

VOCATIONAL BUSINESS EDUCATION AND ITS ROLE IN FOSTERING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AGENDAS

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Abstract

The study examined vocational business education and its role in fostering sustainable economic development agendas such as poverty reduction, employment creations, and high standard of living. Three research questions and three hypotheses guided the study. A correlational survey research design was used to achieve the central aim of this study. The population comprised of postgraduate students of Business Education in Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State. A total of 75 postgraduate students of Business Education in Tai Solarin University of Education were selected as sample size of the study. The authors developed a structured instrument tagged: Vocational Business Education and Sustainable Economic Development Questionnaire (VBESDQ) with 0.94 reliability coefficient was used for data collection. Research questions were answered using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). Hypotheses were tested using regression analysis. The findings of the study revealed that there was significant relationship between vocational business education and poverty reduction, employment creations and high standard of living. It was recommended, among others, that emphasizing the practical aspect of Business Education which will help produce productive citizens of the nation's labour force that will be self-reliant or employable in an industry or company.

Keywords: Vocational Business Education, poverty reduction, employment creations, high standard of living, Sustainable Economic Development.

Introduction

Sustainable economic development is the process in which the exploitation of natural resources, the direction of investment, the orientation of technological development, and institutional change or reform are all in coordination and harmony and enhance both the current and future potential for meeting human needs. In this study, sustainable economic development relates to issues such as ability to reduce poverty, improved standard of living as well as ability to create employment. In some circumstances, an investment in sustainability may directly results in positive economic development outcomes or otherwise. Despite the abundance of natural and human resources, Nigeria, is still faced with some challenges which, in the recent years surged caused serious set-backs to economic development. Economic development is the key to higher living standards. It is connected to the developments in human capacity, the standard of living of the citizenry of a particular nation, the strength and buoyancy of its institutions and the overall societal well-being of its people. Evidence has shown that for a nation to attain development, its social, economic and political institutions must be in tandem with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and that within this framework, Nigeria is rated one of the developing

countries with slow progress in education, gender equality, income equality, employment generation, wealth creation and poverty (Anyaehe & Areji, 2015).

Attaining sustainable economic development is one of the SDGs to be attained by year 2030. Sustainable economic development is the key to higher living standards and connected to the developments in human capacity, the standard of living of the citizenry of a particular nation, the strength and buoyancy of its institutions and the overall societal well-being of its people (Amoda, Adebayo, Kazeem & Babajide, 2020). For a nation to attain development in a sustainable manner, its social, economic and political institutions must be in tandem with sustainable economic growth and that within this framework. Economic development measures the actual standard of living of the people and the level of freedom they have to enjoy a good living condition. Simply defined, economic growth is the process whereby the total supply of goods and services of the society increase leading towards improved living standards. It involves the attainment of economic growth leading to economic competitiveness, high standard of living and self-reliance (Ekpenyong & Edokpolor, 2015). Economic growth is a multi-dimensional process involving major change in social structures, popular attitudes and national institutions as well as the acceleration of eco-growth, the eradication of poverty and reduction of inequality of wealth (Kurotimi, Franklin, Aladei & Opigo, 2017). Similarly, two erudite scholars defined economic development as a multi-dimensional process involving major change in social structures, popular attitudes and national institutions as well as the acceleration of eco-growth, the eradication of poverty and reduction of inequality of wealth (Ogbo & Nwachukwu, 2012). The outcome of economic development is an increase in living standards, improvement in self-esteem needs and freedom from oppression, as well as greater choice.

Measuring economic development is not as precise as measuring Gross Domestic Product (GDP), because it depends on what factors are included in the measurement. The most precise means of measuring economic development is the Human Development Index (HDI), which considers the educational level and pedigree of the people and their life expectancy, which ultimately affects productivity and could lead to economic development. Development involves the actualization of human potentialities, proper grasp, management of the environment and natural resources for sustained human well-being (Anyaehe & Areji, 2015). Development in its economic sense as a certain process of improving the quality of human lives by raising their levels of living, self-esteem, and freedom (Todaro & Smith, 2011). The sustainable development of any economy requires the implementation of a sound and functional vocational business education as depicted in SDG 4 (Edokpolor, 2019b). Vocational business education is a key driver in any economic in the sense that it has the capability of producing competent, skillful and dynamic business men and women who can effectively compete in the world of work (Okoye, 2016).

