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## **VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AS A TOOL FOR SUSTAINING MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND NATIONAL ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (NEEDS)**

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The empirical study examined the roles of vocational education in the sustenance of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS). MDGs and NEEDS are government deliberate policies to ameliorate or eradicate poverty in Nigeria. In order to accomplish this, four research questions were generated. A sample of 300 teachers was drawn from a population of 1,950 Secondary School Teachers in Lagos State, through the method of simple random sampling. Data were obtained through a carefully structured and validated questionnaire. The data thus obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistical method such as percentage and frequency. Based on the result of the analyses the study confirmed among others that students' attitudes as well as government factors affect the implementation of vocational education programme in Secondary Schools. Consequence upon these, recommendations were made.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The global dictum that education is the instrument per excellence for social and economic transformation of communities and societies is significant in order to sustain the on-going national reform. The significance of education in societal development defines the context of the roles that both the society and the state, as an organized continuous public power, have to play in order to facilitate, nurture and develop it, with the requisite institutions, materials and facilities (Jega, 2005).

In May, 2004, president Obasanjo launched the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) as Nigeria's home grown poverty reduction strategy in order to address the shortcoming of the past military regime which had been the constraints to the Achievement of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG). The policy objectives as

outlined in the Guardian of 2<sup>nd</sup> July, 2004 anchor its responses on four key strategies.

- Reforming government's institutions
- Growing the private sector
- Implementing a social character
- Value re-orientation.

The NEEDS focus on achieving growth and better service delivery, reform of government institutions, generate employment and eliminate waste and inefficiency. Vocational education according to its goals as entrenched in the National Policy on Education (1998 revised) will play a vital role in achieving the laudable objective of NEEDS.

It is not enough for society or indeed, for state functionaries to affirm commitment to educational provisioning and development. Nor is it enough to merely annually budget, allocate and spend money for "education". It requires principled conduct, careful



planning, deep and sober reflection to be able to set up a viable and efficacious educational system. According to Agboola (2002), the educational system should be capable of defining the positive societal values as well as the skilled manpower required for a nation to develop desirably and meaningfully. In short, setting the right educational priorities and actualizing them in a country like ours, requires visionary leadership; principled, perceptive and selfless persons.

The current age of science and technology, and in particular the emphasis on information and communication technology (ICT), has turned the entire world into a global village where interaction takes place swiftly and comprehensively. All the issues raised here are about self-reliance and technological empowerment through vocational skill acquisition. What is relevant is the preparedness of Nigeria to take active part in the race toward technological advancement so as to be responsive to global impulses. Being a case of mass action, the citizens must be fully prepared through effective and comprehensive vocational education to ensure that the ground is matured to enable persons to imbibe or assimilate new technologies.

Obioma (2006), states that Nigeria's response to these global aspirations was the development, adoption and implementation of a National Economic Empowerment and Development strategy (NEEDS) in 2004. NEEDS which also anchors on the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) have four critical elements.

- Value re-orientation
- Poverty eradication
- Wealth generation and job creation
- Empowering people through education

Thus, if education will be used to achieve the goals of NEEDS then its contents and delivery processes should be reformed in the context of improving the quality of life, skill acquisition through vocational education and facilitating the peaceful co-existence of the peoples of the world. Vocational education is expected to play a critical role in the achievement of NEEDS targets (Okwuanaso and Okeke, 2005).

NEED recognizes vocational education as an instrument *per excellent* for social and economic

transformation. In this context (Obioma, 2006) states the six goals NEEDS has set for education are;

- Ensuring and sustaining unfettered access to education for the total development of the individual.
- Improving the quality of education at all levels.
- Using education as a tool for improving the quality of life through functional skills acquisition and job creation leading to poverty reduction.
- Ensuring the periodic review and effective implementation of school curriculum to meet the requirement for higher education and the world of work;
- Mobilizing and developing public private partnerships to support and fund education;
- Promoting ICT capability at all levels.

Among the six goals listed above, Hagar, Athanasou and Gonezi (1999) opines that the issue of curriculum review which will result to restructuring and change in the educational content and strategic delivery is at the kernel of social and economic transformation of the society. While ensuring and sustaining unfettered access to education, the total development of the individual will depend to a large extent on the implementation of an appropriate curriculum. However, Gonezi (1994) posits that quality improvement in education will be driven by a curriculum that is relevant and functional. Hence, Obioma (2006) agrees that the twin issues of job creation and poverty reduction can only be assured if the planned curriculum is turned to achieve these. Furthermore, promoting ICT capability through systematic education is curriculum related.

