs, devise innovative solutions, and translate ideas into viable economic activities (Wokeh & Basil, 2011; Odah, 2002). Kuratko and Hogetts (2001) define entrepreneurs as change agents who transform opportunities into productive enterprises. This entrepreneurial thrust aligns with the design of FTCs as centers for job creation, applied research, and community innovation. The current gap in Nigeria's curriculum regarding practical entrepreneurship has contributed to graduate unemployment and a mismatch between education and labour market demands (Wokeh & Basil, 2011). Embedding entrepreneurship into the core of the school system—through interdisciplinary, hands-on, and experiential strategies—is necessary for achieving Pillars 6, 9 (Adult and Lifelong Learning), and 11.

Furthermore, the synergy between entrepreneurship education and the philosophical tenets of Dewey, Nyerere, and Ogundowole is unmistakable. It reflects Dewey's pragmatism, Nyerere's emphasis on relevance and productivity, and Ogundowole's insistence on competence and ingenuity. Entrepreneurship transforms education into a living, responsive practice, cultivating learners who are not only job seekers but creators of economic and social value. This aligns with Okoro's vision for an education system that fosters self-belief and resilience (Okoro, 2009:13).

The convergence of these philosophical frameworks with the goals of FTCs and TVET creates a compelling case for educational reform in Nigeria. Together, Nyerere, Dewey, Ogundowole, and Bello offer a robust foundation for a curriculum that is practical, self-directed, productive, and

responsive to national development needs. This convergence mirrors the ambition of Nigeria's 13-Pillar Education Roadmap, particularly its focus on skills acquisition, innovation, and inclusive learning.

For Nigeria's education policy to truly fulfil its purpose, it must embrace this composite vision. Strengthening FTCs, embedding entrepreneurship in curricula, reforming teacher education, and reorienting learning around practical work and national realities are critical steps. In doing so, Nigeria will cultivate a citizenry that is not only educated but empowered—capable of driving its own development and building a self-reliant, productive nation.

3. Economic Empowerment: Monthly Stipends for Learners

One of the most significant policy innovations under Nigeria's renewed focus on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is the introduction of a ₦45,000 monthly stipend for enrolled learners. This initiative, spearheaded by the Federal Ministry of Education, aims to reduce economic barriers to participation in technical education and promote social equity in access to skill acquisition programs. The provision of this stipend reflects a conscious governmental effort to incentivize learning, enhance retention, and support the socio-economic wellbeing of participants—especially in a country where poverty, unemployment, and financial insecurity remain persistent challenges.

By providing financial support, the government seeks to create an enabling environment in which young Nigerians can focus on skill acquisition without the distractions of financial hardship. This aligns with broader national development goals to equip youth with employable skills, promote entrepreneurship, and reduce dependency on white-collar jobs. The stipend serves not only as a form of social protection, but also as a motivational tool, encouraging sustained participation and completion of training programs. It recognizes that economic empowerment is a prerequisite for self-reliance, productivity, and national development.

Furthermore, the monthly stipend is also symbolic—it reflects a shift in the value society places on vocational education, elevating its status as not just a fallback option but a strategic driver of innovation and self-employment. The policy is expected to improve enrolment in FTCs, reduce dropout rates, and foster inclusion among marginalized and low-income groups, thus contributing to the realization of Pillars 1 (Access and Equity), 6 (TVET, Skills Development and Entrepreneurship), and 9 (Adult and Lifelong Learning) of Nigeria's 13-Pillar Education Roadmap. However, while the initiative is commendable, it is not without challenges. Funding sustainability remains a critical issue. Ensuring that the stipends are disbursed regularly, transparently, and to the

right beneficiaries requires robust administrative structures and financial oversight mechanisms. There is also the risk of corruption and mismanagement, particularly in a system where bureaucratic inefficiencies are entrenched. Moreover, if not properly monitored, stipends may be viewed merely as welfare rather than a springboard to productive engagement.

Additionally, without a strong linkage between training content and labour market needs, stipends alone cannot guarantee employability or self-reliance. Thus, while financial incentives are important, they must be complemented by high-quality, relevant, and demand-driven training curricula, mentorship programs, and access to start-up capital upon graduation.

