



VOCATIONAL EDUCATION: A PANACEA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper sees vocational education as a major panacea for whatever sustainable development that has to take place in Nigeria. Just like in every other African country in the present phenomenon in the continent, vocational education is very germane to move the nation forward and to achieve its glory. Theoretical framework relevant to this paper is therefore discussed, also historical background to the concept of sustainable development as described by scholars of education are expressed. The paper looks at vocational education and its function as described by scholars and equally expatiates on how different types of education can be manipulated for sustainable development to take place. More importantly now that unemployment has bedeviled the country Nigeria and the entire African continent making the youths now engage in nefarious activities thus leading to unsustainable development. As such, this paper lays emphasis on the specification of the National Policy on Education (2014) as the way forward to achieve a viable sustainable development for the country and the continent at large. Amongst Suggestions given towards achieving this purpose are: that vocational education should be included in the curriculum alongside every course of study a candidate applied for in the tertiary institutions, that measures should be taken by government to monitor the implementation of this vocational education program put in place for efficiency and effectiveness to achieve the goals of the National Policy on Education, otherwise any attempt at sustainable development may end up as a mirage.

Keywords: Vocational, Education, Panacea, Sustainable, Development.

INTRODUCTION

The development of any nation is based on the viability of her educational system, be it economic, political or socio, education no doubt plays significant role. Considering the state of the economy and the economic development in the country Nigeria and the entire African continent a better option for sustainable development is the vocational education. This is because the problem of unemployment and poverty are really affecting most families in the country no wonder the National Population Commission NPC,(2007) states that almost 80% of Nigerian youths are jobless and unemployed. This submission is a great threat to the present and future of this country as it has no doubt snowballed into the various social vices the country Nigeria and most African countries are currently battling with Owo (2017) submits that youth unemployment metamorphosed into societal ills such as restiveness, hooliganism, thuggery, rape, armed robbery, prostitution, kidnapping, cultism, quick money syndrome, smoking, alcoholism, examination malpractices among others. All of these vices perpetrated by mostly the unemployed in the country which has made insecurity the other of the day. Security of lives and properties have become a mirage in the country as it appears the various government at all levels are finding it hard to curtail.

No wonder, an adage which says idle hands are the devils workshop, idle lips are his mouthpiece and idle minds are the devils playground. Vocational education of any type prepares the recipient to work as a technician or take up employment in a skilled craft or trade as a tradesperson or artisan. Vocational education is a quite

different type of learning option from the path of Colleges or universities. It offers a path that imparts the skills and knowledge needed. It should be noted that vocational education instructions are intended to equip persons for industrial or commercial occupations which may be obtained either formally in trade schools, technical secondary schools or on the job training programs or more informally by picking up the necessary skills on the job. It is however pertinent to state categorically that Vocational education be introduced to learners at tender age which means that it should be introduced to learners right from Primary school to adapt the slogan which says “catch them young”

Statement of the problem

There is the problem of unemployment and joblessness in the country which cut across the educated who are qualified in their various field of endeavour and equally among the semi and stack illiterates which have really affected the economy and also snowballed into various crimes being perpetrated by the unemployed. The unemployed and joblessness has equally aggravated the state of insecurity in the land. Vocational education has therefore been considered to be the panacea to the various problems caused by joblessness, as it empowers the recipients and even make them employers of labour.

Objectives of the Study

- i. the objective of this study is to emphasise the importance of vocational education.
- ii. to employ vocational education as a means to an end to

- unemployment and poverty in the country.
- iii. to empower the unemployed and youth economically.
- iv. to enable the unemployed channel their prowess to the right direction.
- v. to put an end to all forms of social vices in the country.
- vi. to improve the economy of Nigeria and the entire African continent.
- vii. to enable Nigeria and entire African continent be at par with other developed nations economically and crime free,

Types of Education for sustainable development

Education is always viewed to be the bedrock of any sustainable development. It is always the key to the success of any form of development, which could be in the health, economy, politics, energy, environment and other sectors. As such, the country needs to focus more on the education of individuals to enable them develop the zeal to learning and being innovative in sustainable development of this new normal world. Emphasize have been laid on the various types of education and their functions in the lives of individuals. Ogundipe (2021) identifies these four types of education as:

- i. **Casual education**, which involves learning picked up unintentionally because it is not intended. It is also indeterminant, since it has no content and method but there is always a teacher and learner who do not know they are just that.

