
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Contribution of Vocational Teacher towards National Food Security and Sustainable Development

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| ABSTRACT

Given its crucial role in Nigeria's technological and industrial growth, the Federal Republic of Nigeria has prioritized vocational and technical education. It has been stated as a factor of education that promotes the learning of essential scientific information as well as practical and applied skills. Vocational and technical education (VTE) are essential to the social and economic advancement of a country. The most fundamental challenge facing Nigeria today is that of ensuring the availability of food at all times and at all levels for a healthy and productive life. Having enough food for the populace is crucial and fundamental to any nation's life geared towards achieving human development goals. Furthermore, vocational education will contribute significantly to agriculture. The skills acquired through VTE can contribute to food production and foreign exchange earnings in Nigeria. The teaching and learning of vocational skills should place a strong emphasis on vocational learners. The inability of our policy implementation to achieve the national goal of increased agricultural production and food security has often been attributed to some constraints. A successful government is best judged by its capacity to ensure the citizens' food security as the way forward.

| KEYWORDS

Vocational Teachers, National Food Security and Sustainable Development

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1. Introduction

Nigeria has a strong agricultural economy. Then, agricultural products like cocoa, groundnuts, palm fruit, etc., supported Nigeria's economy. The populace could gripe about poverty but not about terrible hunger. This may be the result of the fact that almost everyone was engaged in agricultural pursuits or related occupations in one way or another. Because everyone was involved, everyone had an interest in it, and it seemed to be everyone's main source of family nutrition, agriculture, and occupational skills seemed to survive at that time. Due to a lack of interest or odd white-collar occupations, there were fewer occurrences of unemployment. Since most homes had an abundance of food, families were not whining about being hungry.

Vocational training is education that equips people to function as technicians as, tradespeople, or artisans in a professional craft or trade. Vocational education can also be understood as the kind of education provided to an individual in order to prepare them for gainful employment or self-employment with the necessary skill.

According to (Olaitan, 2020), vocational and technical education is a sort of education provided to the individual to help them develop their innate creative and manipulating potentials for use by man. Given its crucial role in Nigeria's technological and industrial growth, the Federal Republic of Nigeria has prioritized vocational and technical education. It has been acknowledged as a component of education that promotes the learning of fundamental scientific information as well as practical and applied skills.

Systems of vocational and technical education (VTE) are essential to the social and economic advancement of a country. Because of their vibrant nature, they are constantly impacted by the forces that lead to changes in society, business, and schools. Due to the demands of the local community and the changing needs of the economy, VTE presents special difficulties and opportunities. There is no question that every country, especially emerging ones, must properly develop its technical and vocational abilities in order to advance economically. Additionally, because it enables people and communities to realize their potential, broaden their views, and adjust to the changes in the dynamic world, VTE is a crucial component of the equation for national development.

2. Food Security in Nigeria

The most fundamental challenge facing Nigeria today is that of ensuring the availability of food at all times and at all levels for a healthy and productive life. Having enough food for the populace is crucial and fundamental to any nation's life gearing toward sustainable development.

Food security is a country wherein each person, household, nation, region, and the whole globe continually has bodily and monetary get right of entry to sufficiently secure and nourishing meals to shape their nutritional wishes and meal option for a lively and healthful life (Afolabi, 2020). Additionally, it's far defined as a society in which anybody has access to enough food to live a healthy and productive life, where malnutrition is nonexistent, and where food comes from effective, affordable, and efficient food systems that support the sustainable use of natural resources ^[6].

According to the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) in (Short, 2019), investing in human resources is essential for reviving the agricultural industry and achieving long-term food security goals.

The problem of food security is not exclusive to Nigeria; numerous developing countries are also experiencing severe food shortages as a result of population growth, ineffective resource management, inability to adopt new technology, and failure to use education to keep up with changing trends and problems.

3. Sustainable Development

A guiding principle of sustainable development is attaining human development goals while protecting the capacity of the natural system to supply the natural resources and ecosystem services that are essential to the economy and society.

