



Vocational Business Education: A Veritable Tool for Industrial Demands for Employment and Sustainable Development

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Abstract

This study examines the role of Vocational Business Education (BE) as an essential instrument for meeting industrial employment, demands and promoting sustainable development in Nigeria. It provides a theoretical framework for key concepts such as Vocational Business Education, sustainable development, and the Sustainable Vocational Business Education program within the study's context. VBE often thought of as education geared towards employment, focuses on equipping students with the skills and knowledge necessary for a smooth transition into the job market. Moreover, sustainable development is defined as progress that satisfies current needs without jeopardizing future generations. The discussion includes how Vocational Business Education supports sustainable development and addresses the educational requirements of industries seeking to fulfil employment needs. The paper emphasizes VBE's contribution to national growth and outlines the challenges that hinder the advancement of VBE in Nigeria in the 21st century. The findings suggest that VBE is a vital resource for aligning industry demands with employment needs and fostering sustainable development in Nigeria by providing learners with the essential knowledge, skills, attitudes, and competencies. The study recommends enhancing the infrastructure and resources available in tertiary institutions to support innovation approach effectively.

Keywords: Vocational Business Education; Employment; Industrial Demands; Sustainable Development.



Introduction

Education is universally recognized as a fundamental human right and is widely regarded as a crucial instrument for fostering national development and sustainability. As noted by Okolocha and Baba (2016), education is an entitlement for every individual; it facilitates the development of personal and national potential, benefiting both citizens and the global community. Olubodun and Adaradahun (2018) highlight that education serves as a beacon of hope in a world that would otherwise remain shrouded in ignorance. It lays the groundwork for scientific advancement and technological innovations, and although the degree of emphasis on education may differ from one nation to another, it is prioritized by countries worldwide.

Moreover, education is integral to national growth and requires strategic planning that addresses a nation's specific developmental needs. Investment in education is vital globally, as it responds to industrial demands for economic growth and employment opportunities. For a country to enhance the productivity of its populace, it is essential to reduce reproductive rates and equip individuals with the skills necessary for meaningful participation in society. Okolocha and Baba (2016) suggest that the focus is shifting from general education aimed at mere certification to skill-oriented education that emphasizes practical applications in professional settings. In Nigeria, the escalating rates of unemployment have intensified the call for Vocational Business Education (VBE) as a solution to the nation's economic challenges.

VBE provides functional education aimed at the development of pertinent skills, competencies, and abilities necessary for addressing economic growth and sustainability, responding effectively to industry workforce demands. The incorporation of VBE into higher education curricula aims primarily at fostering economic transformation. As articulated by Modupe (2024), VBE serves as a powerful mechanism to prepare individuals with the knowledge, skills, and competencies that promote self-employment and self-sufficiency, thereby leading to sustainable development.

Vocational Business Education encompasses learning experiences that impart practical skills and foundational scientific knowledge. It aims to equip students for various sectors such as manufacturing, agriculture, and commerce. As highlighted by Ewere (2014), vocational training is specifically structured to empower Learners with the skills vital for hands-on occupations. By doing so, it prepares students to contribute productively to society's progress, enhancing their capabilities in terms of education and employment (Ayeni and Oluwe, 2015). VBE specifically targets essential skills tailored for future employment as skilled workers or technicians, fostering individuals' readiness for both job placement and advanced technical education programs.

Furthermore, VBE represents education geared towards specific sectors needed for economic sustainability, spanning areas such as accounting, marketing, business administration, and entrepreneurship, among others. According to Dokubo (2017), VBE not only prepares individuals for industry demands but also equips them with lifelong skills necessary for self-reliance, which is particularly significant in today's global economy. It nurtures a balance between long-term economic development and the socio-environmental integrity of communities.

Sustainability entails fulfilling the current economic requirements of society without jeopardizing future generations' ability to meet their own needs. An effective VBE curriculum should integrate innovative approaches that supply individuals with the critical skills and



knowledge essential for thriving today's fast-paced business environment, contributing to the development of a robust economy that addresses contemporary societal needs.

Development, in a broad sense, is the transformation of society into a socially, economically, politically, and educationally advanced state, ultimately enhancing the quality of life for its inhabitants. It represents the progress and evolution of communities, as outlined by Ogbaga, Okorie, and Eyo (2021). Sustainable development reflects a country's efforts to advance the economic, political, and social welfare of its populace (Okoye, 2021). This paper seeks to explore the role of Vocational Business Education as a significant means to meet industry employment demands and contribute to sustainable development in Nigeria.

The VBE framework includes a structured program of courses and experiences, guiding individuals through career exploration, enhancing basic academic and life skills, and promoting high academic achievement, leadership development, and preparation for industry-specific work as well as for further education. Muhammad (2017) describes VBE as a multifaceted program capable of transforming Nigeria into a nation of producers rather than merely consumers. Its diverse curriculum aims to equip graduates with skills relevant to their chosen careers.

The National Policy on Education in Nigeria underscores the importance of Vocational Business Education as a vital element of the country's strategy for national development. According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014), VBE encompasses both general education and the study of technology and related sciences, along with the acquisition of practical skills pertinent to various economic and social sectors. For a nation to progress socially, economically, and technologically, it must cultivate a workforce that is productive and innovative, capable of generating employment opportunities rather than merely seeking jobs.