The private sector participation in the funding of educational will depend on the extent the human resources products of education meet the requirements of the sector. For the human resource products to be appropriate, the curriculum has to be relevant. In all of these, the periodic review of the curriculum as a basis of offering functional educational to meet rapid changes in the social and economic context is inevitable.

Okorie (2001) re-affirms that vocational education is also seen as education that fits one into intricate



experience of the real world of works through the acquisition of relevant knowledge and skills. It is job-oriented training designed to develop the appropriate knowledge, skills, attitude and understanding in all citizens. It prepares an individual to succeed in occupations. These skills and attitude promote efficiency in production, reduce wastages and promotes understanding in terms of world of work.

Vocational education is also meant for updating the knowledge of the workers in order to keep abreast of these jobs in terms of new technology. The goals of vocational education as stated in National Policy on Education (1998) revised are:

- (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 necessary skills to individual who shall be self reliant economically.

It is evident that the objectives of vocational education are in perfect consonance with the major objectives of NEEDS. Therefore, vocational education could be used as impetus for achieving NEEDS. A modern nation is built faster and better by its farmers, technicians, dieticians, technologists, industrialists, craftsmen and educational leaders in specialized vocational areas working to expand opportunities in their field (Stiggins, 2001). The major advantages or vocational education in relation to NEEDS are.

- Vocational education is expected to play a noticeable role in driving home the objectives of NEEDS to the advantage of the populace and economic emancipation of the country at large.
- Vocational education as source to gainful employment
- Vocational education will cater for Individual in terms of gainful employment.
- It will provide pre-requisite skills to gain entrance into employment.
- Vocational education promotes establishment for small and medium scale enterprises.

- Vocational education for farming: vocational agricultural education is to cater for the interest of individual who needs to be gainfully employed in mechanized farming or small scale farming. It also assists to give appropriate education to practicing farmer.
- Vocational education stimulates technological and industrial development by producing competent workers who are capable of developing and utilizing technologies for industrial and economic development
- Vocational education recipients in the course of their training increase their productivity and earning capacity as well as increased employability and higher job mobility.

This paper therefore seeks to examine the role of vocational education in sustaining Millennium Development Goals (MDG) through national economic empowerment development strategy (NEEDS).

## RESEARCH QUESTION

1. What roles can vocational education play in realization of MDG goal?
2. What type of vocational subjects are available in Nigerian secondary schools?
3. To what extent has vocational education help towards realization of MDG goals?
4. What are the challenges of vocational education towards realization of MDG goals?

## METHODOLOGY

*Research design:* The survey research method was employed in this study. This was geared towards the collection of data on the role of Vocational education in sustaining Millennium Development Goals (MDG) through national economic empowerment development strategy (NEEDS).

### Respondents

The respondents of the study were 300 Basic school teachers, 15 teachers each from 20 secondary schools in Sabo Educational District.

### Research Instrument

Questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: A and B.



Section A contains the demographic information of the respondents while section B is a close ended questionnaire with few open ended questions designed to elicit the kind of information that is relevant to the research questions.

The responses was analyzed using, likert scale of preferences in descending order, rated strongly agree attracting a score of four; agree; a score of three, disagree; a score of two, and strongly disagree a score of one.

The content and face validity of the instrument used was carried out by expert drawn. The experts made necessary corrections and constructive criticisms which were useful for the preparation of the final draft of the questionnaire. A pilot study was later conducted with 50 Teachers. The teachers used for the pilot study were from Akoka Junior High school and Angus Junior High school. With respect to reliability of the instrument, the test-retest method was employed in ascertaining the reliability of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered to the respondents after 2-weeks and the reliability coefficient for the instrument was 0.85

## Procedure

The researcher personally administered the questionnaires to the subjects and patiently waited for them to fill their responses. The filled copies of the questionnaire were promptly collected from the subjects as soon as they were through with their responses. The 300 copies of the questionnaires administered were completely retrieved.

