

ASSESSING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF TVET PRACTITIONERS TO TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN NSUKKA METROPOLIS.

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Abstract

The tourism industry is one with many sub-sectors and according to world tourism organization, is the 2nd highest employer of labour after agriculture. Tourism in Nsukka and elsewhere is growing rapidly and we all appreciate its growth and benefit from its multiple effect on the economy, transport, accommodation, national identity and pride. Much of this growth in the tourism industry is pushed by the skills and services of many TVET practitioners whose efforts have directly and indirectly helped drive the industry to its current global acclaim. However, this category of stakeholders in the tourism industry has been relatively understudied and their roles and contributions to the growth of the tourism industry have been grossly misrepresented or utterly underreported. It is the aim of this paper to assess the roles and contributions of TVET practitioners and their activities to the growth of the tourism industry through the prism of the Nsukka metropolis in Enugu State. To achieve this, a mixed method approach of quantitative and qualitative research methods was employed to gather and analyse data from TVET practitioners, tourists and tourism establishments within the study area. This paper properly documented the contributions of TVET practitioners to the growth of the tourism industry and suggested what can be done to properly build and harness the synergy between TVET practitioners and other players in the tourism industry, as this will yield more opportunities and benefits for both sides.

Keywords: TVET, TVET Practitioners, Tourism industry, and Tourism development

Introduction

Tourism is defined by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) as comprising the activities of persons who willingly travel to and stay in places outside their usual environment for not more than one whole year for business, leisure, and other purposes (UNWTO, 2013). While (Ugurlu, 2010) views tourism as a collection of activities, services and industries which deliver a travel experience comprising transportation, accommodation, eating and drinking establishments, retail shops, entertainment businesses and other hospitality

services provided for individuals or groups travelling away from home. Today, tourism is one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world because it offers socioeconomic progress and inter-connectedness within societies.

In 2017, tourism receipts for Nigeria was 2.6 billion US dollars. Tourism receipts of Nigeria increased from 81 million US dollars in 1998 to 2.611 billion US dollars in 2017, growing at an average annual rate of 39.18 % (Knoema, 2018). The Federal Ministry of Culture, Tourism & National Orientation and the Economist Intelligence Unit (2010) posit that tourism in general currently contributes over 4% to

Nigeria's GDP. According to the Nigeria Tourism Master Plan (NTMP), tourism is the fourth largest earner of foreign

exchange in Nigeria after oil, gas and agriculture. Sadly, a notable observation from the master plan is that the sector lacks reliable statistics and market information and the essential databases needed to implement the Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) are not available (NTMP, 2006). This means that, to a great extent, one cannot quantify the number of TVET practitioners in the tourism industry or in what areas they can be found by mere looking at the NTMP.

In general, tourism is personnel intensive and employs a significant number of female and youth. Socially, one of the most immediate benefits of the tourism industry is its ability to create employment and, in the case of tourism, an added benefit is that it caters for both skilled and unskilled employment (NTMP, 2006). Given that tourism is a service industry, the development of human resources in various areas is essential for a successful and competitive economic sector (Baum & Kokkranikal, 2005). However, shortage of appropriate and specialized core and skilled personnel in the tourism sector as

successfully in the global market, tourism service providers need to have employees who are creative and innovative, highly skilled and who are able to respond to ever emerging challenges of globalization (UNCTAD, 2005). It is this perceived gap in human resource development that has led the authors to examine the roles of TVET and TVET practitioners in the tourism industry, through the eye of the Nsukka Metropolis.

The broad definition of the TVET concept as examined by Milio, Garnizova, and Shkreli (2014) includes all the learning initiatives, short- and longterm, that prepares individuals with a certain level of skill (from basic to advance) for the labour market. Technical and vocational education and training today faces huge demands, challenges and opportunities. Worldwide, governments and other stakeholders expect Technical and Vocational Education and Training using competency-based curricula to address multiple social and economic development priorities, from poverty reduction, food security and social cohesion to economic growth and competitiveness (Mbarushimana, Role and Allida, 2017). And this is why their many roles in the tourism industry cannot be overemphasized.