Vocational business education is an essential tool for sustainable economic development. Vocational business education provides manpower with requisite knowledge, skills and attitude for harnessing other resources for productive purpose which will go a long way to improving or advancing the national economy (Ogunleye, 2021). This pre-supposes that vocational business education has a diverse avenue of economic activities which accommodate broad spectrum of people. It is not surprising that equipping students with requisite knowledge and skills, which is one of the roles of vocational business education also enables them, as teachers to impact relevant skills and knowledge to others who are key players in the promotion of sustainable economic development. Most of the skills imparted are entrepreneurial in nature promoting self-reliance. These skills are aimed at producing individuals who will be resourceful, functional and can contribute immensely towards the development of the society. A study to demonstrate the contribution of business education development of the society revealed that entrepreneurial leadership has enhanced sustained entrepreneurial success (Agbim, Orlarewo & Owuduamor, 2013). The increasing global phenomenon and awareness on vocational business education will enhance the acquisition of the necessary skills for gainful and self-employment (Agu, Anidiobu & Ezinwa, 2016). Another study revealed that business education has influence on economic development (Owenbiugie & Edigbonya, 2014). Yet, a recent study found that a functional business education is an antidote for developing the Nigerian economy (Edokpolor & Muritala, 2017). It is therefore not unlikely

that the acquisition of vocational business education skills helps an individual to function effectively in the turbulent business environment as independent or self-employed person vis-à-vis improves ones' economic status and the society at large. Researchers add earlier remarked that when youth are empowered through the acquisition of business education skills there is the likelihood that they will use the skills to create avenue for wealth (Uloko & Egimkonye, 2010).

From the foregoing, vocational business education could be viewed as a tool for improving a higher standard of living. A higher standard of living refers to the amount and quality of material goods and services available to a given population. The standard of living includes basic material factors such as income, gross domestic product (GDP), life expectancy, and economic opportunity. Vocational business education drives innovation as well (Afolabi, 2015; Edokpolor & Muritala, 2017; Edokpolor & Somorin, 2017). Innovation enhances the productive capacity of an economy while holding inputs (capital and labour) constant. Growth in productivity raises the material well-being for a society, improves standards of living and is the primary source of long-term economic prosperity.

Economic development is largely concerned with sustainability which essentially means, meeting the needs of the present without a compromise on future generations' needs. For instance, life expectancy, literacy rate and educational standards, GDP per capita, degree of healthcare quality and availability, cost and quality of housing, and degree of environmental standards were among the factors determining economic development of a nation. Every nation of the world, particularly developing nations, seek to achieve sustainable economic development. Governments, development aid agencies and scholars' world over are convinced that vocational business education is central to economic development, employment creation, poverty reduction, and standard of living (Uloko & Egimkonye, 2010).

For instance, Employment creation through vocational business education could predict the process by which the number of jobs in an economy increases overtime. The prioritization of employment creation is informed by a prevalent assumption that employment has a positive impact on both poverty reduction and stability. It is assumed that employment creation reduces poverty directly by increasing household incomes, and indirectly by stimulating the economy through the creation of demand. It is assumed that employment creation promotes stability by reducing incentives to participate in conflict, and by legitimizing the state, as well as supporting the institutions and processes critical for the effective functioning of a state, for example through tax revenue (World Bank 2011), thereby promoting increased economic activity and further employment growth. In this way employment creation can contribute to a virtuous cycle of poverty reduction and improved stability, with mutually reinforcing outcomes (Holmes, McCord & Hagen-Zanker, 2013). Most of the poverty reduction measures and interventions in Nigeria are embedded in entrepreneurship, the National Directorate of Employment (skills acquisitions and school on Wheels) but have suffered several challenges culminating into their failure (Lame & Yusoff, 2015). Poverty reduction is one of the most difficult challenges facing any country in the developing world where, on the average, majority of the population is considered poor. Evidences in Nigeria shows that the number of those in poverty has continued to increase.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of unemployment in Nigeria is particularly pathetic as the number of those coming out from various tertiary institutions and looking for employment opportunity is increasing day by day. It is pertinent to note that education can be a means to an end; it can simply be a tool for securing employment and emancipation of people through the provision and acquiring of necessary skills to make lives more flourishing. Despite that, it has been observed that in the absence of paid employment by the government and private sector, self-employment is expected to take over which would convert the job seekers to employers of labour. This brought the need to examine vocational business education and the challenges of sustainable economic development.

Purpose of the Study

The central purpose of the study was to examine vocational business education and its role in fostering sustainable economic development agendas. Specifically, the study examined:

1. the relationship between vocational business education and poverty reduction.
2. the relationship between vocational business education and employment creations.
3. the relationship between vocational business education and high standard of living.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between vocational business education and poverty reduction?

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between vocational business education and employment creation?

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between vocational business education and high standard of living?

Method

Research Design

A correlation survey research design was used to achieve the central purpose of this study. These type of designs help to determine the extent to which two or more variables and constructs are associated.

Population and Sampling Procedure

The population of this study comprised postgraduate students of Business Education in Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State. A total of 75 postgraduate students of Business Education in Tai Solarin University of Education were selected as sample size of the study. Purposive and stratified sampling techniques were used for selecting the sample size.

Data Collection Instrument

The authors developed a structured instrument tagged: Vocational Business Education and Sustainable Economic Development Questionnaire (VBESDQ) and was used for data collection. The instrument geared towards eliciting information from the respondents regarding vocational business education and the challenges of sustainable economic development. The questionnaire requested responses on a four (4) – point scale format which was a modification of 5-point Likert scale. The responses rating scales are as follows: Highly Extent (HE), Moderate Extent (ME), Low Extent (LE) and No Extent (NE).

