The Relevance of Vocational Education in Enhancing Economic Development in Nigeria

Sa’id Abdullahi Doma, B.Sc, MBF, Ph.D, NIM
Email address: domasai2001@yahoo.com, saiddoma55@gmail.com, 07031393375

Jibrin Ibrahim Bappah, B.Sc, M.Sc
Email address: jibappah4@gmail.com, 08035549494

Yakubu Abubakar
Email address: ysarkinshanu@yahoo.com, 08035180301

School of Business Education
Federal College of Education (Tech), Gombe, Gombe State, Nigeria

ABSTRACTS
This paper discusses the relevance of vocational education (VED) in enhancing economic development in Nigeria. In the introduction, a little historical background of VED in Nigeria was discussed where some of the vocational activities such as: trading, farming, weaving, dying, sewing, plating, crafting and so on were said to be taught to children at lower level of ages. An attempt was made to mention some of the areas covered within the realm of VED which include: Accounting, Business Studies, Home Economics, Secretarial Studies, Commerce, Agricultural Science and Computer Studies. Also, the concept of VED was highlighted and it definition by scholars was mentioned. The discussion in the paper was done based on the following headings: poverty eradication through VED, Problems of VED, Economic development as well as the core values of development. Conclusively, it was found that VED contribute a lot in enhancing economic development in the Nigerian societies generally. Some recommendations were given by the researcher and among the is that: government should provide enough funding as far VED is concern due to its significance in the respect of enhancing economic development in Nigeria.

Keywords: Vocational, Education, Economic, Development

INTRODUCTION
Long before the advent of western education and colonial masters, traditional societies in Nigeria were teaching their young adults some forms of vocational education (VED). Children before their maturation were taught some commercial and economic activities such as: trading, farming, weaving, dying, sewing, plating, crafting and so on. Some were taught technical works such as carpentry, blacksmithing, building and the like. The motive, here, was to prepare the young adults so as to carter for their own survival in the feature.

VED is the form of education that plays a crucial role in the field of economic and societal development. This particular form of education can contribute significantly to the promotion of individuals’ interests, enterprises as well as economic development. It is, also, a master key that can alleviate poverty, promote peace, safeguard the environment and improve the quality of life for all, within a particular society. It, equally, help in achieving sustainable development nationwide, in general and to a society in particular.

VED is said to be the body of knowledge by which its recipients will be opportune to acquire practical skills which will enable them to secure jobs so as to earn their living. It geared towards the production of the educated young persons who can effectively work with their talents, hearts as well
as hands. The driving force of any society or nation is its economic development and the desire for self-reliance and self-sustainability and these can only be achieved through VED.

VED is therefore the total of the organized and purposeful experiences essential to the career development in a trade and industrial occupations that are found in any of the career circles. It is, equally, taken to mean experience gained directly or indirectly which enables a person to take part in a socially useful occupation either during or out of school, at different stages or levels. Likewise, also, it makes person to be sufficiently equipped to become an intelligent creator of goods and services.

The areas covered within the realm of VED include: Accounting, Business Studies, Home Economics, Secretarial Studies, Commerce, Agricultural Science and Computer Studies. At this point, we can say that VED is very cardinal in respect to economic development for any society.

Economic development is concern about the maturity of the quality and quantity of goods and services being produced in a given society or nation. It, also, focuses on the transformation of the economy from primary to secondary sectors and, also, from local to modern way of the creation of goods and services. Also, economic development is about building prosperity –that is to say building of a high and rising standard of living. The fundamental drivers of prosperity are productivity and productivity growth, and skill acquisition is the key driver of them all. Therefore, the focus of economic development of every society should be on supporting skill acquisition practical programmes, which would increase the prosperity for its group members towards their businesses and ensuring that the youth, who are part of the labour force, have the skills to remain the most productive work force.

Youth learned skillful knowledge, through VED, which will enable them to become innovative in the field of the creation of goods and services. Innovation will drive the machinery of growth of the societal business and industrial activities by fostering new ideas, technologies and processes that lead to better jobs and higher wages. These, as a result, would lead to a higher standard of living.