4. Entrepreneurship: Start-up Support for Self-Reliance

An essential component of Nigeria's renewed TVET framework is the provision of start-up support to graduates, designed to aid their transition into self-reliant ventures and small businesses. This initiative recognizes that, in a country with high youth unemployment and a saturated formal job market, technical and vocational training must go beyond skill acquisition to include practical economic empowerment. By equipping trainees not only with skills but also with the tools and resources to operationalize those skills, the Federal Government aims to foster a generation of self-employed, productive citizens who can contribute meaningfully to national development.

Start-up support typically includes access to tools, seed capital, mentorship, and sometimes business incubation services. These interventions are critical for enabling TVET graduates to apply their training in real economic contexts—be it as artisans, digital entrepreneurs, mechanics, agribusiness operators, or fashion designers. Entrepreneurship, in this context, becomes a lifeline to self-reliance, echoing the philosophical ideals of Nyerere, Dewey, and Ogundowole, who all emphasized learning that leads to productivity, community development, and self-actualization.

However, despite its promise, this component of the TVET initiative is not without its limitations. The availability and adequacy of start-up packages remain inconsistent. Many graduates report delays in accessing funds or materials, and in some cases, politicization and lack of transparency hinder the equitable distribution of support. Additionally, while technical training may be solid, many beneficiaries lack the business literacy or market access needed to sustain a small enterprise over time. Without ongoing mentoring, financial literacy training, and access to credit, these start-up supports risk becoming temporary handouts rather than sustainable empowerment tools.

To be truly effective, start-up support must be institutionalized, equitably managed, and tightly linked to post-training monitoring and mentorship. Only then can it fulfill its intended purpose—

advancing self-reliance, reducing unemployment, and strengthening Nigeria’s informal and small business economy

Evaluation: Promise and Pitfalls of TVET Reform in Nigeria

The conversion of Federal Science and Technical Colleges (FSTCs) to Federal Technical Colleges (FTCs) represents a bold step toward revitalizing Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Nigeria. On the surface, the initiative promises to improve access to tuition-free technical education, promote self-reliance, and equip young Nigerians with employable skills. It aligns with the 13-pillar Education Roadmap, particularly in its focus on entrepreneurship, skills development, and job creation. However, a closer evaluation reveals that while the policy holds significant potential, it is also fraught with structural and systemic challenges. The lack of continuity in Nigerian education policy often leads to well-meaning initiatives being abandoned or under-implemented with changes in government. This concern is especially relevant when considering the ambitious components of the FTC policy—such as monthly stipends and startup support—which may face sustainability issues if not backed by strong institutional frameworks. Moreover, the initiative risks being reduced to a nominal change in institutional identity if there is no parallel investment in infrastructure, teacher training, and industry collaboration. Much like the Student Loan Act 2024, the FTC reform may appear progressive in intent but falter in execution without consistent funding, political will, and strategic oversight to sustain its goals beyond initial implementation.

CONCLUSION

The transition from Federal Science and Technical Colleges (FSTCs) to Federal Technical Colleges (FTCs) represents a significant policy shift in Nigeria’s educational system. It reflects the federal government’s renewed commitment to promoting technical and vocational education as a means of addressing unemployment, fostering self-reliance, and driving national development. By focusing on skill acquisition, practical training, and free, inclusive access, the FTC initiative strengthens the link between education and industry, theory and practice, as well as knowledge and productivity.

Philosophically, this transformation aligns with the pragmatic ideals of education advocated by John Dewey and the African philosophy of self-reliance emphasized by Julius Nyerere and Kola Ogundowole. It reaffirms that education must be functional, dynamic, and directed toward solving real human problems. Therefore, the FTC model has the potential to reposition Nigeria’s Technical

and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector as a foundation for sustainable development if effectively implemented and continuously supported.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study carry important implications for philosophy, policy, and educational practice in Nigeria.