This casual education will be very much germane in character modification of every individual when the elders in the society do not look away in a different direction while abnormalities are being perpetrated by especially the youths in their environment. This has always been the practice in the yester-years when an erring child is always called to order by others in the community. This has always led to sustainable development of the society. This should also be part of the new normal of the present world.

- ii. **Informal Education** is another type identified in which there is a method, intention/purpose as in the traditional setting where men and women learn to dress and do things according to their customs. It is not so organized because people learn through correction and observation. In this type of education, every individual must be made to know the value system of the society. The behaviour and attitude of a growing child must be monitored and guided as it used to be in the past years. The culture and norms of the society the youths belong should not be discarded for foreign ones that they are imbibing now. They have not brought any sustainable development but rather, backwardness to the society. For instance, some youths now wear rags, which to them, is fashionable. All hands must

therefore be on deck to checkmate these behaviours for sustainable development.

- iii. **Non-formal education** on the other hand, is a relatively organized learning which is carried out, outside the formal school and usually on a part-time basis, since it is usually for workers or those already contributing their quota to national development and is usually on voluntary basis. Under this, youths because they constitute the larger part of the society must be duly engaged and encouraged to participate in any form of entrepreneurship if they are or not inclined to the formal type of education. This type of education will allow them; acquire skills which in spite of the formal education will provide a mean of self-sustenance for development. Any unmeaningful programme should not be encouraged by the government at all levels (Local, State or Federal) to be showcasing activities that will not bring development to the country. For example, programmes where both male and female youths are brought together under the same roof and were shown on television sets perpetrating immoral acts and being awarded huge amounts for such activities is rather appalling. While youths who engage in educational debates and quiz competitions are merely given stipends is not encouraging and

will never bring any meaningful sustainable development.

- iv. The last of these which is not the list types of education is the **formal one**. It is highly organized, rigid and uses some criteria for admission into the system. It is also certificated and examination oriented. However, in whatever package any of these types of education comes, it is a basic objective of development that can lead to sustainability of the country especially if it is geared towards the new normal world of the present time. These education types similarly have to be utilized in the new normal world for sustainability to perform their functions as speculated by Fafunwa (1974) in Oyelade (2017) definition of education as the aggregate of all processes by which a child or young adult develops the abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviours which are of positive values to the society in which he lives.

Under this Formal education, the government of the country has to be very much proactive in its policy formulation and implementation since they determine all activities carried out in any level of the school system. Emphases should be placed on all the policies that will lead to sustainable development and should be duly monitored by personnel given the assignment.

Vocational education can be acquired from any of the types of education mentioned above: formal, informal and non-formal education which can be acquired right from home informal education for instance if a child comes from a family where they are known or noted for a particular vocation such as blacksmithing, mat and cloth weaving (Aromolaran (2010), such a child must have mastered the skill right from infancy.

So, also in the formal system such as we have it in the various Vocational and technical education institutions where students acquire skills such as auto electrical works, Painting and decorating, Fishery etc. At the non-formal system of education there are the artisans who are craft masters or mistresses who train the apprentices in sewing, hair dressing just to mention but a few.

