

## **VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION: A TOOL FOR YOUTHS EMPLOYABILITY FOR A SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper focuses on the Vocational and Technical Education for livelihood and sustainable development in Nigeria. Vocational and Technical Education plays major roles at promoting community and national development and facilitates the acquisition of applied skills and basic scientific knowledge. The concepts of sustainable development, challenges, strategies and the role of Vocational and Technical Education as appropriate tools towards development of both individuals and the nation at large are discussed in this paper. To proffer solutions to some of the problems facing the country, recommendations were made among others that: government and private sectors should provide equipments and facilities in vocational and technical schools for the acquisition of skills; government and other educational stakeholders should ensure that vocational and technical programmes are made relevant to provide youths and graduates needed skills for sustainable of both human and national development in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Development, Sustainable, Vocational and Technical Education

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### **Introduction**

The development of any nation based on the social and economic contributions of her citizen. A sustainable level of development is what is desired by every society irrespective of its size and stage of development. This is because any society that is not conscious of the welfare of its future generation is bound to perish. Sustainable development is therefore better achieved through education which is the greatest investment that should be made by a country for a quick and effective national development in the areas of economic, political and human resources (Sulayman, 2014)

It is an established fact that the formal and non-formal systems of education as practiced in Nigeria and most of African

countries patterned after the British public schools resulted in the production of graduates for the jobs that are not available. These unemployed graduates roam the streets of major cities of Nigeria in search of jobs in the midst of employment opportunities, especially in the different technologies. Salami (2013) traces the gap between what is taught in school and the skills required to perform on the job as being wide, hence the high percentage of young graduates who are unemployable for lack of skills that would have made them profitable for any employment.

Osuala (2007) in Oyebolu (2010), Vocational Education has not enjoyed the same status as science and mathematics education in both developed and developing

countries. It has been treated as a second rate discipline to meet the needs of the under-privileged masses, the lower social classes and the so-called drop-outs in academic and literal education. He went further to say that the poor perception has not changed but the trend in global sustainable technological development suggests that there should be a paradigm shift to accommodate and promote vocational education in both formal and non-formal educational systems since the concept of sustainable development is a life-long process. The adequate provision of vocational education especially in the non-formal education system will certainly curb youth idleness, restiveness and inclination to crime as witnessed all over the country while its adequate provision at the formal system will be an opportunity to prepare the individuals to bring about the desired social changes and user in an era of sustainable technological development. The need for skilled workers has been increasing at an accelerated rate while the need for semi-skilled and un-skilled has declined drastically. Demands have increased for additional personnel in research, development, production and service in applied science and technology areas.

Olaitan (1996), described the inability of the Nigerian graduates from the formal school system to be gainfully employed as "De-schooling", which he described as the process of negative mismanagement, misplacement and misdirecting the intelligence and ability of a child in the learning process. While technical and vocational education has continued to thrive in many countries, especially in the Asian Tigers which had common developmental challenges as Nigeria, the country has neglected this aspect of education to her peril. The consequence of this neglect is that the society lacks skilled technicians, bricklayers, carpenters, painters and auto-mechanics, laboratory and pharmacy technicians, electrical/electronic technicians, etc. The collapse of buildings due to poor workmanship and use of substandard materials stare us in the face everyday. Today, Nigeria gets her skilled workers from the neighbouring countries for most of her big constructions and infrastructure

(communications, transportation, roads and rail networks). The neglect therefore of technical and vocational training in our formal and non-formal educational systems is socially and economically injurious to the nation because it robs it of graduates who would have contributed tremendously to national development. No wonder we wear the "toga" of a poor state in the midst of bountiful human and natural resources.

Vocational and technical education facilitates the acquisition of applied skills and basic scientific knowledge. it is a planned programme of courses and learning experiences that begin with the exploration of career options, academic and life skills that enables the achievement of high academic standards, leadership preparations for industry and continuing education (Ozoemena, 2013).