## Data Analysis

In analyzing the data, descriptive statistical method was employed using SPSS packages. The methods used include: Percentage and frequency counts

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The result from the Table 1 above shows that 75.3% of the respondent admitted that creation of employment in the fields of pre-vocational specialisation and self-employment is a major role vocational education should play to assist in realization of MDG goal while 24.7% of the respondents disagree

**Table 1**  
Roles of Vocational Education in Realization of MDG Goals

<i>Item</i>	<i>Agree Frequency (%)</i>	<i>Disagree Frequency (%)</i>
Creation of employment in the fields of Pre-vocational specialisation and self-employment	226 (75.3)	74 (24.7)
Higher demand for higher education could be controlled	231 (77)	69 (23)
Vocational education will promote equity equity with a rural skills and manpower	185 (61.7)	115 (38.3)
Provision of secondary school graduates with varied bias and serve the needs of relatively poor people	214 (71.3)	86 (28.7)

*Note:* figures outside parentheses are frequency distributions, (ii), figures in parentheses are percentage distributions

with that above statement. Supporting this result Onuegbuna (2001), asserted that vocational education would contribute to such progress, both by reducing unemployment, through creating employment in the fields of pre-vocational specialisation and self-employment, and by engendering a higher propensity for labour force participation at the end of secondary schooling, improving productivity, and correspondingly resulting in higher graduate earnings. Vocational and technical secondary education can establish a closer relationship between school and work thereby achieving millennium development goals (MDG).

In a similar development, 77% of the respondents admitted that higher demand for higher education could be controlled through vocational education thereby achieving education for self reliance at that level of education.

Furthermore, the table also revealed that 61.7% of the respondents admitted vocational education could also be seen as an equity measure to assists the poor and rural dwellers. As an antidote to urban-biased elite education, vocational education will promote equity with a rural bias and serve the needs of relatively poor people. Also as Grubb (1985) states, vocational education has been seen as the answer to an enrolment problem: the tendency of some students (especially lower class students) to drop out of schools without



occupational skills — a problem that vocational education promises to resolve by providing a more interesting and job-relevant curriculum. More specifically, it is believed to be an effective answer to rural problems, “to alleviate unemployment; to reorient student attitudes towards rural society,” to halt urban migration; to transmit skills and attitudes useful in employment (Lillis and Hogan, 1983), and as an important measure of development for disadvantaged youth in rural and urban areas.

Similarly 71.3% of the respondents also agreed that vocational education give room for provision of secondary school graduates with varied skills and manpower.

Again the respondents saw vocational education helpful in developing what can be termed as ‘skill-culture’ and attitude towards manual work, in contrast to pure academic culture and preference for white collar jobs; and to serve simultaneously the “hand” and the “mind”, the practical and the abstract, the vocational and the academic.

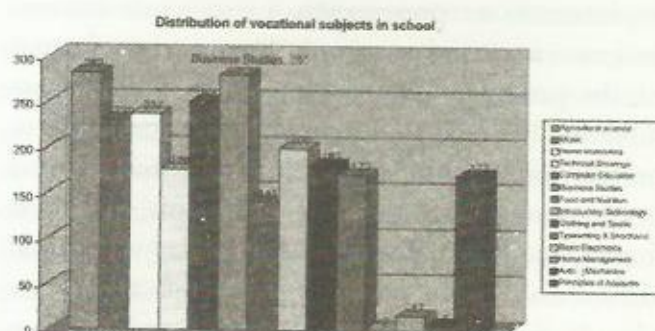


Figure 1: Types of Vocational Subjects Available in Nigerian Secondary Schools

The Figure 2 above shows type of vocational subjects available in Nigerian secondary school. The result from the table above shows that only 281 respondents admitted that business studies are available in their school. Next on the list is agricultural science with a total response of 262, followed by computer education 251, home economics, 237, music 230, introductory technology 200. However, Basic Electronics, auto-mechanics and home management has the least score.

The result from the above shows that vocational educational though available are centred mostly of

theoretically rather than the practical nature of the subjects.