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well as poor planning for human resource development and investment is one of the critical problems the industry is facing. Because of poor human resources, enterprises have been facing difficulties in improving quality standards and introducing the technological innovations (UNCTAD, 2005). To be able to operate and compete

The lack of relevant skills and knowledge has been an obstacle for successful tourism development in most African countries. The rigidity of the training programmes in Africa has resulted in very few people being equipped with the appropriate skills and knowledge necessary to increase local productivity and create wealth through tourism development

(United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2012). This is where TVET comes in.

The UNESCO (2002) and Nigeria's National Policy on Education defined TVET as a comprehensive term referring to those aspects of the educational processes involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences, the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life (FRN, 2004). For Hollander and Mar (2009), TVET is regarded as an instrument for reducing extreme poverty. These distinctive features of TVET make the application and utilization of technology tools a mandatory component that can transform TVET to achieve a sustainable and globally recognized workforce within a nation. UNESCO (2015) further opined that Technical and vocational education and training' (TVET) is understood as comprising education, training and skills development relating to a wide range of occupational fields, production, services and livelihoods.

According to Mbarushimana, Role and Allida (2017) TVET target groups are mostly the jobseekers and young people who are drop-outs from the middle school level. The basic courses include welding, machining, electrical, air-conditioning repair, pipefitting, and computer application. But we find this categorization by Mbarushimana, Role and Allida as incomplete and misleading because there are other TVET skills that they failed to mention as well as other TVET target groups that also include graduates. Baldauf, Hogarth and Hoyos (2008) reported that placement rates of VET (Vocational Education Training) graduates are, however, significantly higher

than those of graduates from higher education institutions, reflecting a high demand for intermediate skills. They added that detailed statistics indicate that 73 per cent of graduates from 'vocational schools' are employed, 10 per cent self-employed and 16 per cent embark on further studies.

TVET is otherwise regarded as workforce education, particularly, in a more traditional role, it facilitates the adjustment of the skills and knowledge of man to the changing demands of the society. It places emphasis on skill development of the individuals in a chosen occupation (Olaitan, 1993). TVET, therefore, has an important role to play in tourism development with respect to the quality of work and competency of TVET practitioners, increasing customer satisfaction and staff training as well as enhancing the industry's productivity.

Olabiya and Chinedu (2018) in their paper, Perception of Employers in Transforming Technical and Vocational Education and Training vis-a-vis Emerging Technology Tools for Sustainable Workforce Development in Nigeria, aimed at determining the perceptions of Organized Private Sector (OPS) employers' regarding the competency of TVET graduates and the role of emerging technology tools in transforming TVET for a sustainable workforce development using a descriptive survey research design and a sample of 80 OPS employers. A validated and piloted questionnaire based on a 5point Likert scale used as the data collection instrument for the study and data gathered were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics including means, standard deviation and ANOVA.

Data analysis was facilitated using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Their findings revealed that employers were not satisfied with the competency level of TVET graduates as it showed that they are not well prepared to enter the competitive workforce and to be self-reliant. Given the nature and complexity of the field of TVET for a sustainable workforce, it was recommended that the utilization of adequate planning and management of emerging technology tools and resources in teaching TVET programs could contribute enormously to the quality and sustainability of the Nigerian workforce.

In addressing the skills and services gap in their tourism industry, the Tanzanian government introduced TVET qualification in all Vocational and Training Centres in culinary art, food and beverage services, front office and housekeeping, with an aim to prepare individuals to integrate the hospitality sector and operate as a head steward

(Mbarushimana, Role and Allida, 2017). It offers the opportunity to work in a household and ensure that hygiene regulations are respected and food preparation is of quality. The authors stated further that during this time, work would be undertaken in various hospitality enterprises where food and beverages are prepared and served, including restaurants, hotels, lodges, airports, supermarkets, tour companies, catering operations, clubs, pubs, cafes, cafeterias and coffee shops.

The MBAROVE model (coined from the authors' initials) as proposed by Mbarushimana, Role and Allida (2017), contends that students from VTE, what they called 'VTCs', offering tourism and hospitality courses in Culinary Arts can be well prepared for the workforce after

identification of their competencies through the WDA (Workforce Development Agency), TVETs, Tourism and Hospitality Industry have been identified. This means Governments, agents from tourism and hospitality industry like hotel managers, tour companies and other bodies related to tourism will add their inputs and together, they will identify right competencies to be achieved at the end of the program.