Vocational and technical education has the potential of bringing about sustainable development in Nigeria because the area it covers include Agricultural education, Business education, Fine and applied art education, Home economics education and Technical education which on the basis of their natures, aims and objectives can all lead to sustainable development. It is thus against this background that this paper looks at vocational and technical education as a tool for sustainable development in Nigeria.

### **Vocational and Technical Education**

The term vocational and technical education is viewed differently by scholars and institutions based on their notions and orientations. Olaitan (1996) defines vocational and technical education as the form of education which emphasized the development of occupational skills needed for preparation of work. It is a form of education which promotes dignity of labour by entrenching work as goal of education. In the view of Ekong (2006), vocational and technical education is a specialized training organized either in a formal or informal setting for the purpose of imparting occupational skills to individuals or groups of individuals. This is aimed at enabling them to acquire skills that would make them render specialized services or become creative which at the end, would make them to be self-employed and employers of labour.

Okoro (1993) opined that vocational and technical education is any form of education which primary purpose is to improve persons for employment in recognized occupations. This is to say vocational education provides skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for effective employment in specific occupations.

The National Policy on Education (2013) defined vocational and technical education as that aspect of education which leads to practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge which prepares graduates for employment in the world of work. Ibitoye (2007) opined that vocational and technical education can be seen as the type of education designed for the preparation of persons for useful employment in a particular occupation. Vocational and technical education blends together intellectual capacity and practical skills and it has been in existence before the advent of formal education called traditional education under which we have agricultural education, trades and crafts as profession.

Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013), vocational and technical education comprises of these disciplines: Agricultural education, Business education, Home management, Fine and applied arts, Music, Food nutrition, Automobile engineering, Electrical engineering, etc. Hence, we can note that vocational and technical education are the area of education where an individual will have a skill, occupation and ability to be self-employed, independent and also earn a living.

Vocational and technical education according to UNESCO (2002), is the form of education that helps the recipient to articulate the mutual relationship between school and world of work thereby eliminating all forms of social discrimination. This could be achieved as individual is helped to develop the necessary mental tools, technical skills, entrepreneurial ability and attitudes required for self-reliance, active and intelligent participation in team work as well as performing effective leadership roles in the society.

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Economics education and Technical education which on the basis of their natures, aims and objectives can all lead to sustainable development. It is thus against this background that this paper examined vocational and technical education as a tool for sustainable livelihood and national development.

### **Sustainable Development in Vocational and Technical Education**

National development comprises of the general level of efficiency attained in a nation's production process as it affects output, real income and standard of living (Rilwan, 2016). Nwogu (2009), the well-being of any nation largely depends on its sustainable economic development. The concept of sustainable development has become a global medium for expressing the need to depart from hitherto dominant models of development that apparently fail to balance the needs of people and the planet in the pursuit of peace and prosperity.

Usoro, Usoro, Akpan & Otis (2010) defined development in terms of reduction in the levels of poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and income inequality. However, Dike (2007) emphasizes that "national development encompasses social and political development. As well, economic development is defined as the attainment of a number of ideas of modernization such as a rise in productivity, social and economic equity, improved institutions and values".

Sustainable development according to Hasna (2014) is concerned with the carrying capacity of natural system with social, political and economic challenges faced by humanity. Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present and not compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

### **Challenges of Vocational and Technical Education in Nigeria**

There are a number of challenges facing vocational and technical education which has impacted negatively on national development in Nigeria. Ekpenyong (2008) identified lack of adequate training facilities. He stressed that about 50% of the institutions running vocational and technical education in Nigeria are yet to meet approved national standards. In many of the

schools, basic facilities such as furnitures, laboratories, running water, electricity, computers, etc are missing. Amoor (2008) also highlighted funding of vocational and technical education programme as inadequate. Financial sustainability facilitates the development of knowledge which requires innovative measures so as to ensure that public vocational and technical education institutions are not deprived of much needed resources for their future expansion.

Nwaka & Amaehule (2011) also identified lack of awareness about vocational and technical education programmes at various levels of school curricula as other shortcomings. In their view, it has taken the educationist working for the government more than twenty years to develop the national policy and the curriculum, yet the general public do not seem to understand the implication of it in the development of the economy.