Olaleye (2023) characterizes VBE as education designed to empower individuals to employ relevant practical skills to effect positive changes in their communities, facilitating self-sufficiency. This educational approach mitigates graduates' reliance on government job placements. VBE provides individuals with the skill sets necessary to thrive and contribute as effective members of a global society. The outlined goals of Vocational Business Education, as articulated in the National Policy on Education (2014), focus on:

- a) Providing trained manpower in applied sciences, technology, and business at various skill levels.
- b) Offering the technical knowledge and practical skills essential for economic development across agricultural, commercial, and industrial sectors.
- c) Equipping individuals with the skills needed for economic self-reliance.

Through these objectives, VBE aims to produce graduates who possess the requisite competencies, knowledge, creativity, and attitudes necessary for successful integration into society as employers, employees, producers, or consumers, thus contributing to the nation's development needs.

Understanding the Concept of Sustainable Development

To effectively clarify the idea of sustainable development, we must first break down the terms "sustainable" and "development." Development refers to the transition from a less advanced to a more advanced, mature, or complex stage. It encompasses a gradual evolution



or enhancement through various progressive changes. According to Ayeni and Olowe (2015), development is characterized as a transformative process where a system moves away from a commonly viewed unsatisfactory state toward a condition seen as better both materially and spiritually. This process contributes to longer, healthier lives for citizens, greater access to resources necessary for a decent living, and the opportunity for community engagement. The term “sustain” suggests support, whether physical or mental, and implies maintaining continuity over an extended period. Meanwhile, development signifies a defined level of progress. Consequently, sustainable development can be understood as an ongoing trajectory of growth that lasts for an extended duration. It has also been described as development that satisfies current needs without undermining future generations' ability to fulfil their own (Data Revolution World, 2020). Notably, sustainable development emphasizes the link between present actions and future outcomes.

Consequent upon the above background, the main crux of this explorative research is to give a clear-cut justification on the need to sustain vocational business education since it serves as an essential instrument for meeting industrial employment, demands and promoting sustainable development in Nigeria. Justifiably, the archival retrieval (documentary) approach was adopted. Key issues discussed include a Vocational Business Education, sustainable development, and the Sustainable Vocational Business Education program within the study's context. This culminated to a detailed discussion, policy implication and actionable recommendations.

Roles of Sustainable Vocational Business Education

As the world increasingly resembles a global village, this modern context presents both challenges and opportunities for Vocational Business Education (VBE) in Nigeria and other parts of Sub-Saharan Africa. Nigeria, being part of the developing world, faces numerous issues that hinder the establishment of a robust framework for sustainable VBE. One significant challenge is the insufficient training of educators, including those in VBE. This deficiency perpetuates existing values, beliefs and leads prospective teachers to rely on outdated instructional methods that may not address the dynamic needs of today's fast-paced world (Nwogbo, 2023). Hence, it is crucial to implement effective VBE to ensure that future educators gain advanced knowledge and teaching practices that surpass their own educational experiences. Chauhan and Sharma (2015) highlighted that a nation's well-being relies heavily on the quality of its people, which in turn is influenced by the quality of their education. In Nigeria, as in many developing nations, educators often struggle to adapt to contemporary realities. Therefore, a sustainable Vocational Business Education program is necessary to enhance educators' skills and competencies, enabling them not only to achieve specific educational goals but also to foster broader capabilities like critical thinking, analysis, and evaluation of complex concepts. A sustainable VBE framework should aim to develop the mastery of prospective educators in essential knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enhance learning outcomes for their students.

Vocational Business Education as a Catalyst for Sustainable Development

Vocational Business Education (VBE) is designed to equip individuals with essential skills for personal development, employment, and sustainable advancement. This form of education focuses on providing students with practical-skills that can translate into economic advantages (Olaleye, 2023). VBE is a vital program aimed at addressing the needs of both current and future generations when implemented effectively. Its primary goals include:



1. Delivering functional and qualitative education capable of fostering economic growth.
2. Imparting entrepreneurial skills that promote self-reliance and prepare individuals to become employers.
3. Developing skills that enable individuals to be effective producers and consumers.
4. Reducing public corruption levels.
5. Supporting the creation of a vibrant economy by supplying skilled workforce knowledgeable in contemporary business practices.
6. Lowering national poverty rates.
7. Tackling unemployment by providing marketable skills that facilitate self-employment.

Given that one of the primary objectives of vocational education as outlined by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) is to provide essential technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial, and economic growth, it is evident that vocational business education plays a crucial role in achieving sustainable development in society.

Sustainable development, as a concept, combines the ideas of “sustainability” and “development.” The term “sustainable,” as noted by Anusuya (2022), originates from the Latin word “sustinere,” meaning to maintain or support over time. Development encompasses progress across various domains, including economic, scientific, and technological advancements. Thus, sustainable development refers to meeting societal needs in a manner that can be perpetuated indefinitely without depleting natural resources. It involves fulfilling present requirements while ensuring that future generations can also satisfy their own needs (Anusuya, 2022).