Sustainable development was well-defined by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015 as development that satisfies present demands without exposing the ability of future generations to satiate their own needs. The foundation of sustainable development is hence the constant satisfaction of human needs. (Waliki, and Usman 2019)

Today, the nation's situation has improved as a result of the economy's switch to oil as its primary source of income. More money is available for the country and its residents to enjoy utilities like electricity, water treatment facilities, information and communication networks, etc. The whole detachment of citizens and general interests from agriculture as a source of income is the flip side of the oil boom. As a result of the perception that agriculture is a business just for the underprivileged, peasants, never-make-it-rich, etc., citizens nowadays frequently lose interest in agricultural operations. One of the most effective means of achieving justice in the agriculture sector is vocational and technical education.

Furthermore, vocational education will contribute significantly to agriculture. The skills acquired through VTE can contribute to food production and foreign exchange earnings in Nigeria

4. Vocational and Technical Education's Goals and Objectives

The National Policy on Education (2004) listed the following as the purposes and goals of vocational and technical education:

1. To supply skilled labor in the business, technology, and applied sciences, particularly at the technical, advanced technical, and craft levels.
2. To offer the technical expertise and practical abilities required for the development of commerce, agriculture, and the economy.
3. To provide education and equip someone with the necessary skills so they can support themselves financially

5. Student-Centered Approach

In the process of teaching and learning, the main point of emphasis on vocational skills should place a strong emphasis on vocational learners. Therefore, educators should make these learners the focus of all their activities. This requires:

1. Encouraging vocational students to actively participate in the teaching and learning process
2. Vocational students are always actively engaged in their interactions with the instructor, the learning materials, and their surroundings.

3. Promoting students' acquisition of fundamental life skills through the teaching and learning of vocational skills
4. Enabling learners to apply their initiative and newly acquired abilities to solve difficulties in their daily lives.

As a result, the FRN (1994) identifies the following six key goals for imparting vocational education:

1. The capacity to pique students' interest in practical skills
2. Ability to make it possible for pupils to learn the fundamentals of vocational education.
3. Ability to help students acquire fundamental vocational skills
4. Exposure to opportunities in the realm of vocational education for students
5. The capacity to get pupils ready for more and
6. Possibility of preparing pupils with vocation-specific skills for careers.

6. Constraints

The inability of our policy implementation to achieve the national goal of increased agricultural production and food security has often been attributed to some constraints. Some of these constraints include the following:

1. Lack of infrastructures such as access/feeder road, thereby delaying the harvest of produce and subsequent tilling of land which could have been used for another cropping season.
2. The cost of production is often very high, especially in the southern part of Nigeria.
3. The scarcity of large expanses of land is contiguous enough for crop intensification as a result of our land tenure system, the temporal fixity of land, and the unwillingness of some non-farmer landlords to release their land to landless farmers.
4. The weak financial base of farmers, especially women, appears to be hampering the activities in the downstream sectors.
5. There is the traditional "delay" in releasing and accessing approved funds for agricultural activities by the authority.
6. Lack of market information network to guide the farmers on where to make their sales and maximum profits.
7. Lack of group dynamics as groups and individuals are not sufficiently capacitated to manage and maintain service projects with little or no external support.

7. The Way Forward

A dependent and insecure nation is one that cannot feed itself. A successful government is best judged by its capacity to ensure the citizens' food security. The current administration should do its part to ensure food security by increasing agricultural productivity significantly. To make this happen, it is crucial to make sure that: -

1. Giving vocational educators rewards in cash and in kind will help them stay motivated.
2. Training vocational students gradually in a mechanized farming system and providing them with subsidies will encourage them to continue such extensive agricultural production.
3. Natural resources shouldn't be the only basis of our vocational training.
4. Massive vocational training for our students, farmers, and young people in environmentally benign and sustainable conservation or agro-ecological farming methods.
5. Bridging the enormous student-to-vocational staff ratio.
6. The vocational educators are being retrained in conservation agriculture methods.
7. Our career research should have a direct impact on food production.

8. Conclusion

The vocational education methods are outdated and unsustainable and, therefore, cannot meet the necessities for our national food security. It becomes desirable for our teachers to be given vocational education (both formal and informal) and required livelihoods that will enable them to manipulate and harness nature efficiently to produce enough food for our crowded population. It is important to state that vocational education has to be practiced to manage the environment in line with the popular saying sustainable development.

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