



VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TRAINING FOR POVERTY ERADICATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Vocational education and training is very cardinal to sustainable development of a country. Training in general has potential benefits which accrue to the individual, organization and the nation in general. To the individual, vocational education training enhances their future earning potentials, career progression and employability. The paper argues that the individual or groups will need vocational education training in order to perform competently. With the vocational skill acquired, the individual can determine his own destiny. Because of the importance of vocational education skills to the individual, it is important that every individual access the training in order to contribute to sustainable development. Currently in Nigeria, not everybody is able to access modern vocational education training with the rise in population growth and economy going down, government is unable to offer social amenities. Even schools and colleges cannot match the rising population and as a result, only fewer people have access to the modern vocational education training. This paper therefore focused on the contribution of vocational education training towards poverty eradication and sustainable development in Nigeria in order to improve the economic status of the country and welfare of the people, which would eventually lead to job creation. It concludes that to solve the problem of widespread poverty, priority should be giving to vocational education training.

Keywords: Vocational education training, Poverty eradication, Sustainable Development.

Introduction

Education at all levels can shape the world of tomorrow, equipping individuals and societies with the skills, perspectives, knowledge and values to live in a sustainable manner. Education helps individuals fulfil and apply their abilities and talents. It increases productivity, improves health and nutrition, reduces family size, presents specific knowledge, develops general reasoning skills, causes values to change, increases receptivity to new ideas, and changes attitude toward work and society. Education has both consumer good and investment good component (Nafghizer, 2004).

Vocational Education training for sustainable development is a vision of education that seeks to balance human and economic well-being with the major aim of eradicating poverty in Nigeria. Vocational Education for sustainable development is a



dynamic concept that encompasses a new vision of education that seeks to empower people of all ages to assume responsibility for creating and enjoying a sustainable future. The overall aim of Vocational Education training for Sustainable Development is to empower citizens to act for positive environmental and social change, implying a participatory and action-oriented approach. Skill training enhances productivity and sustains competitiveness in the global economy. World wide countries are renewing efforts to promote vocational education training, this is because it is the only way to prepare young people for the world of work, which reaches out to the marginalized and excluded groups to engage them in income-generating livelihoods. High unemployment has been leading to increasing poverty and serious social problems in Nigeria. Coincidentally, there has been a decline in TVET enrolments (EFA, 2000).

Vocational education is a learning process that requires from learners/students self direction and self management, unlike the traditional stereotype teaching. It seeks to provide students with the knowledgeable skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety of schooling from primary or secondary schools through graduate university programmes (Wikipedia, 2011). Their importance to sustainable development cannot be over emphasized because both are lifelong learning processes that start as early as elementary school and progressing through all levels of education, including adult education. They focus on developing understanding and capacity for pursuit, of entrepreneurial behaviours, skills and attributes in widely different contexts. It can be portrayed as open to all and not exclusively the domain of the high-flying growth-seeking business person. The propensity to behave vocational and entrepreneurially is not exclusive to certain individuals. There is need to revitalized Vocational education training as the best means of eradicating poverty through improved economic opportunities for the teaming youth of Nigeria. It is in recognition of this that government has gone into agreement with the UNESCO's section for technical and vocational education through the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE). Currently, the Federal Government is emphasizing on the need for Vocational Education training at all levels of education which aims to better equip large numbers of young Nigerians for the world of work.

Vocational Education

Vocational education can be regarded as experience gained directly or indirectly that enables one to participate in a socially useful occupation either in or out of school, at various levels and to be sufficiently equipped to become an intelligent creator of goods



and services. The continued deterioration of the national economy is a clear signal to every Nigerian to try hard for a reliable and independent means of survival. This can only be realized through improved vocational training programmes. According to Abdulahi (1994) vocational and technical education is that aspect of education that involves the acquisition of techniques and application of the knowledge of science for the improvement of man's surrounding. Technical and vocational education prepares one for the world of work with which the individual becomes reliant and can make contributions to the development of the society. With the economy being more globalised than ever, it is important to have a background and a skill set that allows graduates to become immersed in the global economy right from graduation (Cote, 2007). It is important for these students or graduates to have skills in innovation in technology education and entrepreneurship to be ready to fit into the global market place on which today's economy depends on. Furthermore, the blueprint on education (2014) asserts that the aims and objectives of technical and vocational education are to:

- a) Provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and business particularly at craft, advanced craft and technical levels;
- b) provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development;
- c) give training and impart the necessary skills to individuals who shall be self-reliant economically;
- d) provide people who can apply scientific knowledge to the improvement and solution of environmental problems for the use and convenience of man;
- e) enable our young men and women to have an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology;
- f) give an introduction to professional studies in engineering and other technologies.

The philosophy of technical and vocational education in Nigeria emphasizes that any programme that will qualify as "education" in Nigeria should not just offer "certificates" but must be work-oriented. This will go a long way in solving under-employment/un-employment and the attendant problems. It will also empower the graduates to become relevant producers of goods and services as well as become sensible consumers of same. The Nigeria dream of building a truly egalitarian society can only be achieved through the effective use of Technical and Vocational Education. It offers life-long education to all types of learners and enables them realize and develop their self-potentials maximally (NPE, 2014).



Vocational Education Training and Sustainable Development

Sustainable National development can be explained to mean progress, advancement or qualitative changes that is evident in a nation over a period of time. These are the contributions of individuals who transmit desirable values, habits, wisdom from one generation to the other, so as to ensure continuity. What makes a nation to achieve greatness is the quality of contributions of her citizens in human and socio economic development. Effective education is a potent system which every society has being suing to promote desired social, political and economic agenda.

Sustainable development is all about allowing this present generations to meet their needs without compromising the ability of the next generations to meet theirs. As stated earlier, unemployment and poverty are among other socio economic development challenge that bedevils Nigeria which will hinder intergenerational equity, gender equity, just and peaceful societies, social tolerance, environmental preservation and restoration, poverty alleviation and natural resource conservation etc. thus, the importance of functional education that promotes self reliance among graduates which vocational education philosophy strives to achieve cannot be overemphasized

Vocational education is the type of education that equips its recipients to use their heads and hands in order to survive in a world that is essentially work-oriented. The philosophy of Vocational Education is basically to enhance human dignity and enthrone work and labour by making individuals acquire and/or develop enough saleable and employable skills, competencies, attitudes as well as knowledge to enable them gain and maintain basic employment or self-reliance for a comfortable living.

Akinola (2012) opined that the need for vocational and entrepreneurship education cannot be overstressed in Nigeria because unemployment, poverty and the corresponding social problems are on the increase. Nigeria adopted vocational education to accelerate economic growth than development. This reflects in Nigeria's national policy on education which states that education is the most important instrument for propelling change, as no fundamental change can occur in any society except through educational revolution that impact on the intellects (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2004).

Vocational Education and poverty eradication

Vocational education skills are essential to the development of any economy. It is through these skills that products in the form of goods and services are produced to the requirements of customers. With the skills, an individual will be employable and participate in the production of goods and services. The reward of this participation is



income that will be earned. Now, when one is skilled, the rewards in terms of whatever income will be greater than one who is not skilled. With skills, the individual is able to perform a basic confidently and is able to sell himself for herself with less difficulty. With these capacities developed, one is able to earn a livelihood regardless of whatever form it may come (Kombe, 2003).

Education in whatever form is an immediate modeling a child or the individual into a better person relevant to his immediate environment. Sustainable development cannot be achieved without education. Development is a process where an economy undergoes social and economic transformation leading to a rise in the standard of living, access to basic amenities for all through knowledge. It is in recognition of the above concept of development that vocational education and training for poverty alleviation should be given utmost priority by government, having in mind the future consequence and task ahead for sustainable development. The future prospect and success of the TVET would depend on the continuation and expansion of the existing training programmes and strengthening the existing cooperation both with national and international, as well as by starting non-formal training programmes for the unemployed and the community at large as part of the government poverty alleviation efforts toward sustain welfare of the people and development.