Statement of Problem

The Tourism and Hospitality Industry sector in its unique nature of a service sector has seen increased international investment in the recent past. International hotel brands have made a stake in the Nigerian market. Despite this remarkable growth in the industry, there is a big deficiency of the human resources to match these needs. Customer satisfaction is an important aspect of every successful business including the hotel industry.

However, Mubiri (2016) notes that many hotels and restaurant managers face problems trying to satisfy their customers and end up experiencing high levels of customer dissatisfaction because of food and drinks served with low quality and sometimes waiters don't tell exactly when service will be provided. This scenario raises a concern and poses a question; can TVET be incorporated into the tourism sector to fill this gap?

The broad definition of the TVET concept as examined by Milio, Garnizova, and Shkreli (2014) includes all the learning initiatives, short- and longterm, that prepares individuals with a certain level of skill (from basic to advance) for the labour market. Technical and

vocational education and training today faces huge demands, challenges and opportunities. Worldwide, governments and other stakeholders expect Technical and Vocational Education and Training using competency-based curricula to address multiple social and economic development priorities, from poverty reduction, food security and social cohesion to economic growth and competitiveness (Mbarushimana, Role and Allida, 2017). And this is why their many roles in the tourism industry cannot be overemphasized.

Notably, this category of skill and service providers – TVET practitioners – in the tourism industry has been relatively understudied and their roles and contributions to the growth of the tourism industry have been grossly misrepresented or utterly under reported. This paper assesses the contributions of TVET practitioners and their activities to the growth of the tourism industry through the prism of the Nsukka metropolis in Enugu State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study focused on identifying the general contributions of TVET practitioners to the development of the tourism industry in Nsukka Metropolis as well as the perception of TVET and TVET practitioners within the tourism industry of the study area. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Ascertain the general perceptions of TVET and TVET practitioners within the tourism industry.
2. To document the contributions of TVET practitioners to tourism establishments.
3. To identify the relationship between tourism organizations and TVET Practitioners (as regards recruitment/hiring, perception of

quality of services rendered, frequency of patronage).

4. To identify the most prevalent challenges faced by tourism organizations in dealing with TVET practitioners.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study. They are as follows:

1. What are the general perceptions of TVET and TVET practitioners within the tourism industry?
2. What are the contributions of TVET practitioners to tourism establishments?
3. What is the relationship between tourism organizations and TVET Practitioners (as regards recruitment/hiring, perception of quality of services rendered, frequency of patronage)?
4. What are the most prevalent challenges faced by tourism organizations in dealing with TVET practitioners?

Research Method and Procedure

Concurrent mixed methods research approach was employed in this study. According to Gall, Gall, and Borg (2010), mixed approach refers to studies that concurrently employ both quantitative and qualitative methods rather than two or more methods that are purely quantitative or qualitative. They also maintain that to be classified as mixed method research; the study must have design elements that reflect some or all of the features of both qualitative and quantitative research. While quantitative approach was used to measure relationship and differences among variables under focus, qualitative approach was used to explain phenomena more deeply and exhaustively, attempting to make sense of it in terms of the meaning people bring. Briggs, Coleman and Marrison (2012) further described

mixed method approach as the paradigm that systematically combines aspects of quantitative and qualitative research methods into a single study to take advantage of each paradigm's strengths.

Consequently, the quantitative method was a survey of 40 mid-level staff members of tourism establishments was conducted. The valid samples are 40 establishments in three groups of Accommodation, transport and catering service providers. The survey had three distinct sections: individual socio-demographic - includes questions designed to classify the respondents according to the following aspects: gender, occupation, age, education level and marital status; general perception of TVET (in terms of contribution to the tourism industry) – relevant questions here include the benefits TVET personnel bring to tourism organizations, how/if they are hired/recruited, quality of service rendered; and challenges faced by Tourism providers in dealing with TVET practitioners. On the other hand, the qualitative approach involved interview of 8 tourism organization managers, who were conveniently picked from the tourism providers sample size. Unstructured and semi-structured questions were administered to them via personal contact.

The researchers moved from one location to another to administer the research instruments. The researchers asked permission from managers of tourism organizations to distribute the questionnaires and collect data from willing members of their staff. Upon completion, the researchers reached out to managers of tourism organizations to secure interview appointments.

Population of the Study

The population is all the staff members of tourism establishments in Nsukka metropolis. This category of establishments was chosen because they fall within the study area and the research objective.

