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National Development Enhancer via the Youth: Research in Viable Vocational Education as a Pivotal Avenue

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Abstract

This paper approach in addressing the needs of youths and empowering them to face the future with optimism through viable vocational guidance research that will help them deal successfully with the life transitions they face in this era of mass unemployment. Vocational education plays a significant role in national development by preparing individuals for careers in the skilled trades. However, there is a need for research to better understand how vocational education can be improved to meet the needs of a changing economy and society. This paper seeks to explore the current state of vocational education research and identify gaps that need to be addressed. The goal is to develop a research agenda that will lead to more meaningful and impactful research in this field. This study is of critical importance to policymakers, educators, and employers who are seeking to ensure that vocational education meets the needs of today's workforce.

Keywords: Research, Vocational Education, Youth, National Development, Nigeria

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Introduction

Research is fundamental to any country's development because good data and good research findings are essential in making sound policy decisions and smart investments. It provides the knowledge that is needed to understand what is possible, what is not, and the best way to proceed with developmental efforts. According to Basu (2020) research is a scientific and systematic investigation or inquiry especially through search for new facts in any branch of knowledge and it is widely regarded as providing benefits to individuals and to local, regional, national, and international community's involved in the education system. On the other hand education is regarded as the aggregate of all the processes by which a person develops abilities, attitudes and other forms of behavior of practical values in the society in which she or he lives.

Types of research in Vocational Education

Research Agenda

In general, a research agenda in education identifies gaps in knowledge and in practice and puts forth research questions that have significance for advancing and influencing an academic field, discipline or area of study. The proposal of research lines to guide researchers' efforts towards certain priorities aligned to opportunities and challenges that have been identified in the area under study. A framework for the direction and types of studies that must be completed to address an overarching problem or area of interest. Researching in vocational education and training systems were initially created, discussions about vocational pedagogy were likely to be derived from the principles of general education. Even today, there is a sense in which vocational pedagogy sits in a no man's land between what is taught, in colleges and by training providers, and what is needed in the workplace. And too often employers complain that the content taught does not connect closely enough with the requirements of a particular occupation.

There are many different approaches to constructing learning in vocational education. The report "How to teach vocational education: A theory of vocational pedagogy" (Pramezwary *et al.*, 2021) is listing a number of approached for effective pedagogy in vocational education:

1. Learning by watching
2. Learning by imitating
3. Learning by practising ('trial and error')
4. Learning through feedback
5. Learning through conversation
6. Learning by teaching and helping
7. Learning by real-world problem-solving
8. Learning through enquiry
9. Learning by critical thinking
10. Learning by listening, transcribing and remembering
11. Learning by drafting and sketching
12. Learning on the fly
13. Learning by Reflecting Learning by being coached
14. Learning by competing
15. Learning through virtual environments
16. Learning through simulation and role play
17. Learning through games

The concept of Vocational Education

Vocational education is one branch of education offered at the present time. It was created to provide opportunities for students who have a tendency to science and technology education to meet the manpower needs of the industry. To realize technical education programs, many related programs have been created and offered. This training system has also been introduced at the secondary school level to the tertiary level. These efforts will enable potential students are trained to be professional workforce and semi-professionals in various fields of technology and engineering. Technical and vocational education is actually able to help school dropouts in education is academic, but has great potential to become excellent individuals in the areas of skills and thereby stimulating the economy as a whole (Yasin *et al.*, 2013).

Vocational education is the acquisition of skills and techniques in chosen occupation or profession to enable an individual earn a living. The national policy on education (NPE, 2004), viewed vocational education as training or retraining programe, which is given in schools or classes under public supervision and control. Vocational education is a system of education, which is predicated upon the teaching of skills and also demanding the professional or expert use of hands. The teaching of skills at formal sector existed in 2 types of institution initially established in Nigeria, these are technical colleges and trade centers. Vocational education is a continuous process of adaptation of the worker's training towards acquiring the minimum knowledge required.

