

Vocational and Universal Basic Education for Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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Vocational education is the component of education that prepares an individual with the expertise, abilities, and mindset necessary to enter the workforce and advance in a certain career. Basic education, which teaches reading and numeracy while also encouraging cognitive, affective, and social development, is a pedagogical experience experienced by the vast majority of humans in some form or another. Vocational and universal basic education has been reported to be significant in the growth and development of a nation. Hence, the universal declaration of human rights was adopted in 1948, emphasizing everyone's right to education, with a focus on basic education. Sustainable development is the development that meets the requirements of the present without jeopardizing future generations' ability to meet their own needs. Sustainability necessitates the integration of theory and practice. As a result, the school's curriculum must accept and promote the following ideals: reflecting community realities, generating creative activity among pupils, teacher empowerment, and so on. Finally, education at various levels has the potential to shape the world of tomorrow by providing individuals and society with the necessary skills and perspectives, knowledge and values for living and working sustainably. This paper, therefore seeks to examine vocational and universal basic education for sustainable development.

Keyword: Vocational, universal, basic education, sustainable development

Introduction

Vocational and universal basic education is of interest for different protagonist, with high level of engagements from countries and international organizations (Bruns et al., 2019). A significant investment in vocational and universal basic education is regarded as important for long-term growth (Guo et al., 2019). The 2030 United Nations Agenda provides a new holistic path to long-term viability with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) opening the door to equality, justice, and prosperity while taking into consideration social, environmental, and economic well-being (Bascopé et al., 2019). The challenge for twenty-first-century societies are to rapidly evolve towards sustainability while balancing the complex trade-offs between their ecological, social, and economic components (Wei et al., 2021). Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) helps to the holistic transformation of education systems by supporting the deeply entrenched learning processes required to co-create a sustainable future for all (Dumitrache et al., 2022). As an official aim within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4.7), the implementation of ESD in national

educational systems has become a high-level political task. More so, there are literatures on Vocational and Universal Basic Education for Sustainable Development across the globe. However, their impacts in Africa and Nigeria in particular have not been discussed exhaustively. Therefore this paper discusses Vocational and Universal Basic Education and how it impacts Sustainable Development in Nigeria.

Vocational Education

Vocational Education is any type of education whose primary goal is to educate people for employment in recognized occupations. It is an education meant to prepare students for gainful employment as semiskilled workers, technicians, or sub-professionals in recognized occupations, or to prepare persons for enrollment in advanced technical education programmes (Okoye & Arimonu, 2016). Vocational education encompasses a wide range of occupations needing a high level of skill and scientific understanding (Tomlinson, 2017). The National Policy on Education (FME, 1981) emphasizes Vocational Technical Education, particularly in terms of delivering skilled labor in applied science, technology, commerce, and other vocational fields. It is also intended to provide technical knowledge and vocational skills required for agricultural, industrial, commercial, home management, and economic development. Among the objectives and purposes of Vocational Technical Education as stated by the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE, 1987) are: engineering trained personnel are available, technology and professional commerce, provide skilled and well-equipped professionals to apply scientific knowledge to enhance and solve environmental problems for man's use and convenience, professional studies in engineering and other technologies will be introduced, to provide technical and vocational knowledge and skills required for agricultural, industrial, commercial, and economic development, to give training and skills that will result in the production of craftsmen, technicians, technologists, engineers, and other skilled professionals (Ogunode & Adanna, 2022).

Basic Education

Basic education, which teaches reading and numeracy while also encouraging cognitive, affective, and social development, is a pedagogic experience shared by the vast majority of human beings (Oyibe & Anukaenyi, 2021). Basic Education, regardless of subsequent educational experiences, is often formative and permanent. Thus, the core goals of Universal Basic Education (UBE) remain the establishment of a foundation for lifelong learning for all segments of the population, regardless of

their socioeconomic status (Famuyiwa, 2022). National forerunners to Universal Basic Education are a part of Nigeria's educational history.

On September 8th, 1979, Nigeria established the first nationwide tuition-free Primary Education scheme. The programme is mentioned in the third Sustainable Development Plan (1975-1980). According to Ukeje (1991), the justification for the scheme's implementation is the awareness that Universal Primary Education "is a prerequisite for the equalisation of educational opportunities across the country. Universal Basic Education has both international and national precedents in Nigeria. Obanya (2000) emphasizes the following at the international level:

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which emphasized everyone's right to education, with a focus on basic education. Concerns about a global educational crisis prompted an International Conference on the same topic in Paris in 1968, as well as the publication of a book on the subject by Philips Coombs and the formation of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

The Beijing Women and Development Conference (1997), the most essential lesson from the international setting, however, is related to what has become generally known as the Jomtien Goals. The following are excerpts from the Jomtien Declaration and Framework of Action on Education for All (EFA): Basic Education is not a package but a process.