Sampling and Sampling Technique This study employed the concurrent mixed methods research approach. Purposive and random sampling techniques were used to select the tourism establishments for this study. Purposive sampling was used to select staff members of tourism establishments that were popular and that had standard brick-and-wall structures. 40 mid-level staff members of tourism organizations made up of 15 hotels, 20 restaurants and 5 transport companies were randomly selected for the study based on their availability and accessibility. Additionally, 8 tourism organization managers were randomly picked from the sample tourism organizations for interview.

Instruments for data collection

The instrument for data collection in the quantitative approach was a 3-point structured questionnaire designed to elicit responses from the respondents. The questionnaire had three distinct sections: individual socio-demographic, general perception of TVET (in terms of contribution to the tourism industry) and Challenges facing the TVET relationship with tourism providers and Prospects. The questionnaires were constructed by the researchers with the help of research supervisors and a statistician.

The instrument for data collection in the qualitative approach was Interview Schedules designed to elicit responses from the 8 managers from tourism organizations. The questions also bothered on individual socio-demographic, general perception of TVET (in terms of contribution to the tourism industry) and Challenges facing the TVET relationship with tourism providers and Prospects.

Validity and Reliability of the Instruments

The research instrument was face validated by two experienced experts from the Department of Archaeology and Tourism, and one expert from the Faculty of Vocational and Technical Education both in University of Nigeria. They looked into the research instruments against research questions of which necessary adjustments were made and incorporated into the final versions of the instruments. This was done before the pilot study and the final data collection. To ascertain the reliability of the instrument, the instrument was trial tested on a sample of 20 staff members of tourism organizations in Anambra state. The result yielded a Cronbach alpha of 0.87.

Data Analysis and Results

In order to analyse the general perception of TVET Practitioners in the tourism industry, the first step is to identify the responses from the dataset. Data from interview schedules was coded, analysed and arranged using thematic approach. The statistical tool for analysis was percentages, which was facilitated using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.

This study purposed to assess the contributions of TVET practitioners and their activities to the

growth of the tourism industry through the prism of the Nsukka metropolis in Enugu State, Nigeria. The question was guided by a proposition that TVET practitioners were not given much recognition despite their huge contributions to the growth of the tourism industry. The question was answered by the use of data from the interview schedules and from the questionnaire.

Results

Research Question 1

What are the general perceptions of TVET and TVET practitioners within the tourism industry? This question comprises three sub-questions: a.) Have you heard of Technical Vocational Educational Training (TVET)? b.) Are you a TVET Practitioner? c.) Do you believe TVET-practitioners contribute to the tourism industry in Nsukka?

him. Three of the 8 managers interviewed

Table 1: General Perceptions of Technical Vocational Education Training (TVET) within and outside the tourism industry.

Have you heard of Technical Vocational Educational Training (TVET)?		
	Frequency	Percent
No	14	35.0
Yes	26	65.0
Total	40	100.0
Are you a TVET Practitioner?		
	Frequency	Percent
No	26	65.0
Yes	12	30.0
Total	38	95.0
Do you believe TVET-practitioners contribute to the tourism industry in Nsukka?		
	Frequency	Percent
No	0	0.0
Yes	40	100.0
Total	40	100.0

Of the entire respondents, 65% have heard about TVET before. Then all of the respondents (after TVET was explained to them) said they believe that TVET practitioners benefit the tourism industry. Of them all, only 30% identified as TVET practitioners currently working in a tourism organization.

Responses from the interviews conducted with the managers of tourism organizations revealed almost the same responses gotten above, except for one manager who had not heard of TVET before but understood the concept immediately the researchers explained it to

identified as being TVET-practitioners, having studied Business management under the Faculty of Vocational and Technical Education, University of Nigeria Nsukka. One of the respondents is quoted saying:

“I am a full-fledged TVET graduate but I don’t know if I can call myself a TVET-practitioner. I got this job because I had that TVET background as an advantage”.

Research Question 2

What are the contributions of TVET practitioners to tourism establishments?

Table 2: Contributions of TVET Practitioners to the tourism industry in Nsukka.