Vocational education is a learning process organized by government to produce skilled workers (Handayati *et al.*, 2020). A phenomenon study is a way to determine the field situation based on experience. Research on this

phenomenon is important, especially to track the development of Vocational Education thus far, (Neubauer *et al.*, 2019). Various studies related to vocational education have been carried out in various fields, including agriculture (Amao *et al.*, 2022a, 2022b), history (Suharo *et al.*, 2020), evolution (Michelsen *et al.*, 2020), developments (Pramezwary *et al.*, 2021), technology (Rusdi *et al.*, 2020; Rusdi *et al.*, 2021), regulation (Burk and Wiese, 2020), strategy (Indrawati *et al.*, 2021), employment (Brown *et al.*, 2020), and outputs (Ali *et al.*, 2020). Indeed, studies on the phenomena of Vocational Education are essential in every country that organizes vocational education programs, such as Nigeria, East Germany, Tanzania, Thailand, Finland, Denmark and Sweden (Ariyani *et al.*, 2021). Amao *et al.*, (2022a) that vocational and technical education is result oriented that brings about technological advancement and aims to fit new manpower for employment and provide continuing training for those already qualified, so that they can keep up with modern working methods.

The development of vocational education in Nigeria

The education system of Nigeria has been influenced by the British system of education. This type of education neglects the cultural and vocational interest of the nation. The apprenticeship system was the earliest type of vocational education practiced in Nigeria and it provided employment for youth as they learnt how to use their hands in specific trade (vocation). Extensive development of vocational education started in Russia in 1888 with the introduction of shop classes in addition to the existing apprenticeship system. Shop classes involved the development of a problem and specially prepared drawings made to tackle the problem. Then the students were made to perform the same exercise individually, until they are proficient in that skill.

In United States of America, vocational and technical education is organized through agencies. These includes public high schools, public and private junior colleges, technical institute, extension services, labour unions and the armed forces while dozens of programs are organized, specialization in training for 1 type of occupation exists. The change in educational system in Nigeria came after the enactment of the land grant foundation Morrill's act of 1890. This foundation in the United States of America influenced the educational reforms after the abolition of the slave trade. Simple Job training skills through companies and schools were introduced. Learning of skill in carpentry, tailoring, mechanizing, craft making etc, started in some schools in Nigeria, like the comprehensive high school Aiyetoro and Mubi and the technical college in Yaba, Lagos and vocational education remained dormant for a long time with the introduction of western education (Uwaifo, 2009).

Youth and the knowledge economy

Like many other African countries with a high population growth rate, Nigeria particularly faces the challenge of converting the population boom into a demographic bonus instead of a disaster. In the 21st century, knowledge has taken over as the greatest factor of production, rendering to a secondary position the traditional factors of production (land, labour and capital). Economic structures and systems are now under rapid continuous changing consonance with the rapid turnover of knowledge. Economics that do well in this new global order are those that will succeed at creating knowledge based advantage. It empowers virtually anyone to participate in the mainstream global economy even if they do not have significant access to land, labour and "capital". In this new economic order, young people are taking the mantle jobs virtually overnight, of which India, Thailand, Singapore, USA, Hong Kong and China are clear examples (Yasin *et al.*, 2013). Intrinsically, it seems that young people in Nigeria have all it takes to lead the way. This is the hope for Nigeria to escape the impending demographic trap and the rage of absolute poverty. All we have to do is ensure that at the earliest age possible, the youths are empowered through supportive frameworks to access and convert the ever-changing streams of knowledge into productive engagements that meet local needs and global markets.

Handayati *et al.* (2020) defined vocational education as technical or vocational training which is given in or outside the school. It is a systematic learning experience which is designed to fit an individual for gainful employment in recognized occupation or empowerment to create wealth. Vocational education can also be viewed as a type of education for choosing, preparing to enter into and progress in an occupation. It provides the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for effective employment and capacity building in specific occupations or jobs. According to Suharno *et al* (2020), vocational education can be regarded as any form of education whose primary purpose is to prepare persons for employment in recognized occupations. It is an education given to people who are to, or have chosen an occupation but want to develop further knowledge and skills in such areas as Agriculture, Home Economics, Technical Education or Business and Trades. According to Ariyani *et al.* (2021), any education which is necessary for effective employment in an occupation is vocational. Its main function is to provide knowledge, develop skill, and inculcate the attitudes that are required for entry and progress in a career or for wealth creation through acquisition of work skills or saleable skill.