Basic education is an integral component of a broad-based inclusive education policy. President Olusegun Obasanjo formally began the Universal Basic Education Programme in Sokoto on September 30, 1999.

Universal Basic Education (UBE) Act 2004

The Universal Basic Education bill was an executive sponsored Bill sent to the National Assembly to give a legal backing to the Universal Basic Education. The 1st and 2nd reading of the Bill were on 26th and 27th August, 2003 respectively and the 3rd reading was on 28th August, 2003, the Bill was passed into law by both houses of the National Assembly on 28th August, 2003. The president Olusegun Obasanjo, signed the Bill into law on 12th May, 2004 the Bill according to the Federal Republic of Nigeria, (2003) seeks to provide a compulsory, free Universal Basic Education (UBE) for all Children of primary and Junior Secondary School age, it further seeks to provide punishment for parents for failing to comply with its provisions.

Sustainable Development

Sustainability is a complicated and ever-changing notion. Many academics and practitioners have spent years attempting to define it and imagining how to attain it at the national and local levels. However, the notion of sustainability received broad attention after the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) published the Brundtland Commission Report, Our Common Future, in 1987 (Yaman & Ghadas, 2022). The commission defined Sustainable

Development as development that meets current demands without jeopardizing future generations' ability to meet their own (Verma, 2019). The Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) (2004) proposes an alternate definition, which is as follows: ***Sustainable Development provides a framework for redefining progress and redirecting our economies to enable people to meet their basic needs and improve their quality of life, while ensuring that the natural systems, resources, and diversity on which they rely are preserved and enhanced for their benefit and the benefit of future generations.***

Sustainable Development is a process that goes beyond what is expressed in these two narrow perspectives, to include all that humanity and nature require for their existence both now and in the future. This last perspective is particularly evident in the popular report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) which asserts that Sustainable Development is ***a process in which resource exploitation, investment direction, technological development orientation, and institutional change are all in harmony and enhance both current and future potential to meet human needs and aspirations.***

Following the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 and the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002, the definition of Sustainable Development has been expanded to include issues of economic growth, social development, and environmental protection. According to the documents produced at these conferences, Sustainable Development is founded on three pillars of sustainability: the economy, the environment, and society. According to Newman (2004), the emerging consensus emphasizes that the pursuit of economic viability as an end in itself, driven by a neoclassical economic model, does not preserve or improve ecological health and human well-being. Rio de Janeiro emphasizes the value of education in long-term development. The Rio conference specifically identified four major thrusts of education for sustainable development as Promotion and improvement of Basic Education, Reorienting Existing Education at all levels to address National Development, Developing public understanding and awareness of sustainability, Training.

Curriculum Implications of Universal Basic Education

A fundamental curriculum imperative of Universal Basic Education for the achievement of Sustainable Development requires teachers to prepare the young learner for a successful life, both for his own good and for the good of his community as a whole. According to Okam and Bozimo (2002) this line of thought implies that the curricular of the school must endorse and propagate the ideals of reflecting community realities, providing opportunities for individuals for active and meaningful participation in schoolwork, generating creative activity among children, stressing among learners and individuals respect for the dignity of labor, national loyalty and consciousness.

The above values have significant implications for teachers, who are critical partners in the successful implementation of Universal Basic Education for Sustainable Development (Kaivola&

Kaasinen, 2004). Their empowerment in the information, skills, values, and methods of Sustainability principles would undoubtedly have a multiplier effect on learners in both formal and informal education sectors. Recent evaluations of pre-service and in-service teacher education in Nigeria, however, reveal emotions of neglect, alienation, and dissatisfaction (Ivowi, 1998; Ajayi et al., 2004). When teachers are underpaid or paid sporadically, they are unable to put out their best efforts in implementing curricula and will not act in ways that promote Sustainable Development.

Another effect for teachers is inadequate educational finance. In Nigeria, for example, most schools are in disrepair, with old structures, overcrowded classrooms, inadequate staffing, and a lack of basic teaching and learning tools. In comparison to other professions such as medicine and law, teacher education institutions such as colleges of education, universities institutes of education, and faculties of education receive second-rate treatment. This has a negative impact on the self-image and occupational reputation of both new teachers and those who train them. Under such conditions, teacher educators find it difficult, if not impossible, to do meaningful research that will equip them as a pool of human resources for trainers in Sustainable Development strategies (Ogunyemi, 2005).

Another possible challenge in this implementation scenario is matching word with action. Sustainability necessitates the integration of theory and practice. Governments in Nigeria, at the national, state, and local levels, are expected to demonstrate leadership by integrating sustainability education into all sectors and activities, including agriculture, sports, recreation, health, and industrialization (Okidi, 2003). A critical assessment of Nigerian national aspirations in relation to daily activities of people in government, according to Yaqub (2003), does not support the celebrated desire for a "land full of bright opportunities for all citizens" given the wasteful use of resources by those in government.

