

**Entrepreneurship and Vocational Education for Sustainable Development in Nigeria****<sup>1\*</sup>Eyiolorunshe D.T, <sup>1</sup>Egbowawa S.I. <sup>1</sup>Aina Tope, <sup>2</sup>Adetoye O.A**<sup>1</sup>Redeemer's College of Technology and Management Mowe, Ogun State, Nigeria<sup>2</sup>Ekiti State University.<sup>1\*</sup>gbendav@gmail.com**Abstract**

*Entrepreneurship and vocational education are widely recognized as crucial components of national development strategies due to their significant impact on human resource development. Their role in job creation, productivity, and economic growth cannot be overstated, as they have the potential to cultivate skills that promote self-employment, self-reliance, and expedite economic growth and development. This study examines the contribution of entrepreneurship and vocational education to sustainable development and the challenges they face in Nigeria. The research utilizes an exploratory research design to provide information and enhance understanding of entrepreneurship and vocational education. Secondary sources were used to collect data. The findings indicate that entrepreneurship and vocational education equip graduates and unemployed youth with skills for self-reliance and employment, thereby making a meaningful contribution to the country's economic development and sustainability. However, the study emphasizes the need for the government to prioritize resource allocation to entrepreneurship and vocational education and training, and to redirect policies towards strengthening tertiary education and vocational institutes in order to foster entrepreneurial and vocational skills for sustainable national development in Nigeria.*

**Keywords: Entrepreneurship Education, Vocational Training, Sustainable Development****1. Introduction:**

Nigeria, with a population of over 216 million people according to the National Population Commission (NPC, 2022), is among the most populous nations globally. However, despite its abundant natural resources and vast fertile land, the country remains relatively impoverished and underdeveloped. Key sectors of the economy, such as manufacturing and agriculture, are declining, leading to significant rural-to-urban migration in recent years. This migration has resulted in overcrowded cities, increased crime rates, and high levels of unemployment, among other issues.

One harsh reality of Nigerian society is that there are more job applicants than available positions at any given time. A recent recruitment exercise conducted by the Nigerian Immigration Services witnessed over 125,000 applicants in Abuja and Lagos alone competing for 4,500 jobs, leading to chaos and even fatalities (Ojeme, Onoyume, Mosadomi, et al., 2014).

Such incidents are not uncommon, and organizations often demand that Nigerian graduates stand out from the crowd in order to secure employment and build successful careers.

Nigeria possesses vast yet underutilized human resources. However, with a youth population of over 60 million, the eligible workforce is approximately 40 million, out of which only 14.7 million are fully employed, leaving another 11.2 million unemployed (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020). The Nigerian labor market is highly competitive, and a high youth unemployment rate correlates with increased insecurity and poverty, which is viewed as a potential time bomb. Nigeria has a multifaceted tertiary education system that produces thousands of graduates each year who often lack the practical skills required in the workplace. Consequently, the challenge lies in finding suitable employment opportunities for these graduates.

Given these troubling realities, it is crucial for school leavers to avoid being among the pool of unemployed graduates who, despite holding certifications, lack the necessary employability skills sought by employers. There is increasing emphasis on entrepreneurship and vocational education as a means to address the rising rates of youth and graduate unemployment, reduce dependence on white-collar jobs, and stimulate economic growth and overall national development. Many higher education institutions in Nigeria have incorporated entrepreneurial education into their curricula, either as part of general studies or as graduation requirements. While some programs encourage students to start their own businesses during their undergraduate years, and some schools collaborate with investors and venture capitalists to fund startups (Constantine, 2019). By bridging the gap between education and the world of work and focusing on improving entrepreneurial and vocational education and training, these initiatives aim to strengthen the pathway to sustainable development.

It is evident that graduates from entrepreneurial and vocational institutions possess highly valuable entrepreneurial skills and rely on their own efforts and abilities. Sustainable development can only be achieved when concrete steps are taken to equip the youth with skills that enable them to be self-reliant and become agents of development and sustainability. Therefore, this paper examines the role of entrepreneurship and vocational education in sustainable development, as well as the challenges they face in Nigeria's pursuit of sustainable development.