Vocational education is an instrument of positive change with various, divergent potentials for wealth creation, skill development, youth empowerment and capacity building. The UNDP (2009) defined capacity building as the creation of an enabling environment with appropriate policy and legal framework, institutional development including participation (of women in particular), human resources development and strengthening of managerial system. Capacity building is a long term continuous process in which all stakeholders participate. The stakeholders may be ministries, state or local governments, non-governmental organizations, professional associations, academics and others. Capacity building includes all activities which can strengthen the knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviours of an individual and

improve institutional structures and processes such that the organization can efficiently meet its mission and goals in a sustainable way. It is much more than training. It includes mostly Human Resources Development, the process of empowering or equipping individuals with the understanding, skills and access to information, knowledge and training that enables them to perform effectively. Capacity building is a process of development and strengthening the skills, abilities, processes and resources that organizations and communities need to survive, adapt and thrive in the fast changing world. In which case, it is the element that gives mobility, flexibility and functionality of a programme or an organization to adapt to changing needs of the population that is served. Capacity building focuses on a series of action directed at helping participants in the development process of increasing their knowledge, skills and developmental changes aimed at preventing social exclusion and socially disadvantaged life. The focus of vocational education is capacity building towards self-reliance of all vulnerable groups.

The question therefore is “Can Nigeria meet the challenges of her youths’ unemployment? The answer is yes, if all stakeholders are prepared to radically change the current development paradigm as well as the economic and social systems it has generated. The key lies in positioning a comprehensive youth agenda at the centre of the country’s development strategy.

The purpose of vocational education can then be viewed on a spectrum with training for specific, narrowly defined jobs at one end and, at the other, a more general preparation designed to help young people leads productive and fulfilling adult lives as workers and citizens. The content of vocational provision will vary according to the underpinning aim. A range of key indicators, including the relationship between general and vocational education, assessment and certification, can be identified that offer evidence about the goal and nature of programs.

The implications of vocational education in Nigeria

The implication of vocational education in Nigeria can be discussed which the following sub-heading.

i. Psychological implication

Vocational and technical education can bridge the gap between people without job and without hope. If one is able to acquire training in vocational education, employment is guaranteed. On the other hand, a country without enough manpower in vocational and technical area will continually suffer the problem of unemployment.

ii. Sociological implication

Occasional education is a social safety measure to many social problems. Unemployment is a serious social ill, with its numerous remote consequences like hooliganism, unstable homes and other anti-social vices. Vocational and technical education helps to eliminate all these through the production of students that are easily employ-able.

iii. Economic implication

Vocational education is designed to meet the employment needs of particular areas of the economy. The training provided is closely matched with specific job requirement so as to foster immediate production performance by the trainees. Trainees can become wage earners, thereby becoming more useful and productive citizens who will be assets to the society and not liabilities

Current State of Vocational Education

Vocational Education prepares its prospective graduates for the world of work, by inculcating the requisite school-to-work transition skills in the students. The responsibilities of vocational education include preparing its prospective graduates for job opportunities, to be self-reliant, and to develop career-related decisions and choices in their areas of studies (Ekpenyong, 2011; Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). This implies that vocational education is also expected to give learners the knowledge and practical skills that will enable them to continue in the world of work. Hence, there is a synergy between vocational education and lifelong learning. Lifelong learning and technical education can be achieved via formal, non-formal, and informal education for employability skills (Ifenacho *et al.*, 2017; Laal and Salamati, 2014). The totality of these is to enable one develop career competencies, get acquainted with the lifelong learning opportunities and benefits, and propel one’s intention to undertake vocational training periodically for personal and professional development, which are dependent on the level of the individual’s career satisfaction.