This paper intends to highlight the relevance of VED in enhancing Economic Development in Nigeria.

**Concept of Vocational Education**

Vocationalism has been in Nigeria as well as in Africa for a very long period of time. According to Oni (2006), historically, vocationalism is not a new concept in Nigerian education. He maintains that even before the advent of colonial influence in Africa, there was a traditional or indigenous educational system prevalent in African societies.

VED, as described by Fafunwa (1974), cited in Oni (2006), is the type of education that emphasizes individual’s ability and skill towards doing a certain job. He, also, stated categorically that:

a. Nigerian higher education emphasized social responsibility, job orientation, vocational exploration, and political participation, spiritual and moral values.

b. Children were involved in practical farming, fishing, weaving, cooking, carving, knitting and so on.

When we talk of VED to some extent, we mean the aspect of education that is centred towards the production of the learned individual who can work efficiently well for the promotion and upliftment of his/her own society or nation either economically, socially, or physically. VED “is geared towards the production of the educated man who can effectively work with his head, heart and hands” (Idris, Oseni, and Betty 2011). According to OECD (2009,; 2010a,) as cited in CEDEFOP (2011), VED ‘prepares participants for direct entry, without further training, into specific occupations. Successful completion of such programmes leads to a labour-market relevant vocational qualification.’ From the above definition we can now understand at least a role VED is playing in a given society to its citizens –that of giving a kind of preparation in the career development of a person which will subsequently enable him/her to choose an occupation in the world of work. This means that VED gives skills and orient the participants towards selecting their occupational jobs so as to be self-reliant and to earn their living.

**Poverty Eradication through VED**

Being it the key to poverty eradication, VED plays a crucial role in improving the living conditions of people who are already poor. Idris, Oseni and Betty (2011) mentioned the following guiding principles as far as VED in Nigeria is concern:
a. Economic growth and employment creation: - the purpose here is to raise the productive capacity of the poor, the youth and the vulnerable of the society through the acquisition of job-specific skills through VED.

b. Teaching appropriate vocational subjects: - by this the government will achieve its objectives of job creation and poverty reduction.

c. Employability and entrepreneurship: - this is one of the major objectives of a credible vocational training system.

d. Proficiency: the aim here is that of proficiency-testing in such a way the trainees will demonstrate their practical competences rather than follow the strictly examination and certification approach.

Problems of VED

There are some problems associated with VED in our societies or the nation at large. About five of the problems were listed by Idris, Oseni, and Betty (2011) in this regard. Some of them are listed below:

i) Poor Funding. As a result of poor funding, the success and developmental advancement in VED that have been actualized for many years has been frustrated to failure.

ii) Inconsistent Government Policy. The major setback to the advancement of VED has been that of inconsistency in formulation and implementation of VED policies.

iii) Poor State of Laboratories, Workshops and other Infrastructure. Many vocational institutions in the country are stocked with out-dated equipment that is irrelevant in modern time due to technological advancement.

iv) The Neglect of VED. The neglect of VED will consequently through a nation into socially and economically injurious situation. This is because the youth cannot make their contributions on poverty alleviation.

Economic Development

Economic development simply refers to building prosperity of a given society or nation – that is to say, a high and rising standard of living of the said society or nation. As maintained by Porter (1990) economic development is the “long-term process of building a number of interdependent microeconomic capabilities and incentives to support more advanced forms of competition.” From the above definition, it should be understood, that the capabilities and incentive identified are taken to mean the nature and extent of the inputs needed by business firms and organisations in the process of producing goods and services; the rules, incentives and ethic leading the kind and greatness of indigenous competitiveness; the excellent of local services demanded for; and the magnitude and excellence of local suppliers. Ugoji (2003) distinguished between economic growth and economic development. According to him, economic growth is “the increase in the quantity of goods and services produced in a country which raises her national income.” “This”, he maintained, “occurs whenever there is a quantitative increase in a country’s input and output over a period of time.” Whereas economic development “talks about the maturity of the quality and quantity of goods and services produced in a country, the transformation of her economy from primary to secondary sectors, changes in the citizens’ creative energies and acquisition of special skills etc. Economic development occurs when there are quantitative and qualitative improvements in all or almost all the sectors of an economy and which can be sustained.” Also economic development, according to the International Economic Development Council (IEDC) can be described in terms of objectives. IEDC, also, maintained that “economic development can also be described as a process that influences growth and restructuring of an economy to enhance the economic well-being of a community.” In this regard, IEDC identified three major areas that economic development encompasses. These are:

i) Policies that government undertakes to meet broad economic objectives including inflation control, high employment and sustainable growth.