## **2. Conceptual Clarifications**

### **2.1 Concept of Entrepreneurship and Vocational Education**

Entrepreneurship is the process of identifying, creating, and pursuing opportunities to establish and manage a business or organization. It involves taking calculated risks, innovating, and mobilizing resources to transform ideas into viable products, services, or processes that generate value and contribute to economic growth. Entrepreneurship encompasses various

activities such as opportunity recognition, resource allocation, business planning, marketing, financial management, and leadership (Kuratko, 2016).

Entrepreneurship is characterized by traits like creativity, passion, resilience, adaptability, and a willingness to take risks. Entrepreneurs often exhibit a strong drive for achievement, a desire for independence, and a vision to make a positive impact on society. They play a vital role in fostering innovation, job creation, and economic development (Hisrich, Peters & Shepherd 2019).

Entrepreneurship Education has a long history and gained popularity in the 1980s in Western countries.(Constantine, 2017). It involves providing students with the knowledge, skills, and motivation necessary to start small and medium-scale businesses, promoting innovation, and introducing new products, services, and market strategies (Anyebe (2017). Entrepreneurship education prepares individuals to be responsible, enterprising individuals who contribute to economic development and sustainable communities. It involves assuming the responsibility and risk of a business operation with the expectation of making a profit (Kenton and Envin (2010). Quality entrepreneurship education can enhance job creation, reduce unemployment and poverty, and improve the standard of living, thereby promoting socio-economic and political development. (Anyebe, 2017).

Entrepreneurship education is the kind of education that deals with skill acquisition and management that is necessary for job creation (Maina, 2013). The introduction of entrepreneurial education is necessary to inculcate the spirit of entrepreneurship into children and young people in school, early for their tender age which could be used as a tool for fighting the war against poverty and unemployment in Nigeria while improving living standard and promoting social and economic development of any given country (Maina, 2013).

Vocational education on the other hand also known as technical or career education focuses on equipping individuals with practical skills, knowledge, and competencies that are directly applicable to specific occupations or industries. It aims to prepare individuals for gainful employment in various sectors, such as healthcare, construction, information technology, automotive, hospitality, and more. (Lerman, 2016). Vocational education programs typically combine theoretical instruction with hands-on training to provide students with the necessary skills to enter the workforce or pursue further education in a particular field. These programs are designed to meet the demands of the labor market, aligning with industry standards and requirements. Vocational education often emphasizes skill development, problem-solving, critical thinking, and teamwork, aiming to produce job-ready individuals who can contribute effectively to the economy (Colardyn & Bjornavold, 2004). Vocational education focuses on preparing individuals for employment in recognized occupations. It involves the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding, and knowledge related to various sectors of economic

and social life. Vocational education equips individuals with the necessary knowledge and skills for efficient performance in their chosen occupational careers, promoting self-reliance.

Vocational education encompasses fields of study such as agricultural education, fine and applied arts education, business education and vocational trades in soap making, hair dressing, computer training etc. Based on the above definitions, vocational education is defined in this work as an educational training, which has been designed systematically to enable an individual acquire the basic knowledge, skills, abilities, and understanding needed for ones efficient performance in his/her chosen occupational carrier for self-reliance (Ojimba (2012).

## **2.2 Concept of Sustainable Development**

Sustainable development emerged as a response to concerns about economic growth and its impact on the environment. The widely known definition of sustainable development, proposed by the Brundtland Commission, states that it is development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This definition emphasizes the importance of economic growth that does not harm vulnerable populations or deplete natural resources, highlighting the quality of growth alongside its quantity. practices (Francis & Taylor, 2017; Osei-Hwedie, 1995).

The Brundtland Commission's definition highlights two key concepts: the essential needs of the world's poorest population and the limitations imposed by technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs. Sustainable development calls for comprehensive changes in resource and power management, as well as existing policies and practices, to address disparities in economic and political power, poverty, resource depletion, and environmental degradation (Jalal, 1993).

Intergenerational equity is a central idea in the concept of sustainable development, emphasizing the fulfillment of basic and essential needs, the facilitation of economic growth, and the encouragement of equity through citizen participation. Sustainable development encompasses the relationship between the environment, poverty, and socio-economic change, the capacity of the environment to cope with meeting human needs, and the impact of economic growth on environmental processes (Francis & Taylor, 2017; Osei-Hwedie, 1995).