Vocational Education (VE) is one branch of education offered at the present time. It was created to provide opportunities for students who have a tendency to science and technology education to meet the manpower needs of the industry. To realize vocational education programs, many related programs have been created and offered. This training system has also been introduced at the secondary school level to the tertiary level. These efforts will enable potential students are trained to be professional workforce and semi-professionals in various fields of technology and engineering. Vocational education is actually able to help school dropouts in education is academic, but has great potential to become excellent individuals in the areas of skills and thereby stimulating the economy as a whole.

A variety of emerging trends in the research field of VE and the flow exist must be understood in depth impact on the existing system. In order to understand the profound impact on the emergence of new trends in this system, there is a need for a deeper exploration of global trends in terms of changes in technology, economic and social (Majumdar,

2009). This global trend has clearly given the implications of the system of VE in many developed countries. Changes experienced at once has changed this affected the VE system as the implementation of Competency Based Assessment, Employability, work-based learning, apprenticeships and so on.

Therefore, the purpose of this analysis is to identify the current trends, the latest issues of choice and the needs of researchers in the field of research that has been published VE. Synthesis of results from studies Rojewski et al. (2008) showed that studied trends in VE not comprehensive, this resulted in the analysis results do not reflect the overall global scenario that occurred in the VE. Thus a meta-analysis of studies that refer various international journals and current is required to view trends and current issues at the global level in the VE.

Research Gaps

Characteristics of vocational education pathways and some implications in broad-brush terms, vocational pathways can be viewed as school-based, where students follow full-time programs of study linked to a broad vocational area such as business, economics, and commerce in a formal educational institution; apprenticeship, where apprentices are placed (and usually employed) in a company where they receive on-the-job training (usually) coupled with regular off-the-job training (such as day release in college); or mixed, where the vocational system includes both apprenticeship and school-based modes of participation. Fuller, (2015) suggests that pathways can be analyzed along four dimensions:

- i. Size of vocational pathway in comparison with general education – the proportion of the cohort pursuing each route
 - ii. Nature of vocational pathway – particularly extent to which it is school-based, work-based, or a mixture of the two
 - iii. Occupational specificity – the degree to which the program is narrowly job specific or more broadly focused on a vocational area
 - iv. Relationship between general and vocational pathways –the degree of commonality between the modes of participation, pedagogy, assessment, and certification associated with each, and the ease of movement between them.
- These four are key dimensions for illuminating the general character of the pathway but it is also worth identifying some other issues. In addition to the size of the vocational pathway, the main setting in which it is followed, the degree of Vocational Education

What draws this special issue together is a concern that there is a triple moment of challenge and opportunity facing those of us interested in issues of Vocational Education for development. Alongside the policy moment outlined above, there is also a theoretical moment during which there is a real possibility of significantly advancing the sophistication of our accounts of what is going on in Vocational Education for development due to recent moves in development theory and the moment of reflection provided by the World Congress and its related Report. Both of these two moments are intertwined with a multi-faceted evidential moment.

First, this reflects the rise of new and dangerous approaches to thinking about evidence, which are increasingly infecting this field and others.

Second, the policy moment does legitimately raise questions about the parlous state of Vocational Education data and evidence internationally, as McGrath and Lugg (2012) explore in their contribution to this special issue. Third, the theoretical moment opens up possibilities of thinking about epistemology and methodology in potentially fruitful new ways, a point made both by McGrath and Lugg (2012), and Powell (2012). The very weaknesses in these three areas offer a major window of opportunity for new thinking about Vocational Education and its theoretical and practical relationships with development.

i. Beyond the borrowing of a policy toolkit

We are using the metaphor here to reflect primarily on a set of policies that have “travelled” across the globe into many national vocational education systems and which reflect the standard policy options that most policymakers, consultants and international agencies are likely to draw upon when developing national models. As McGrath (2012) notes, the key tools in the kit are: systemic (and sometimes sectoral) governance reforms; qualifications frameworks; quality assurance systems; new funding mechanisms; and managed autonomy for public providers.