In addition to the aforementioned challenges, political volatility makes policy consistency almost the exception rather than the rule. According to Okidi (2003), policies seem to come and go with the governments that proclaim them, and unless a country stabilizes its democratic infrastructure, it may lose out on efforts to use education to promote sustainable development.

Education for Sustainability and National Development

According to UNESCO (2003), the primary goal of education for sustainable development is to promote values and ethics through education at all levels in order to influence people's lifestyles and behavior and contribute to the construction of a sustainable future. According to Tilbury (2003), it is intended to motivate, equip, and involve individuals and social groups in reflecting on how they now live and work, making informed decisions, and developing strategies to strive towards a more sustainable society. Indeed, it is about adult and adolescent learning for change in order to attain sustainable living (IUCH, 2003). With the aforementioned goals in mind, UBE must be viewed as a vision of education that tries to combine human and economic well-being with cultural

traditions and respect for the earth's resources. According to Iheonunekwu (2004), education for national development should not be interpreted as just acquiring literacy or other skills or preparing persons for the labor market.

The researchers reported in a study titled one transformation path does not fit all-insights into the diffusion processes of education for sustainable development in different educational areas in Germany that the diffusion process of ESD is highly dependent on the educational area: it is not only the professional activities of the actors involved that have an impact on the diffusion of ESD, but also the prevailing structural conditions, systemic goals, and the educational environment. Against this background, the interplay between the innovation of ESD and the innovation system points to the following transformation paths that are specific to the educational area (Singer-Brodowski, Etzkorn & Von Seggern, 2019).

In a study titled how community colleges and other technical and vocational education and training institutions (TVETs) institutions contribute to the United Nations sustainable development goals, the researcher reported that the SDGs related to economic development and social justice were a priority in all five case studies, while the environmental SDGs were a priority in the two North American studies. The biggest impediments to sustainable growth include the high cost of education, low completion rates, graduates' failure to get work commensurate with their education, insufficient funding, and community colleges and TVETs' status as second-tier schools (Legusov et al., 2022). Inclusive education and sustainable development goals: A study of the physically challenged in Nigeria, according to a study. The study's findings revealed that the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 4) in Nigeria's education system for the physically challenged is in grave danger and requires immediate policy revalidation. The study concludes that for Nigeria to achieve real development, every individual (even the physically handicapped) must have access to knowledge, skills, and information (Kusimo& Chidozie, 2019).

In a research titled the effect of universal basic education on rural formal education in Ohaozara, Onicha, and Ivo Local Government Areas of Ebonyi State. The study looked at the impact of the Universal Basic Education Programme on rural formal education in Ebonyi State's Ohaozara, Onicha, and Ivo Local Government Areas. The study used a survey design. The study's population comprises of 1294 Ebonyi State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) employees and headmasters/teachers in the 138 primary schools under the jurisdiction of Ohaozara, Onicha, and Ivo Local Government Areas. For data gathering, a 28-item questionnaire was used. The information gathered was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency count, percentage, and mean scores. Regression analysis was used to examine the hypotheses. According to the findings, the UBE project has not significantly ensured that all school-age children in Ebonyi State's Ohaozara, Onicha, and Ivo Local Government Areas are in school. It was also discovered that the UBE initiative greatly aided recipients in developing literacy, numeracy, and fundamental life skills, as well as ethical, moral, and civic values. Based on the findings, recommendations include

stepping up efforts to develop an effective institutional framework for monitoring learning and instruction, as well as emphasizing basic life skills, ethical moral principles, and civic values in the primary education curriculum (Nnennaya et al., 2021)..

Conclusion

Education at all levels has the potential to create the world of tomorrow by providing individuals and communities with the skills, perspectives, information, and values necessary to live and work in a sustainable manner. Vocational and Universal Basic Education for Sustainability is an educational vision that attempts to reconcile human and economic well-being with cultural traditions and environmental stewardship. Pursuing sustainability through Vocational and Universal Basic Education necessitates critical reflection by educators and learners on their own communities, identification of non-viable components in their lives, and exploration of tensions between different ideals and aims. It instills new motivation in students by empowering them to create and assess alternative visions of a sustainable future and to work together to realize these goals. It is therefore, imperative that to ensure that Vocational and Universal Basic Education achieves the goals of Sustainability, it requires quality education as a prerequisite and requires recognition of the challenge, collective responsibility and constructive partnership, acting with determination, and the indivisibility of human dignity, as well as learning to live together.

Suggestions i There is great need to reorient the entire education programme and practices to address sustainability.

- ii Education will need to catch the wave of educational reform. The proponents of education for Sustainability need to identify and illustrate the linkages between the principles of Sustainability and long-term economic well-being of the nation.
- iii Government should work out a model to follow. Without models to adapt and adopt, it becomes difficult for implementations.
- iv The successful implementations of education for Sustainability will require responsible, accountable leadership and expertise in systematic education change. Realistic strategies must be developed to create knowledgeable and capable leadership.

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