Vocational Education

Vocational education according to Maduka (1980) is defined as a type of education deliberately designed for the development of skills and knowledge which can be useful to both the individual concerned and the society. In the views of Akaninwor (2004) who defines vocational education as a type of education or training designed for preparing the individual learner to earn a living (to be self-reliant). According to UNESCO (1978), vocational education is the type of education that is designed to prepare skilled personnel at lower levels of qualification for one or a group of occupations, trades or jobs. It should be noted that Vocational education is equally provided at the upper senior classes and even in tertiary institutional level which include general education, practical skills and related theories needed by the various occupation.

The above definitions are clear indications that vocational education aims at providing a means of livelihood for the recipient whereby they can be gainfully employed and self-reliant. The word poverty will by no means be associated with recipient of vocational education or technical skill which will inferably sustain development in the various community and the nations at large.

Ojo (2019) equally corroborates the aforementioned views of the scholar by seeing Vocational education as geared towards self-reliance. It is a form of learning that involves training and tutorship. She further cites (FGN 2014:24) that, the Nigerian Education Policy extends this type of education beyond mere training in vocation, it includes Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), which is a comprehensive educational process involving the study of technologies and related Sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life. She concludes saying vocational education is all encompassing. It includes all forms of training for the acquisition of skills to empower those that are committed to it and to improve their economic fortune in a poverty ridden society like Nigeria, where the orientation of people is to find jobs in the formal sector.

History of sustainable development

According to Mensah (2019), quoting Pigou (1920) sustainable development as a concept was derived from economics as a discipline. This was said to have emerged on the discussion regarding whether the capacity of the earth's limited natural resources would be able to continually support the existence of the

increasing human population which gained prominence with the Malthusian population theory in the early 1800s. Mensah (2019) explains further that, as far back as 1789, Malthus had already postulated that the rate at which the human population was growing in a geometric progression, while subsistence could grow in only an arithmetic progression and it was believed that population growth was likely to outstrip the capacity of the natural resources to support the needs of the increasing population. In addition, Mensah (2019) citing Eblen & Eblen (1994) opinion that, if therefore measures were not taken to check the rapid population growth rate, exhaustion or depletion of natural resources would occur, resulting in misery for human.

However, in the same vein, Mensah (2019) cites Dernbach (2003) and Paxton (1993) argument that the concept of sustainable development received its first major international recognition in 1982 and the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm. Mensah (2019) reiterates the developments that followed which culminated into the World Commission on Environment and Development, chaired by Gro Harlem Brundtland of Norway who renewed the call for sustainable development. This resulted to the development of the Brundtland report entitled “Our Common Future” in 1987. Since the emergence of this term “sustainable development, it has continuously been used in policy discourse and of global concerns (Ogundipe, 2021). Likewise this Brundtland (1987) report according to Ogundipe (2021) gave a definition to sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs.

Succinctly puts, this historical background is very much relevant to this paper if the youths of the African continent especially Nigeria have to be gainfully engaged for their self-actualization and survival at a time like this, when all the tiers of government (local, state and federal) cannot offer the majority of them any form of employment. Hence, it is very much pertinent for them to have proper and functional training in any of the vocational education skill acquisition programmes in order to have a sustainable development to move forward as individual as well as a country.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is known as development that attends to the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (United Nations General Assembly, 1987) United Nations added that this development is depended on three pillars namely: economic growth, social equality and environmental sustainability. As such the inability of only formal education may constitute disempowerment, helplessness, powerlessness which in this regard is the inability of a person certificated in formal education alone may constitute disempowerment if not harmonized with Vocational education. It is the limitation of formal education alone that brings about poverty and unemployment. Infact this no doubt is one of the reasons that brought about the 6-3-3-4 system of education the country is currently implementing as against the 6-5-4 system of education which was said to be the academic, because it does not prepare the recipient for self sufficiency, empowerment and it does not prepare the recipient to be producer/employer of labour but job seekers. That is, people scouting around for white collar job. Hence,

sustainable development goal addresses “the end of poverty in all its form everywhere; it is equally expected that by 2030, extreme poverty would have been eradicated for all people everywhere currently living at less than \$1:25 per day (UNDP, 2017)

Sustainable development is quite pertinent in bringing about an end to poverty and unemployment without jeopardizing the future because it always encourages us to conserve and enhance our resources by gradually changing the manners in which we develop and use technologies. It therefore behoves on all countries especially African countries to meet their basic needs of development, food energy, water and sanitation. Sustainable development always encourage us to conserve and enhance our resources, by gradually changing the manners in which we develop and use technologies, which implies that countries should meet their basic needs of employment, food, energy water and sanitation.