ii. Building beyond the narrow theoretical orthodoxy

The critique of toolkits clearly is one of this special issue’s theoretical arguments. However, a number of papers develop a deeper set of theoretical critiques of the current orthodoxy. This provides the crucial insight of locating skills policy debates within historical and geographic contexts to do with wider developmental dynamics. Although this approach has a strong comparative tradition in Europe, with important French, German and British strands (Crouch and Streeck, 1997; Ashton and Green, 1996), and looks strongly at East Asia (Brown et al., 2001), it has not been much used in other regions, with the exception of South Africa (McGrath et al., 2004). There may be considerable merits in trying to expand such an approach to other western contexts and Nigeria inclusive, something that was beyond the scope of this special issue.

iii. Better understanding the possibilities and limitations of evidence

We must reiterate the point that there is little or no evidence that the toolkit works. Indeed, one of the most striking features of the toolkit is that such criticism appears to be unheard of by its many advocates. This was strikingly shown when its most prominent element was the subject of a major international review by the International Labour Office (Allais, 2010). Although, this report was subjected to appropriate peer scrutiny, including a two-day event that brought together researchers and staff from several qualifications authorities, its conclusion that there was no clear evidence that NQFs worked was subsequently publicly rejected by ILO's partners in the process, the European Training Foundation. Frequently in international fora conducted, evidence for NQFs' success is taken as being simply that so many of them exist.

iv. Noting some silences in this special issue

The lack of economists' voices is a special issue that reflects both a desire to talk back to the orthodoxy and a failure of engagement on both sides. It is important to remember that economic accounts of vocational education are a vital element of the overall picture and matters such as efficiency and effectiveness do need to be part of an overall account of vocational education development. Our intention, however, is to go beyond established positions. Similarly, there is nothing of the anthropological-psychological tradition of authors such as Lave (2011); which has done important work in constructing an account of vocational learning in developing countries, particularly as it occurs in traditional apprenticeship systems and in the informal economy more generally.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The issue of youth unemployment has been growing steadily in the past years and it is now one of the key issues in the contemporary time. At the same time, it has become a matter of national concern. Except that the education and empowerment of young people is given prime attention for an efficient and equitable development of human capital, no success would be recorded in terms of national development. It should therefore be noted that for meaningful vocational development, vocational education must necessarily be central to any meaningful youth policy as the potential benefits of youth development cannot be overestimated, and failure to provide adequate education to the young ones would, in the long run, result into the most costly policy failure. An underperforming education system can only produce an underperforming society. A system where many children fail to even complete compulsory elementary education not only represents enormous wastage but a substantial cost for the society.

Again, effectively empowering the individual to explore his or her human capital should be a matter of providing the right incentives and return a concept that applies quality to all other stakeholders in the educational system. This demands an integral and coordinated educational strategy for employability. It is necessary to promote effective universal access to early quality childhood education and care for all pre-school children on comparable standards in Nigeria. Also develop a wide strategy to eliminate child poverty, identify efficient income transfers to families in need using gender equality as leverage to fight social exclusion through vocational education.

From the findings in this paper, the following conclusions become clear, that vocational and education in Nigeria is the pivot of any national development. It is when the individual in the micro setting are self-reliant that the macro economy becomes buoyant and stable. Therefore, vocational education is the live wire of technology. It is no exaggeration to assert that vocational and technical education constitutes the arteries that supply life-sustaining blood through the system of country economy and standard of living. It will be an impossible task to plan and develop any economy in which vocational and technical education is not developed.

Recommendations

On the basis of this paper, the following suggestions were made,

- i.) Industry, communities, religious organization, labour union and wealthy individual in the society should be encouraged to contribute in cash and kind to the growth and development of vocational and technical education at all level.
- ii.) Vocational education as a matter of urgency should through a comprehensive retraining in services programme and research work improve their quality.
- iii.) The public, employers of labour and the products of vocational and technical education programme should serve as a source of determining the efficacy, efficiency and the effectiveness of vocational and technical education based programme.
- iv.) Workshop and seminars should be jointly organized by government, vocational educators, schools, accrediting bodies and industries regularly.
- v.) The guiding principles to the success of vocational education should be making the best use of all available materials, tools, equipment as well as human resources at all times.

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