ii) Policies and programmes to provide services including building highways, managing parks and providing medical access to the disadvantaged.

iii) Policies and programmes explicitly directed at improving the business climate through specific efforts, business finance, marketing, neighbourhood development, business retention and expansion, technology transfer, real estate development and others.
“The main goal of economic development is improving the economic well-being of a community through efforts that entail job creation, job retention, tax base enhancements and quality of life” (IEDC, date withheld). The obvious fact is that there are different kinds of communities with different geographic and political strengths and weaknesses. Also, economic development, as a phenomenon has many forms of definitions. Therefore, the challenges for economic development may differ from a society to a society.

Core Values of Development
The three core values of development, according to Todaro and Smith (2004) are:

a. **Sustenance**: The ability to meet basic needs such as food, shelter, health and protection. These are called life-sustaining basic human needs.

b. **Self-esteem**: To be a person; this simply means a sense of worth and self-respect. Also, it can be taken to mean a situation whereby a person is not being used as a tool by others for their own ends.

c. **Free from servitude**: That is ‘to be able choose’. “Freedom here is to be understood in the sense of emancipation from alienating material conditions of life and from social servitude to nature, ignorance, other people, misery, institutions and dogmatic beliefs, especially that one’s poverty is one’s predestination. (Todaro and Smith 2004)

Objectives of Development
According to Todaro and Smith (2004), development in all societies must have at least three objectives. These are listed below:

1) To increase the availability and widen the distribution of basic life-sustaining goods such as food, shelter, health, and protection.

2) To raise levels of living, including, in addition to higher incomes, the provision of more jobs, better education, and greater attention to cultural and human values, all of which will serve not only to enhance material well-being but also to generate greater individual and national self-esteem.

3) To expand the range of economic and social choices available to individuals and nations by freeing them from servitude and dependence not only in relation to other people and nation-states but also to the forces of ignorance and human misery.

Vocational Education and the Economic Development
There is doubt the fact that vocational education has a significant role to play as far as economic development is concern. Aspects of vocational education have been highlighted in the Nigerian National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004) as:

a. An integral part of general education.

b. A means of preparing for occupational fields and effective participation in the world of work.

c. An aspect of lifelong learning and a preparation for responsible citizenship.

d. An instrument for promoting environmentally sound sustainable development.

e. A method of facilitating poverty alleviation.

Education leads to social awareness and creativeness. From the above, we can see that one of the aspects of VED mentioned is that it is an integral part of general education. General education provides values, communicative and manipulative skills to the society on which effective vocational education is based.

CONCLUSION
From the above discussion, we made to understand that VED contribute in skills development and gives good orientation to youngsters towards selecting their occupational jobs so as to be self-reliant and to earn their living, which eventually leads the society to high level of economic prosperity.

RECOMMENDATIONS
At this juncture, the researcher wishes to make some recommendation based on the discussions made in this paper. The paper tries to establish that vocational education have a significant contribution
towards the enhancement of economic development in Nigeria. But some problems are emanating here and there. Therefore, the following recommendations are hereby made:

1. There is need for the introduction of vocational courses right from primary education level, therefore, the government through the educational system of the country should develop a suitable curriculum which can be designed to capture primary school pupils so as to enhance their skill development attitude.

2. Government should adequately provide enough funds in carrying out the activities of vocational education in Nigeria. This will go along with promoting skills acquisition among the youth.

3. Parents, also, should encourage their children towards developing their vocational thoughts through providing enough materials and resources can assist them in building up the skill acquisition exercise.

REFERENCES
Todaro, M.P, and Smith, S.C (2004), Economic development, Pearson Education (Singapore) Pte. LTD.