Data Collection Instrument Validity and Reliability

To ensure the content validity of the instrument, copies of the instrument were made available to the experts in the Department of Business Education to review in content, grammar and structure. The final draft was used to gather relevant data for study. Reliability of the instrument was done using the Cronbach alpha. In this case, copies of the instrument were administered on 10 Business Education undergraduates in Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye that are parallel to the sampled population. The collected data were analyzed and the respective reliability estimate reported as 0.94.

Data Collection Procedure

Primary method of data collection was used. The structured questionnaire was used for collecting data from the respondents. The authors made use of three research assistants to help in distributing the questionnaire to the respondents and ensure that the instruments retrieve back immediately after the administration by the respondents.

Data Analysis

The research questions were answered using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient.

Result

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between vocational business education and poverty reduction?

Table 1: Pearson's Correlation between vocational business education and poverty reduction.

Variables	Mean	SD	r-value	df	p-value	Remark
Vocational business education	18.7120	1.96169	.442	75	.000	Sig.
Poverty reduction	29.9267	2.86997				

Table 1 revealed that there was significant relationship between the independent variable (vocational business education) and the dependent variable (poverty reduction) in the order of ($r = 0.442$, $P < .05$). On this premise, the researcher concluded about 44.2% reduction in poverty could be attributed towards vocational business education.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between vocational business education and employment creations?

Table 2: Pearson's Correlation between vocational business education and employment creations.

Variables	Mean	SD	r-value	df	p-value	Remark
Vocational business education	18.712	1.962	.760	75	.000	Sig.
Employment creation	25.450	2.621				

From Table 2, it was observed that there was significant relationship between the independent variable (vocational business education) and the dependent variable (employment creations) in the order of ($r = 0.760$, $P < .05$). On this premise, the researcher concluded that vocational business education has capability to promote employment creations by 76%.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between vocational business education and high standard of living?

Table 3: Pearson's Correlation Relationship between vocational business education and high standard of living.

Variables	Mean	SD	r-value	df	p-value	Remark
Vocational business education	18.712	1.962	.760	75	.000	Sig.
High standard of living	25.450	2.621				

From Table 3, it was observed that there was significant relationship between the independent variable (vocational business education) and the dependent variable (standard of living) in the order of ($r = 0.760$, $P < .05$). On this premise, the researcher concluded that vocational business education has capability to increases standard of living by 76%.

Discussion

The findings of the study revealed that vocational business education positively influence poverty reduction, employment creations and improvement in standard of living. These findings were in support to Ogbaga, Ike and Edet (2021) found that vocational business education is a formidable tool for

sustainable development in Nigeria because it provides its recipients with the appropriate knowledge, skills, attitudes and competencies that are needed for sustainable development. Elujekwute, Nwaokwa, Aja, and Oigoche (2021) revealed that business education; which is skilled oriented and self-employment motivated, holds the key to Nigeria becoming technologically relevant and socio economically prosperous, if systematically packaged and adequately delivered. Ezeonwurie (2021) showed that Business Education programme will be an indispensable tool for alleviating poverty if the programme is not handled with levity and there is the provision of adequate fund and infrastructures needed to implement the programme. The study was concluded that meaningful poverty alleviation through Business Education cannot take place without adequate funding. The findings of the study also correlate with Elujekwute, Nwaokwa, Aja and Oigoche (2021) found that Business education prepares students for occupations in administration office systems, accounting and finance, marketing and management as well as stenographic and computer information system. It equips students (youths) with appropriate skills, knowledge, abilities and competencies that enhance individuals to be self-employed and self-reliant leading to sustainable economic development.

Conclusion

Having examined vocational business education and the challenges of sustainable economic development, the following conclusions were drawn based on the findings of the study that: there was significant relationship between the independent variable vocational business education and poverty reduction and that about 44.2% reduction in poverty could be attributed towards vocational business education; there was significant relationship between vocational business education and employment creations and that vocational business education has capability to promote employment creations by 76% and there was significant relationship between vocational business education and standard of living and that vocational business education has capability to increases standard of living by 76%.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were provided:

1. It was recommended amongst others that emphasizing the practical aspect of Business Education which will help to produce productive members of the nation's labour force that will be self-reliant or employable in an industry or company.
2. Also, governments, donor agencies and all stakeholders should join hands in providing funds for Business Education so as to ensure scholarship award, conducive teaching and learning environment.
3. It was recommended, among others, that more innovative and experiential approaches should be employed for teaching and learning of both commercial and social entrepreneurship content of Business Education curriculum at tertiary education levels.
4. The curriculum planners should ensure that the school curriculum content is relevant to the skills required of industries because of the relevance of the programme in providing the needed manpower in industries.
5. The knowledge and competency gaps identified in the study should be packaged into training modules for in-service training, workshops, seminars and conferences for business educators' students to build their capacity to apply pedagogical and professional competencies in instructional delivery.

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