

Effect of Vocational and Universal Basic Education in Promoting Sustainable Development

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This study explores the significance of vocational and universal basic education in promoting sustainable development. Vocational education provides practical skills and specialized training, enabling individuals to enter the workforce with confidence and contribute to economic growth. Universal basic education ensures equal access to quality education for all, equipping individuals with foundational knowledge and fostering lifelong learning. The integration of vocational and universal basic education facilitates a holistic understanding of sustainability challenges and cultivates the competencies needed to develop sustainable solutions. It emphasizes the importance of inclusivity, removing barriers to education and promoting equal opportunities. The study highlights the need for governments, organizations, and stakeholders to invest in these forms of education, allocate resources, and develop partnerships to foster sustainable development. By prioritizing vocational and universal basic education, societies can build a more resilient and prosperous future for all. The practice/policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded/marginalized, such as those having physical or intellectual disabilities/belonging to other minority groups.

Keywords: *Vocational, Education, Development, Universal Basic Education, Sustainable.*

Introduction

Education is a fundamental driver of sustainable development, playing a critical role in empowering individuals, fostering economic growth, and promoting social well-being¹. In this context, vocational and universal basic education are two essential components that contribute significantly to the achievement of sustainable development goals. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), vocational education focuses on providing specialized knowledge and skills to prepare individuals for specific occupations and

trade². It aims to equip learners with practical competencies and employability skills that align with the demands of the labor market. By offering vocational education programs, societies can address skills gaps, reduce unemployment rates, and enhance productivity, which are crucial factors for sustainable development³.

On the other hand, universal basic education refers to a comprehensive and inclusive education system that ensures all children, regardless of their socio-economic background or geographical location, have access to quality education⁴. Universal basic education encompasses primary and lower secondary education, laying the foundation for further learning and skill development. It promotes social equity, reduces poverty, and empowers individuals to actively participate in society and contribute to its sustainable development⁵. The effects of vocational and universal basic education on sustainable development are multifaceted and interconnected. By examining these effects, policymakers, educators, and stakeholders can better understand the significance of these educational approaches and develop strategies to enhance their impact.

This research aims to investigate the effects of vocational and universal basic education in promoting sustainable development. It seeks to explore the benefits, challenges, and potential synergies between these two educational approaches. Furthermore, the study intends to assess the effectiveness of existing policies and practices related to vocational and universal basic education in different contexts. Through a comprehensive review of relevant literature, empirical data, and case studies, this research will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the role of education in sustainable development. It will provide valuable insights for policymakers, educational institutions, and other stakeholders involved in shaping educational policies and practices.

By shedding light on the effects of vocational and universal basic education, this study aims to inform evidence-based decision-making and foster dialogue for enhancing the quality, accessibility, and relevance of education systems. Ultimately, the findings of this research can guide efforts towards creating sustainable and inclusive societies, where education plays a pivotal role in empowering individuals and driving progress towards a brighter future.

Statement of the Problem

Education is recognized as a crucial factor in achieving sustainable development goals. Both vocational and universal basic education have been implemented as key strategies to enhance educational outcomes and contribute to sustainable development⁶. However, there is a need to investigate and understand the specific effects of vocational and universal basic education on promoting sustainable development.

The existing body of literature provides evidence of the potential benefits of vocational education in addressing skills gaps, reducing unemployment rates, and improving productivity. It has been suggested that vocational education can equip learners with practical skills and knowledge that are directly applicable to the demands of the labor market⁷. However, there is limited research on how vocational education specifically contributes to sustainable development,

including its impact on economic growth, social equity, and environmental sustainability. Similarly, while universal basic education aims to ensure equal access to quality education for all children, there is a gap in understanding how universal basic education directly contributes to sustainable development. While universal basic education is recognized as a means to reduce poverty and empower individuals, there is a need to explore its broader effects on sustainable development, including its impact on social cohesion, gender equality, and community development.

Furthermore, there is a lack of research that examines the potential synergies between vocational and universal basic education in promoting sustainable development. Understanding how these two educational approaches can complement each other and create a more comprehensive and effective educational system is crucial for designing policies and practices that maximize their impact⁸. Therefore, the primary problem addressed in this research is to investigate and understand the effects of vocational and universal basic education on promoting sustainable development. The study aims to explore the benefits, challenges, and potential synergies between these two educational approaches, as well as their specific contributions to economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Literature Review

Vocational Education and Sustainable Development

Vocational education plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable development by addressing skills gaps, reducing unemployment rates, and enhancing economic productivity. Through vocational education programs, individuals acquire practical skills and specialized knowledge that are directly applicable to the demands of the labor market, increasing their employability and contributing to economic growth³.