Table 2

Vocational Education and Realization of MDG Goals

Item	Agree Freq (%)	Disagree Freq (%)
Vocational education has helped to realize trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and business particularly at craft, advanced craft and technical levels.	189 (63)	111 (37)
Vocational education has helped to realize trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and business particularly at craft, advanced craft and technical levels.	200 (66.7)	100 (33.3)
Vocational education has Play a noticeable role in driving home the objectives of NEEDS to the advantage of the populace and economic emancipation of the country at large.	263 (87.7)	37 (12.3)
Vocational education has promoted establishment for small and medium scale enterprises.	206 (68.7)	94 (31.3)
Vocational education increased employability and higher job mobility of graduates	233 (77.7)	67 (22.3)
Vocational education has stimulates technological and industrial development by producing competent workers who are capable of developing/utilizing technologies for industrial and economic development	79 (26.3)	221 (73.7)
Vocational education recipients in the course of their training increase their productivity and earning capacity	189 (63)	111 (37)

Note: Figures outside parentheses are frequency distributions, (ii), figures in parentheses are percentage distributions

The result from the Table 1 above shows that 63% admitted that Vocational education has helped to realize trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and business particularly at craft, advanced craft and technical levels while 37% of the respondents disagree with that above statement. However, 66.7% of the respondent agreed that vocational education has provided the students the Technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural commercial and economic development.



Similarly 87.7% of the respondents agreed that vocational education will play a significant role in driving home the objectives of NEEDS to the advantage of the populace and economic emancipation of the country at large. In same the vein 68.7% of the respondents also admitted that vocational education has promoted establishment for small and medium scale enterprises. Furthermore, 77.7% of the respondents noted that vocational education increased employability and higher job mobility of graduates.

Concerning the whether vocational education has stimulated technological and industrial development by producing competent workers who are capable of developing/utilizing technologies for industrial and economic development, 73.1% of the respondents unanimously disagreed that vocational education has stimulated technological and industrial development. Also 63% of the respondents also admitted that vocational education recipients in the course of their training increase their productivity and earning capacity.

**Table 3**  
**Challenges of Vocational Education**

Item	Agree	Disagree	Rank
	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	
Poor funding by government	269 (89.7)	31 (10.3)	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Inadequate specialist teachers in vocational subject	231 (77)	69 (23)	1 <sup>st</sup>
Non steady supply of electricity	213 (61.7)	87 (38.3)	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Poor monitoring and implementation of policies on vocational training	189 (63)	111 (37)	4 <sup>th</sup>
Poor morale of the teachers	153 (51)	147 (49)	6 <sup>th</sup>
Non availability of training/teaching facilities	166 (55.3)	134 (44.7)	5 <sup>th</sup>

*Note:* figures outside parentheses are frequency distributions, (ii), figures in parentheses are percentage distributions

From the table above, 93.7% of the respondents (teachers) saw the issue of funding as a major challenge towards effective implementation vocational education in Nigeria.

Similarly, 89.7% of the respondents also agreed that non availability of speciality teachers as the major challenge for effective implementation vocational education.

The next challenges to effective implementation of vocational education in schools today as identified by the study is poor power situation in our nation as most machines/equipment will have to need electricity to power it. Again, 63% of the respondents pointed out that poor monitoring and implementation of policies on vocational education and MDG goals by government agencies has resulted inability program to succeed. Other challenges identified by respondents include; poor monitoring and implementation of policies on vocational trainings ranked 4<sup>th</sup>; Non availability of training/teaching facilities 5<sup>th</sup> and poor/low morale of the teachers 6<sup>th</sup>.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result of the findings suggests that many student attitudes as well as government factors affect the implementation representation of vocational education programs in secondary schools. The main beneficiaries of the programs are assumed to be the students (Olaitain, 1996). Thus, for the vocational programs to be fully implemented, students as stakeholders have to be made aware of such programs and their importance; they must become interested in practical skills-oriented lectures, and cognitive skills at the same time. If the students are to become employable on graduation, they must appreciate learning with their hands.

No effective vocational training can take place without the adequate provision of learning facilities (Puyate, 2004). Facilities needed include textbooks, classrooms, workshops, library, tools, equipment and so on. No vocational program can be complete without adequate facilities. Hence, for skills training to be implemented effectively, enough training facilities have to be provided.

According to Olaitain (2007), teachers who are the major operators of educational systems or programs, are expected to effect and impart the needed knowledge to the trainees. This can only be effective if the teachers are in their right frame of mind. This needs stimulus



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