What are the contributions of TVET practitioners to tourism establishments?		
	Frequency	Percent
customer service	5	12.50
Product supply	13	32.50
Maintenance	18	45.0
Others	4	10.0
Total	40	100.0

Table 2 shows us the distribution of responses for how, and in what ways, the respondents think TVET practitioners contribute to the tourism industry. From the data gathered, results show that the key areas TVET-practitioners contribute to the tourism industry are in Maintenance services and Product supply, with 45% and 32.5% respectively. 12.5% of the respondents chose customer services as another key area where TVET-practitioners contribute to the industry. Lastly, 4% chose ‘others’ for this section.

All the interview respondents agreed that TVET Practitioners benefit tourism organizations in various ways, ranging from provision of customer services, product supply, staff training and maintenance services. During the interview, one of the managers of the sampled tourism organization revealed that the customer services provided by TVET Practitioners in their organization include —front office management and the sales unit|. Another respondent added that part of the customer services that TVET-practitioners provide in their hotel include —working as stewards/waiters and in the ICT unit|. Talking about product supply, one of the managers said:

“I have two clients or what you call „TVET Practitioners“, who supply bread and other pastries from their workshops to my hotel every morning”.

This response was in line with the rest managers who claimed that one product or the other were supplied by TVET Practitioners to their various tourism organizations. These products include food and drinks, art works and handicrafts. There was also a resounding response for maintenance services provided by TVET Practitioners in tourism organizations. While 5 of the managers said they had TVET Practitioners as part of the maintenance unit of their establishments, the other three said TVET Practitioners were in their technical department. Their services in these departments/units include air conditioning machine servicing, car and generator servicing and electrical configurations.

Interestingly, four of the managers identified ‘staff training’ as another important service rendered to their organizations by TVET-practitioners. They explained that many of their staff members undergo 3 – 6 months training at the hands of certain TVET practitioners before they are recruited fully or promoted. These categories of staff include those in the kitchen unit, front office and the IT/Technical units.

Table 3: Relationship between tourism organizations and TVET Practitioners (as regards recruitment/hiring, perception of quality of services rendered, frequency of patronage).

Are TVET-practitioners part of your Staff?		
	Frequency	Percent
No	18	45.0
Yes	22	55.0
Total	40	100.0
Does your organization hire the services of the TVET-practitioners?		
	Frequency	Percent
No	6	15.0
Yes	34	85.0
Total	40	100.0
Do you think TVET-practitioners contribute to the growth of your organization?		
	Frequency	Percent
No	0	0.0
Yes	40	100.0
Total	40	100.0
Are the services of TVET-practitioners beneficial to the tourism industry at large?		
	Frequency	Percent
No	0	0.0
Yes	40	100.0
Total	40	100.0
How often does your organization patronize TVET-practitioners?		
	Frequency	Percent
Less often	8	20.0
Often	26	65.0
Very often	6	15.0
Total	40	100.0
To what extent are TVET services beneficial to your organization?		
	Frequency	Percent
Low	4	10.0
Normal	8	20.0
High	16	40.0
Very high	12	30.0
Total	40	100.0

Research Question 3

What is the relationship between tourism organizations and TVET-practitioners (as regards recruitment/hiring, perception of quality of services rendered, frequency of patronage)? This question comprises six sub-questions: a.) Are TVETpractitioners part of your Staff? b.) Does your organization hire the

services of the TVETpractitioners? c.) Do you think TVET-practitioners contribute to the growth of your organization? d.) Are the services of TVET-practitioners beneficial to the tourism industry at large? e.) How often does your organization patronize TVET-practitioners? f.) To what extent are TVET services beneficial to your organization?

Table 3 above shows us the distribution of responses for the relationship between tourism organizations and TVET-practitioners. From the responses gathered, only 55% of tourism organizations have TVET-practitioners as part of their staff. Also, 85% of tourism organizations in the study sample area hire the services of TVET-practitioners. All the respondents agree that TVET-practitioners contribute to the growth of their organizations and that their services are beneficial to the tourism industry at large. In addition, when asked to select the extent to which tourism organization perceive TVETpractitioners as being beneficial to their organizations, ‘_very high’ and ‘_high’ recorded 30% and 40% respectively, while ‘_normal’ and ‘_low’ recorded 20% and 10%, respectively. In addition, it can be seen in the table above that 65% of tourism organizations ‘_often’ patronize TVET-practitioners, while 15% do so ‘_very often’ and 20% ‘_less often’.

This implies that there is a high chance of tourism organizations in Nsukka requiring the services of TVET-practitioners in their establishments.