Relevance of Sustainable Development to Vocational Education

Considering the goals of sustainable development as itemized by the United Nation which are the world’s shared plan to end severe poverty, reduce inequality and protect the planet by 2030, one realized that the goals aligns with the purpose/relevance of vocational education.

The seventeen goals of sustainable development

1. Eliminate poverty
2. Erase hunger
3. Establish good health and well-being
4. Provide Quality Education

5. Enforce gender equality
6. Improve clear water sanitation
7. Grow affordable and clean energy
8. Create decent work and economic growth
9. Increase industry, innovation and infrastructure
10. Reduce inequality
11. Mobilize sustainable cities and communities
12. Influence responsible consumption and production
13. Organize climate action
14. Develop life below water
15. Advance life on land
16. Guarantee peace, justice and strong institutions
17. Build partnerships for the goals.

Vocational education as listed above are activities which aim at acquiring the skills, knowledge and has also been seen as a major part of national development strategies through which many societies because of the impact it has on human resource development productivity and economic development. The National Policy on Education (2004) lays great emphasis on the development of vocational and technical education for the total development of the country which are exactly what the Seventeen sustainable development goals are hammering on Ogundipe (2021) submits that an important goal of vocational and technical education is to increase the employability of school leavers, so that they will not be job seekers but entrepreneur, job providers or employers of labour.

Focus on National Policy on Education (2014)

The National Policy on Education since its inception in 1977, the second and the third editions published in 1981 and

1998 respectively, the fourth edition in 2004, fifth edition in 2007 while the present sixth edition in 2014 have copiously been coming up with emphasis on the inculcation of vocational education in the school system in its philosophy and objectives. For instance, it is stipulated that, government shall ensure institutions operate in collaboration with relevant industries, professional bodies and establishments to ensure practical training and experiences for students.

However, this laudable statement as written in the National policy on Education (2014) has not been implemented adequately and appropriately especially in the practical aspects. Consequently, there is dire need to pay more attention to vocational education in every school curriculum at all levels that is the primary, secondary and tertiary institutions for sustainable development to take place in the lives of the individual especially the youths and the country as a whole.

Suggestions in form of Recommendations

- a. Vocational education should be included in the curriculum alongside every course of study a candidate applied for in the tertiary institutions.
- b. Vocational education should also be introduced to pupils from primary four, through secondary levels before they get to the tertiary institutions. After all, there is the saying that “practice makes perfect”. This will keep them from being idle and engaging in nefarious activities.
- c. Measures should be taken by government to monitor the implementation of this vocational education programmes put in place for efficiency and effectiveness to achieve the goals of the National

Policy on Education otherwise any attempt at sustainable development may end up as a mirage.

- d. Public enlightenment programmes should be carried out by the government at intervals of time to parents, on the benefits of vocational education programme to discourage their children from being involved in nefarious activities.
- e. The Guidance counselling departments of all the institution of learning should be more proactive in advising the learners on the relevance and benefits of vocational education for sustainable development of themselves and the nation.

Conclusion

This paper concludes that, Education especially the one involving vocational programme remains the panacea to sustainable development in the African continent at a time like this, when unemployment is so rife and has turned some youths in Nigeria to shady characters. It just behoves that all hands have to be on deck by stakeholders to make the seventeen goals of sustainable development achievable by 2030 through the laudable programmes of vocational education as stipulated by the National Policy on Education at all levels of institutions Primary, Secondary and tertiary institutions.

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