There are over 140 tertiary institutions producing more than 300,000 graduates annually, hence the availability and platform for basic requirements for economic development (Otokiti, 2012). There are however several challenges affecting Nigeria socio-economic development. In a report by the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in 2001, it shows that universities and other tertiary institutions in Nigeria produce an average of 120,000 graduates each year while another 500,000 school leavers or college graduates are turned out each year without the hope of any job (Awogbenle and Iwuamadi, 2010). In Nigeria, the growing problem of unemployment in the country has contributed largely to the worsening problem of poverty among the populace. The problem of unemployment, he further stated, has worsened as millions of school leavers and graduates of tertiary institutions have not secured gain full employment over the years. Unemployment has posed a serious problem not only to the welfare of individuals but also to that of their families. Many able-bodied and highly qualified persons who could not secure gainful employment have remained economically dependent on their parents because they lack the necessary occupational skills to be self employed and to effectively function in today's world of work (Osolor, 2013).



Vocational education and training

Vocational education and training plays an essential role in improving the well being of Nigeria families and communities. It increases productivity, empowers individual to become self-reliant and stimulates entrepreneurship. Businesses are more willing to invest in a community with strong human resources. Skills development can therefore contribute to strengthening the social links of a community by promoting local employment, creativity and sustainable means of subsistence. There is a strong link between poverty and rurality. In Nigeria for instance, over 70% of poor people live in rural areas where enrolment rates in all types of education are low, reducing poverty therefore will entail increasing rural educational opportunities as part of an overall development strategy, here Vocational education becomes a handy tool, as it can be both formal and informal. Such skill development of the rural poor must take into account the following:

1. Equipping the people to add value to vocational-based products
2. Training in basic literacy, numeracy and life skills should be an integral part of the whole program
3. The promotion of the growth and profitability of local traditional crafts and industries.

Functional vocational education training becomes a handy tool for poverty alleviation and sustainable development as majority of the target rural population already have basic knowledge of vocational education. Providing functional vocational education training will eradicate poverty through first of all increased production of goods and services. Secondly, learners' access to modern facilities, up-to-date knowledge, and saleable skills will lead them to produce more high value goods and services that sell well in the market. Income from sale of produce will help the individual to access other household necessities, pay health and education costs and have extra to spare. These will lead to creation of more jobs such as baking, decoration, sewing, hair dressing, brick laying, etc. When the necessary vocational training are acquired by the learners and put into work, poverty will be drastically reduced if not totally eradicated because majority of the citizens will now have a means of livelihood. This goes a long way in contributing to the sustainable development of Nigeria.

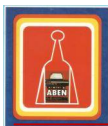


Conclusion and Recommendations

Education is the most valuable treasure any nation can give to its citizens. Functional education should be geared towards the acquisition of knowledge and information as well as relevant competencies (skills, attitudes, aptitudes, etc). Effective education therefore should go beyond mere literacy - ability to read and write. It should incorporate ability to “do” and “apply” that is, it should equip the learners with some form of technical know-how. The number of unemployed graduates in Nigeria suggests that most of them do not possess relevant, saleable, employable or even entrepreneurial skills that are needed in the society. This partly explains why the nation has remained economically dependent till date. This is because most nations who are economic giants today, started by equipping their citizens with the right type of education-education that will enable them use both their heads and hands. It is therefore recommended that the current tempo of revolution in our education system which is a drastic change in ideas and methods should not only be maintained and sustained but improved upon. Thus, all stakeholders should cooperate and work with the government in achieving the philosophy and objectives behind the introduction of vocational education training.

Recommendation

1. Government should provide strategy and implement plan for increasing Vocational educational and training opportunities for people with disabilities.
2. Vocational Education and training programmes should provide a worldclass skill and knowledge with opportunities for the indigenous people using available local materials and technology
3. Vocational education centers which is at all levels of the educational curricula and adult education expanded and equipped properly.
4. A flexible learning environment and frame work should be provided for the would-be beneficiaries
5. Government should focus on poverty eradication through functional vocational education training.
6. Communities should be carried along in such a way that the vocational education programme will be inclusive and sustainable.



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