In the interview, the managers differed in their opinions about the extent to which the services of TVET-practitioners benefitted their organizations. Few of them said they had TVET-practitioners as part of their staff, and the rest said that they only needed TVET-practitioners on some occasions of repair and general yearly maintenance and so, they are hired and paid off on such occasions, instead of being retained as part of the regular staff. On the other hand, while 5 of them said they believed their services benefitted them because of their supplies and maintenance services, the other three said they could operate without the services of the TVETpractitioners, thus, rating the benefits of

their services as between ‘_normal’ and ‘_low’.

One manager is quoted saying:

“for example, I am planning on hiring an Electrical Engineer and a Computer scientist to be permanent members of my technical staff. When I do this, I will not need to call those guys to come and service my technical appliances when they break down.”

The interviewees also said that they have all patronized the services of the TVET-practitioners at one time or another, directly or indirectly. When asked in what areas they patronized the services of TVET-practitioners, they mentioned vehicle servicing, plumbing and mechanical works.

Research Question 4

What are the most prevalent challenges faced by tourism organizations in dealing with TVET practitioners? This question comprises three subquestions: a.) Are there some challenges you are facing with TVET practitioners? b.) If ‘_yes’ in the preceding question, in what areas? c.) Which is the most suitable solution to these problems?

Table 4: The most prevalent challenges faced by tourism organizations in dealing with TVET practitioners.

Are there some challenges you are facing with TVET practitioners?		
	Frequency	Percent
No	14	35.0
Yes	26	65.0
Total	40	100.0
If 'yes' in the preceding question, in what areas?		
	Frequency	Percent
Language barrier	3	11.5
Instability of service	7	26.9
Quality of service	12	46.15
Others	4	15.38
Total	26	99.93
Which is the most suitable solution to these problems?		
	Frequency	Percent
Bridging language gaps	3	11.5
Standardization of the service	7	26.9
Global quality assurance	13	50
Others	3	11.5
Total	26	99.99

As shown in the table 4, 65% of tourism organizations say they had any challenges in their relationship with TVET-practitioners. Of this percentage, 46.15% identified ‘quality of service’ as their most prevalent challenge with TVET-practitioners. 26.9% chose ‘instability of service’ and 11.5% chose ‘language barriers’ as challenges they faced. 15.38% of the respondents chose ‘other challenges’, and the reoccurring entries included ‘pricing’, ‘recruitment’ and ‘inadequate training and regulations’.

One manager among the interviewees complained bitterly of having to demonstrate to his ‘mechanic’ every time he comes around to repair the cars because he could neither speak nor understand the English language. While some complained that the quality of TVET services they had received was poor, others complained about their price being too high and unpredictable. Another manager is quoted saying:

“To see them is problem. Sometimes, I check for the plumber down my street when I need his services, and he’s not at his workshop. I have to call him repeatedly before he shows up at the hotel”.

In addition, 50% of this group identified ‘global quality assurance’ as the most suitable solution to the challenges they faced. 26.9% identified ‘standardized of the services’, while 11.5% chose ‘bridging language gaps’ as the most suitable solution. The rest 11.5% who chose ‘others’ suggested their own solutions. The most re-occurring entries of this group include ‘harmonized price regime’ and ‘adequate rules and regulations guiding the practice’, as their most suitable solutions to the challenges highlighted in Table 4.

The interviewees spoke lengthily about suggestions and solutions towards tackling the challenges they faced in their relationship with TVET-practitioners. One of them said it was an issue of giving them standardized training on communication and

technical skills because —this will brush up the semiskilled ones among the TVET-practitioners who pose such challenges|. Another manager opined that ‘a harmonized price regime’, ‘better recruitment process on the part of tourism organizations’ and ‘adequate regulations guiding the practice’ can help tackle the challenges. This manager is quoted saying: —*We can start by having the government mandating a body to institute regulations guiding TVET services, in terms of quality and pricing. Also, to promote this relationship better, managers like myself can then begin to look out for TVET-practitioners during our recruitment process and make it an important requirement for certain positions within their organizations|.*

This he said will engage those TVET-practitioners who are stuck after graduating as well as encourage others to venture into TVET. On the issue of global quality assurance, one of the managers is quoted saying:

“We have to start locally, then nationally/regionally before a global assurance of quality can be achieved for services rendered by TVET-practitioners inside and outside of tourism organizations”.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study sought to find out the various ways TVET practitioners contribute to the growth and development of the tourism industry in Nsukka Metropolis. The research focused on the perception of TVET within and outside the tourism industry and examined the contributions of TVET-practitioners to the development of the tourism industry in the areas of product supply, customer services and maintenance services, among others. It also highlighted the relationship between TVET practitioners and tourism organizations in terms of recruitment/hiring and frequency of patronage. Finally, it identified the prevalent challenges facing tourism organizations in their relationship with TVET practitioners, as well as the most suitable solutions to tackle these challenges.