The objectives of sustainable development include enhancing capital income and employment, promoting human welfare, addressing basic needs, and protecting the environment, among others. Equitable participation in development and decision-making processes is essential for bridging gaps between rich and poor. Anusuya (2022) further identifies four critical components of sustainable development:

- a) Environmental protection and preservation,
- b) Sustainable economic growth through resource conservation,
- c) Poverty reduction and the creation of an inclusive society, and
- d) Fostering mutual knowledge and cultural understanding among various groups and communities.

Vocational Business Education for Industry Demands for Employment

The concept of employment refers to a contractual agreement between an employer and an employee, where the latter is compensated for their work. This relationship is a key indicator of a country's economic growth, which is driven by industry demands. The growth of industry demands relies on three primary factors: investment in human capital, technological advancements, and physical infrastructure. As industry demands increase, so does the potential for improved economic well-being and national strength.

Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) plays a vital role in driving technological progress and economic growth. The quality of TVE in a country is a reflection of its people's resourcefulness and ability to innovate. In this context, Vocational Business Education (VBE)

is essential for providing individuals with the skills necessary to contribute to industry demands and drive economic growth.

According to recent research, VBE is critical for improving industry demands and promoting sustainable development. By providing individuals with relevant skills and knowledge, VBE enables them to contribute to the growth of various industries, including agriculture, business, and technology. Moreover, VBE helps to reduce unemployment rates by equipping individuals with marketable skills, making them more employable and less likely to become a liability to society.

The role of VBE in national development cannot be overstated. It contributes to the generation of employment opportunities, industrial development, and entrepreneurship. By providing individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge, VBE enables them to become self-reliant and create jobs, rather than relying on others for employment. Additionally, VBE helps to alleviate poverty by providing individuals with alternative sources of income and promoting economic growth. However, VBE in Nigeria faces several challenges, including inadequate funding, poor remuneration and motivation of teachers, and insufficient infrastructure. The lack of funding and poor infrastructure hinders the ability of VBE institutions to provide students with the necessary skills and knowledge, while poor teacher remuneration and motivation affect the quality of education provided. Furthermore, the orientation of administration in VBE institutions is often inadequate, leading to a lack of support for VBE programs.

To address these challenges, it is essential to prioritize the development of VBE in Nigeria. This can be achieved by increasing funding for VBE institutions, improving teacher remuneration and motivation, and providing adequate infrastructure. Additionally, there is a need to promote the use of digital and internet technology in VBE institutions to ensure that students are equipped with the necessary skills to compete in the modern business environment.

VBE plays a critical role in driving industry demands and promoting sustainable development. By providing individuals with relevant skills and knowledge, VBE enables them to contribute to the growth of various industries and promote economic growth. However, VBE in Nigeria faces several challenges that need to be addressed to ensure its effectiveness in promoting national development.

Conclusion

The effectiveness of any nation's education system is heavily influenced by the calibre of its educators; thus, issues related to education, particularly Vocational Business Education (VBE), must be prioritized by nations aspiring to excel globally. Therefore, governments should utilize contemporary teaching methodologies in VBE to ensure the production of competent educators. The demand for VBE is a crucial instrument for fostering sustainable development in Nigeria, equipping individuals with the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes, and competencies vital for sustainable economic progress. Over time, the focus of VBE programs has evolved to consistently contribute significantly to sustainable development in the 21st century. Nonetheless, challenges that hinder the effective implementation of VBE in Nigeria have been highlighted and must be urgently addressed to align with the industry's demands and contribute to sustainable employment growth.

Recommendations



It is clear that there is a need for enhancement in VBE in Nigeria to meet industry employment demands effectively at the higher education level. To this end, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Funding for education should never be neglected. The government must allocate sufficient resources to the educational sector, with all educational stakeholders, including VBE, collaborating with the government to secure necessary funding. Additionally, VBE programs at tertiary institutions should foster strong connections with alumni to assist in providing essential facilities for achieving program objectives.
2. During the admissions process, VBE programs should aim to enroll students beyond just those who apply for the program, ensuring both continuity and commitment to business education.
3. All VBE students should be required to complete a paid, one-year teaching practice. During this period, they should not engage in any academic coursework, allowing them to apply their teaching skills and gain appreciation for their profession.
4. Vocational and Business courses ought to be mandatory rather than optional at all educational levels.
5. Schools, colleges, and universities should be equipped with adequate, modern facilities. Training equipment should mirror industry standards, and regular maintenance of these tools must be ensured.
6. Multinational and public companies should contribute to the advancement of VBE by providing necessary infrastructure and equipment to educational institutions, as well as offering scholarships to deserving students.
7. The formulation and execution of VBE policies should be left to experts in the field rather than general educators, as this has been a significant barrier to growth and productivity in the country.
8. The Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) and the National Association of Vocational and Technical Educators of Nigeria (NAV BEN) must diligently fulfil their roles, ensuring that only registered and licensed VBE educators are permitted to teach VBE courses or related subjects. This criterion should be paramount in the hiring process for key positions within the program to mitigate the employment of non-professional educators.



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