### **Vocational and Technical Education: A Strategy for Sustainable National Development**

Nation building or development has to be sustainable in practical terms. This however, is dependent on available resources, the ability to optimize the application of these resources beneficially as well as keeping the physical environment safe, healthy, stable and highly conducive. Ozoemena(2013). Sustainability according to the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) is the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising future generations' opportunities to meet their own needs. Sustainability include a just and peaceful society, gender equality and intergenerational equity.

Vocational and technical education constitutes a vital engine for economic, social, practical and all round development of any nation. It has been identified as a tool for sustainable, virile and stable economy. In Nigeria, vocational and technical education was previously not seen as fundamental to national development or for the economic development but for school dropouts.

Hallack (1990) argues that vocational and technical education is linked to human

resource development and that it impacts on more than just economic growth but also on the overall development of the individual and the society. Akpomie (2009) asserts that no nation can move forward technologically, industrially and economically without developing a strong partner initiative in the creation of wealth, poverty reduction and employment generation with required skills. These skills include technical human and specific skills to cope with the challenges of the future since vocational and technical education is a vital tool for the sustainable advancement of any nation. Vocational and technical education thus:

- 1) Serve as learning and training centre for the translation of dreams and ideas into successful ventures.
- 2) Builds technical and conceptual skills in individual that prepares him for today's world of work.
- 3) Leads to technological advancement
- 4) Reduces poverty and idleness
- 5) Directs towards self-reliant and sustainable means of livelihood
- 6) It creates many social changes in the society e.g. technological changes in various fields of endeavor in which have resulted into improvement in food production, communication, information processing and business management.

If vocational and technical education is efficiently implemented, it could assist the nation to overcome poverty and its associated problems such as unemployment, hunger, malnutrition, low standard of living, etc.

### **Career Opportunities Available in Vocational and Technical Education for Livelihood**

Self-employment is one of the greatest instrument for sustainable economy in a country like Nigeria. It is very necessary to consider the courses under vocational and technical education and their contribution to sustainable livelihood and national development.

Agricultural education deals with production of edible crops and plants, raw materials, fishes, birds, animals, etc. Many Nigerian through rearing cattle, goats, sheep,

keeping poultry, fisheries, selling of farm products have become stinkingly rich.

Business education equips its graduates with necessary skills and potentials that will make them perform very well in business and also be self-employed and above all create jobs by being employers of labour. There are many job opportunities in business education such as establishment of business centres for typesetting photocopy, laminating, printing, selling of recharge cards sim packs, phones, and other goods and services.

From Fine and applied arts, means of livelihood we can derive there include graphic design, textile design, ceramic design, metal works fashion design, photography, film making and cinematography and printing technology.

Home economics offers home child care and development, nutrition, interior design and decoration, clothing, customer education fast food centres, etc as means of livelihood to as many that want to live above poverty.

There are other areas like mechanical engineering, civil engineering, electrical engineering, building engineering which will make any serious minded Nigerian self-employed and live above poverty.

### Conclusion

Sustainable development is highly desirable to every society irrespective of its level of development. In order to make poverty and other malice history and also remain competitive in the world of economy, vocational and technical education is a major link between people and productivity and it occupies an important position as far as sustainable development is concerned. Vocational and technical education students should be properly empowered and equipped with necessary skills and information in order to reduce poverty and unemployment.

### Recommendations

In the light of the above, it is recommended that:

4. Both government and private sectors should provide equipment and facilities in vocational and technical education for acquisition of skills.
5. Government and other education stakeholders should make sure that educational programmes at all levels

of education are made relevant to provide youth and graduates needed vocational and technical skills.

6. Technical educators should involve technological, technical and business organizations, the government, NGOs and successful industrialists in their service delivery to the students.
7. A training plan that states clearly what the student is expected to provide should be developed as an integral part of national strategy.
8. Regular seminars and workshops should be organized to keep teachers abreast of current development in the field of vocational and technical education and how best to impact them on their students

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