After the analysis of the responses from the survey and the interviews, this study concludes the following.

Many persons within and outside the tourism industry have heard about Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) and many believe those who practice TVET after their training, render services that yield substantial benefits to the growth of the tourism industry. The services TVET practitioners offer to tourism organizations include but are not limited to, product supply (pastries, food, handicrafts and souvenirs); customer services (front office management, sales, stewarding and waiting duties); and maintenance services (technical, mechanical, electrical and repairs or fixings).

Few tourism organizations recruit TVET-practitioners as part of their regular staff, but many of them prefer to hire them and pay them off as the occasion arises. Also, many tourism organizations often patronize the services of TVET-practitioners directly or indirectly in their day-to-day activities. And the services rendered to tourism organizations by TVET-practitioners are rated high and beneficial by the tourism organizations themselves.

Finally, the most prevalent challenges identified by tourism organizations as bedeviling their relationship with TVET-practitioners include poor quality of service, language barrier and unavailability of service. In the same vein, it is important to note that standardized training on communication and technical skills, a harmonized price regime, better recruitment process on the part of tourism organizations and adequate regulations guiding practice are perceived as the most suitable options to tackle these challenges.

Suggested Solutions

Seeing the growing demand for a more skilled workforce, there is a need to integrate TVET programs into the vocational education curriculum in secondary schools, thus addressing issues confronting both the rural and urban youth. This move can provide a sound foundation on which to build upon. Available streams in secondary education should also have a strong vocational education component in the curriculum to ensure that students can be sufficiently equipped with both the knowledge and skills needed to directly join the labour sector or to have the option to pursue higher studies. Keeping this in view, we agree with Mbarushimana, Role and Allida (2017) who suggested that there needs to be four major components in a given vocational education program for secondary schools: academic, technical, entrepreneurship skills and life-long skills. The skills imparted need to be within a country's social context and be area sensitive.

Pioneering and rich experiences from other countries on Quality Assurance of TVET should be studied and replicated in the areas of training standards development, skills testing and certification, and accreditation. According to Mbarushimana, Role and Allida (2017), some forms of quality assurance include an external examination of polytechnic graduates by a Board of Technical Education; institutional registration and program accreditation by a national coordinating body for TVET; skills testing and certification by a certifying body or accredited professional bodies; a national vocational qualification (NVQ) system which recognizes certification from the International Standard Organization (ISO).

Building linkages among stakeholders and tourism training providers is important to encourage and create synergy. This will contribute to developing training programs that not only meet the immediate needs of the industry, but also address the long-term goals of national planning, as well as the desire of managers and workers for life-long career development in the tourism industry. There is currently a major gap existing between the skills students have when they graduate from TVET institutions and the demand by the tourism industry for qualified and expert workforce. In addition, the education curriculum for tourism and hospitality training at many TVET institutions needs to be reviewed, as there is often a mismatch between the training being offered by the vocational courses and skills needed by the labour market (Agrawal, 2012; Mayaka & Akama, 2007).

TVET programs must be demand-driven in order to be effective and relevant. This gap between the growth of the industry and qualified workforce, calls for government intervention toward matching the industry growth by introducing competency-based curricula in TVET programs (WDA, 2014) and preparing tailor-made packages to match the needs, convenience and interests of tourism providers. When financed by government, a TVET Centre can be established to specifically offer a range of training services to support tourism development. TVET centre will support these businesses with the provision

of accredited training in business management; tour guiding, food and beverage and housekeeping, and so on. A partnership with the tourism industry and TVET will help train those in rural communities to pick up basic training to run their small-scale tourism in their communities and provide unique tourism experience to the guests, thus providing a win-win situation for both TVET practitioners and the tourism industry at large.

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