First, the conversion of FSTCs to FTCs implies that reform in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) must transcend mere institutional renaming or restructuring. It should involve a deep philosophical reorientation toward education for self-reliance, skill competence, and societal transformation. This supports Nyerere's and Ogundowole's view that education should liberate individuals through productive engagement and self-sustaining work.

Secondly, the study implies that free and inclusive technical education, while commendable, requires strong political will, adequate funding, and policy continuity to achieve sustainability. Without these, the transformation risks becoming another short-lived initiative rather than a long-term development strategy.

Thirdly, the philosophical implication of this study is that education must be practical and value oriented. FTCs, therefore, must not only train for employment but also cultivate ethical responsibility, discipline, and creativity in students, thus restoring the dignity of labour and national pride in craftsmanship.

Finally, this study implies that Nigeria's broader development vision must integrate education reform with industrial, entrepreneurial, and economic policies. Effective collaboration between educational institutions, industries, and government agencies will determine whether the FTC policy truly contributes to reducing unemployment and promoting sustainable national growth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In pursuit of a self-reliant and productive education system, this study draws from its findings to propose practical steps for improvement. The following recommendations aim to reposition Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and the Federal Technical Colleges (FTCs) as key drivers of national transformation:

1. **Strengthen Policy Implementation:** The Federal Ministry of Education should ensure effective and consistent implementation of the FTC policy through regular monitoring, evaluation, and feedback mechanisms.
2. **Ensure Sustainable Funding:** Adequate and timely funding must be provided to all FTCs to maintain free tuition, quality infrastructure, and well-equipped workshops that meet global technical standards.
3. **Promote Industry Collaboration:** Government should strengthen partnerships between FTCs and industries to ensure that the curriculum remains relevant to labour market needs and emerging technologies.
4. **Encourage Entrepreneurial and Ethical Orientation:** FTC programs should integrate moral education, creativity, and entrepreneurship to produce graduates who are self-reliant, disciplined, and committed to national development.
5. **Institutionalize Policy Continuity:** Future administrations should sustain the FTC initiative to prevent policy reversal, ensuring that the gains of TVET reform translate into long-term national benefits.

References

- Aggarwal J.C. and S. Gupta (2014), *Great Philosophers and Thinkers on Education*, Delhi: Shipra Publications.
- Akinkuotu, Y.A. (2001). *Modern Approaches to Philosophical Foundations of Education*. Lagos: Atlantic Publishing Company.
- Akinpelu, J. (1981). *An Introduction to Philosophy of Education*. London: Macmillan.
- Akinsanya, P.O. (2015). *Philosophizing About Education*, Lagos: University of Lagos Press and Bookshop Ltd.
- Amune Stephen (1986). *Work and Worship Selected Speeches of Ahmadu Bello*, (Kaduna: Amana Printing & Advert Ltd., 1986), p.128.
- Awolowo, O. (1960). *Awo: The Autobiography of Chief Obafemi Awolowo*, Cambridge: The University Press.
- Awolowo, O. (1981). *Voice of Wisdom: Selected Speeches of Chief Obafemi Awolowo*. Lagos: African Publishers.
- Dewey, J. (1899). *The School and Society*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Fafunwa Babs (1974). *History of Education in Nigeria*, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.
- Fafunwa, A.B. (ed.), (1972). *Education in Africa: A Comparative Survey*. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Federal Ministry of Education (2020). *National Policy on Education (6th Ed.)*. Lagos: NERDC Press.