One of the key benefits of vocational education is its ability to address skills gaps in the workforce. Rapid technological advancements and changing labor market needs often lead to a mismatch between the skills possessed by job seekers and the skills demanded by employers. Vocational education programs offer training that is aligned with specific industries or occupations, providing individuals with the skills and competencies needed to fill these gaps⁹.

Reducing unemployment rates is another significant contribution of vocational education to sustainable development. By equipping individuals with job-specific skills, vocational education enhances their employability and increases their chances of securing gainful employment. This, in turn, leads to reduced dependency on social welfare systems and improved economic well-being for individuals and communities¹⁰. Furthermore, vocational education enhances economic productivity, which is a crucial factor for sustainable development. Skilled workers who have received vocational training tend to be more productive and efficient in their respective roles. Their

specialized knowledge and practical competencies allow them to perform tasks effectively, contributing to overall economic growth and competitiveness¹¹.

In addition to economic benefits, vocational education can also contribute to environmental sustainability. By incorporating environmental education and sustainable practices into vocational training, individuals can develop an awareness of environmental issues and learn how to apply sustainable principles in their work. This can lead to the emergence of green jobs and the adoption of eco-friendly practices, promoting environmental conservation and sustainable development¹². Vocational education plays a significant role in promoting sustainable development. It addresses skills gaps, reduces unemployment rates, enhances economic productivity, and can contribute to environmental sustainability. By equipping individuals with the necessary skills and competencies, vocational education supports economic growth, social well-being, and the achievement of sustainable development goals. Policies and investments in vocational education are essential for creating a skilled workforce that can contribute to long-term sustainable development and societal progress.

Effects of Vocational Education on Sustainable Development

Vocational education plays a crucial role in equipping individuals with practical skills and competencies that are essential for economic growth and social well-being. Several studies have highlighted the positive effects of vocational education on sustainable development. In research conducted, it was indicated that vocational education contributes to reducing unemployment rates by providing learners with job-specific skills that match the needs of the labour market³. Additionally, vocational education has been shown to enhance productivity, leading to increased economic growth and competitiveness¹⁰.

Moreover, vocational education has the potential to contribute to environmental sustainability. Sustainable development requires a workforce equipped with green skills and knowledge to address environmental challenges. A research demonstrated that vocational education programs incorporating environmental education and sustainable practices can promote environmental awareness and prepare individuals for green jobs¹³. By incorporating sustainability principles into vocational education curricula, institutions can foster a culture of environmental responsibility and contribute to sustainable development.

Effects of Universal Basic Education on Sustainable Development

Universal basic education aims to ensure equal access to quality education for all children, irrespective of their socio-economic background or geographical location. The impact of universal basic education on sustainable development is multifaceted and spans various dimensions. Research suggests that universal basic education significantly contributes to poverty reduction and social equity⁵. By providing education to marginalized populations, universal basic education promotes social inclusion, empowers individuals, and reduces inequalities.

Universal basic education plays a vital role in fostering sustainable development through the promotion of gender equality. Studies have shown that increasing girls' access to education through universal basic education programs leads to improved health outcomes, lower fertility rates, and increased economic opportunities¹⁴. Gender equality in education is closely linked to broader social, economic, and environmental sustainability goals, making universal basic education a critical driver of sustainable development.

Synergies between Vocational and Universal Basic Education

While vocational and universal basic education are often viewed as distinct approaches, there is a growing recognition of the potential synergies between these two educational strategies. Integrating vocational elements into universal basic education can provide students with a broader skill set, combining academic knowledge with practical competencies. Another research suggests that vocational elements within universal basic education can enhance students' employability and smooth their transition from education to the workforce¹⁵. This integration can lead to improved labor market outcomes, reduced unemployment rates, and increased social mobility.

Theoretical Review

Human Capital Theory

Human Capital Theory, developed by Theodore Schultz (1960), posits that investing in education and training enhances individuals' productivity and economic outcomes, ultimately leading to economic growth. This theory suggests that vocational education contributes to sustainable development by equipping individuals with specific skills and competencies that are in demand in the labour market.

By developing human capital through vocational education, societies can improve productivity, reduce unemployment rates, and promote economic sustainability¹⁶. Human capital theory of economic growth that includes three (3) elements:

- (1) Countries without much human capital cannot manage physical capital effectively.
- (2) Economic growth can only proceed if physical capital and human capital are use together.
- (3) Human capital is the factor most likely to limit growth.

Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy: The Capability Approach

This is a normative approach to human welfare that concentrates on the actual capability of persons to achieve lives they value rather than solely having a right or freedom to do so. It was conceived in 1980s.