- Federal Ministry of Education (FME). (2023). *Repositioning TVET for Youth Empowerment*. Abuja: TVET Development Unit.
- Federal Ministry of Education (FME). (2024). *Nigerian Education Roadmap 2024–2027: A Strategic Blueprint for Reform*. Abuja: FME Publications.
- Igwe, I.C. (2010). “Ogundowole’s Self-Reliancism as a Paradigm for Africa’s Education” in *Bachelor of Arts Degree Project*, University of Lagos.
- Irabor, B.P, Uzoka, N.E. & Giwa, A.G. The Student Loan Paradox: ‘Educational Empowerment’ or ‘Debt Sentence’? - A Philosophical Analysis of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu’s Policy Initiative. *Uniben Educational Journal*. 2025.
- Irabor, B.P. (2018). Inclusion of Entrepreneurial Studies in School Curriculum as a Catalyst for Sustainable Development: John Dewey’s Perspective. *Journal of Faculties of Arts/Humanities Scholars’ Association of Nigerian Universities*, (FAHSANU: Faculties of Arts/Humanities Scholars’ Association of Nigerian Universities), Vol. No.1, pp.187-198.
- Irabor, B.P. and Damilola, G.O. (2020). Hey Mr. Teacher My Child Must Pass This Examination At All Cost!: On the Cheating Culture and Africa’s Post-Colonial Education. *Sapientia Foundation Journal of Education, Sciences and Gender Studies (SFJESGS)*, (Enugu State University of Science and Technology), Vol.2 No.2, p.39-48 ISSN: 2734-2522(Print); ISSN: 2734-2514(Online).
- Irabor, B.P. and Olofuwobi, O.O. (2019). John Dewey and Julius Nyerere on Education as Pathway to Development: An Exercise in Intercultural Philosophy. *Calabar Journal of Philosophy and Leadership Studies: Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* (University of Calabar: Department of Philosophy), Vol.1 Issue 1, pp.1-16.
- Irabor, B.P. Olofuwobi, O. O. and Adidi, D. T. (2019). “Obafemi Awolowo’s Philosophy of Education and National Development: An Argument for its Contemporary Relevance”. *Philectics: Benin Journal of Philosophy* (Department of Philosophy University of Benin, Nigeria, vol3. No.1, pp.102-117.
- Irabor, B.P. Olofuwobi, O.O. and Adidi, D.T. (2020). Julius Nyerere and Kola Ogundowole on Self-Reliancism in the Reflection on African Development. *FALSAFA: Journal of Philosophy*, (Department of Philosophy, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaira, Nigeria), Vol.3, No.1, pp.177-203.
- Kassam, Y. “Julius Kambarage Nyerere” in *Prospects: the Quarterly Review of Comparative Education* (Paris, UNESCO: International Bureau of Education), vol. XXIV, no. 1/2, 1994, p. 247-259.
- Nyerere, J.K. (1967). *Education for Self-reliance*, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: Government Printer.
- Nyerere, K.J. (1968). *Ujamaa: Essays on Socialism*, Dar es Salaam: Oxford University Press.
- Nyerere, K.J. (1968). *Uhuru na Ujamaa: Freedom and Socialism. A Selection from Writings and Speeches 1965-1967*, London, New York and Dar es Salaam: Oxford University Press.
- Ocho, L.O (1988) *The Philosophy of Education for Nigeria*, Enugu: Harris Printing and Publishing Company Ltd.
- Ogundowe, E.K. (1988). *Self-Reliancism: Philosophy of a New Order*, Lagos: John West, 1988.

- Ogundowe, E.K. (2004). *Philosophy and Society*, Lagos: Correct Counsels Ltd.
- Ogundowe, E.K. (2007). *Inexhaustibility of Self-Reliance*, Lagos: University of Lagos Press.
- Okoro, C.B. (2009). "Political Leadership in a Pluralistic Society" in *Financial Standard*, Tuesday and Wednesday Editions
- Okoye, R. & Okwelle, P. C. (2014). Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) as a Tool for National Development in Nigeria. *Journal of Educational Policy and Entrepreneurial Research*, 1(2), pp. 22–28.
- Ozomon, H. & Craver, S. (1990). *Philosophical Foundations of Education* 4th ed., London: Merrill Publishing Company.
- Shina. R, H.(1998). *Advanced Entrepreneurship*. Cape Town. Oxford University Press.
- UNESCO (2016). *Strategy for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), 2016–2021*. Paris: UNESCO Publishing.
- UNESCO. (2021). *Skills Development for Youth in Africa: Country Profile - Nigeria*. Paris: UNESCO
- Wokeh P.I & Basil S.P (2011). "Entrepreneurship Education and Value Re-orientation" in *Nigerian Journal of Educational Philosophy*, vol.22, No.2