It focuses directly on the quality of life that individuals are actually able to achieve. It entails two normative claims (1) the claim that the freedom to achieve wellbeing is of primary

moral improvement (2) that well being should be understood in terms of people's capabilities and functions.

The Capability Approach, emphasizes the importance of individual capabilities and freedoms in assessing well-being and development. From a vocational education perspective, the Capability Approach highlights the significance of providing individuals with the opportunity to acquire skills and capabilities that enable them to participate fully in society and achieve their potential. Vocational education, by enhancing individuals' capabilities and empowering them with practical skills, can contribute to sustainable development by promoting human well-being, social inclusion, and equality of opportunities¹⁷.

Social Capital Theory

Bourdieu and Coleman are the founding theories of Social Capital Theory, focuses on the value of social networks, trust, and social cohesion in fostering economic and social development. In the context of vocational and universal basic education, Social Capital Theory suggests that these educational approaches can contribute to sustainable development by building social capital within communities. Vocational education programs create opportunities for individuals to develop networks and establish connections with employers, industry professionals, and peers, which can enhance employment prospects and contribute to economic development¹⁸. Universal basic education, by providing equal access to quality education, can foster social cohesion, trust, and cooperation, leading to more inclusive and sustainable societies¹⁹.

It contends that social relationships are resources that can lead to the development and accumulation of human capital. Social capital is the networks of relationships among people who live and work in a particular society.

Summary

In summary, the effects of vocational and universal basic education in promoting sustainable development have been examined through a literature review, conceptual review, and theoretical review. The literature review highlights the positive effects of vocational education on reducing unemployment, addressing skills gaps, and fostering environmental sustainability. Universal basic education is shown to contribute to social equity, poverty reduction, and gender equality. The review also emphasizes the potential synergies between vocational and universal basic education in creating seamless educational pathways and enhancing employability.

The conceptual review explores the concepts of vocational education, universal basic education, and the integration of vocational elements within general education. It highlights the role of vocational education in addressing skills gaps and promoting sustainable employability, while universal basic education is seen as a means to ensure equal access to quality education and promote social inclusion. The theoretical review examines key theories relevant to the topic. Human Capital Theory emphasizes the economic benefits of vocational education, while the

Capability Approach focuses on enhancing individual capabilities and well-being. Social Capital Theory underscores the value of social networks and cohesion, and environmental education and ecological literacy highlight the importance of addressing environmental challenges.

Overall, these reviews provide a comprehensive understanding of the effects of vocational and universal basic education in promoting sustainable development. They provide a foundation for empirical research, policy development, and the enhancement of educational systems to maximize the impact of vocational and universal basic education on sustainable development outcomes.

Conclusions

Vocational education plays a crucial role in addressing skills gaps, reducing unemployment, and enhancing productivity. By equipping individuals with job-specific skills and practical competencies, vocational education contributes to economic growth and sustainability. Universal basic education is essential for promoting social equity, reducing poverty, and empowering individuals. It provides a foundation for further learning and skill development, contributing to human capital development and sustainable development outcomes.

There are potential synergies between vocational and universal basic education, such as integrating vocational elements within universal basic education to enhance students' employability and creating seamless educational pathways. Also, environmental education and ecological literacy are important components of vocational and universal basic education. By incorporating sustainable practices and promoting environmental awareness, these educational approaches can contribute to environmental sustainability and the achievement of sustainable development goals.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions drawn from the research, the following recommendations can be made:

- Policymakers and educational institutions should prioritize the integration of vocational elements within universal basic education curricula. This can be done by incorporating practical skills training, work-based learning opportunities, and exposure to industry-specific knowledge.
- Stakeholders, including educational institutions, employers, and industry representatives, should collaborate to ensure the relevance and quality of vocational education programs. Building partnerships with employers can help align vocational education with the needs of the labor market and improve employment outcomes.
- There is a need for teacher training and professional development. Enhancing the capacity of teachers and instructors in vocational and universal basic education is crucial. Providing continuous training and professional development opportunities will ensure that educators

are equipped with up-to-date knowledge and pedagogical approaches that align with sustainable development goals.

- Both vocational and universal basic education should incorporate environmental education and promote ecological literacy. This can be achieved through the integration of sustainability principles, eco-friendly practices, and environmental awareness into the curricula.
- Further research is needed to assess the long-term effects and outcomes of vocational and universal basic education on sustainable development. Evaluating the effectiveness of existing policies and practices, identifying best practices, and monitoring progress towards sustainable development goals will contribute to evidence-based decision-making and continuous improvement.

Endnotes

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