Sustainable development requires progress across multiple dimensions, including economic, human, environmental, technological, and political aspects. These dimensions are interrelated, and actions taken in one area can reinforce goals in others. The feasibility of sustainable development raises questions about the availability of resources and the implications of population growth. While the question of feasibility lacks a definitive answer due to insufficient empirical information, it is acknowledged that sustainable development requires careful consideration of exhaustible resources and population dynamics. (Osei-Hwedie, 1995).

### **2.3 Aims and Objectives of Entrepreneurship and Vocational Education**

The aims and objectives of entrepreneurship and vocational education are as follows:

1. **To Foster Successful Entrepreneurship:** Entrepreneurship education aims to develop the qualities necessary for successful entrepreneurship, including self-confidence, foresight, maturity, dynamism, dedication, leadership skills, innovative thinking, and decision-making abilities.
2. **To Encourage Self-Employment:** Entrepreneurship education aims to promote self-employment as an alternative to seeking traditional employment. By encouraging individuals to become their own bosses and establish businesses, entrepreneurship education creates opportunities for job creation and economic growth.
3. **To Provide Business Operation Training:** Entrepreneurship education also focuses on providing training for successful business operations. This includes teaching entrepreneurs how to conduct business dealings, develop good relations, establish a balance between different components of the business, and overcome challenges that may arise during the course of business.
4. **To Develop Skill Development and Employability:** Vocational education plays a crucial role in skill development and enhancing employability. Vocational programs provide students with hands-on practical skills that are directly applicable to specific occupations, bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical abilities.
5. **To Promote Small, Cottage & Local Industries:** Entrepreneurship education aims to inspire and support the establishment of small, local industries that utilize available resources in nearby areas. By promoting entrepreneurship at the grassroots level, vocational education contributes to the growth and development of small-scale industries and local economies.

### **2.4 Entrepreneurship, Vocational Education, and Sustainable Development**

Entrepreneurship and vocational education are seen as integral to achieving sustainable development. The UNESCO-UNEVOC Bonn Declaration on Learning for Work, Citizenship, and Sustainability highlights the role of entrepreneurship and vocational education in poverty alleviation, peace promotion, environmental conservation, and overall improvement in the quality of life. These forms of education are considered essential for cultivating innovation and building a more productive and competitive economy. (Redclift, 2005) .

Entrepreneurship and vocational education expose learners to demonstrative skills that can be transformed into economic benefits. These education programs aim to orient individuals towards skills acquisition and provide them with the necessary knowledge and attitudes for utilizing those skills effectively. (Adenle and Shobowale, 2009), Well-organized entrepreneurship and vocational education programs foster self-reliance and offer opportunities for employment and development. Entrepreneurship and vocational education focus on

acquiring knowledge and skills for the world of work, empowering individuals and contributing to socio-economic development. They are uniquely positioned to put sustainable development principles into practice by producing an educated, skilled, and motivated workforce. By developing the skills and knowledge of the youth, entrepreneurship and vocational education contribute to the development and sustainability of the national economy (David 2009; UNISWA, 2008).

### **3. Entrepreneurship and Vocational Education in Nigeria**

In Nigeria, there are different perceptions of entrepreneurship and vocational education. Some view it as non-formal training for school dropouts who cannot pursue formal university education, while others see it as training for semi-skilled labor. Unfortunately, these negative views have discouraged many young people from enrolling in Technical Vocational Education Training (TVET) programs, undermining the importance of this form of education for national and sustainable development (Deebom, Mtorma Bari and Tam Bari, 2019)

Entrepreneurship and vocational education, from a general and professional perspective, should be seen as formal training necessary for all individuals. It is designed to orient people toward skills acquisition and teach them the attitudes and knowledge required for utilizing those skills effectively. Entrepreneurship and vocational education play a vital role in national development strategies by contributing to human resource development, productivity, and economic growth. Therefore, it is crucial to strengthen the link between education, schooling, and preparation for the world of work, with a focus on improving entrepreneurship and vocational education and training in Nigeria (Ogbuanya, Obiajulu, 2015; Afeiti, 2008; African Union, 2007).

The technological development of a nation relies on the availability of technical know-how, which is a result of vocational and technical training. Current emphasis on university education in Nigeria often neglects the socio-economic opportunities for those more inclined toward practical work than academics. Graduates of vocational and technical institutions possess highly skilled entrepreneurial abilities and contribute to infrastructure development. Unemployment remains a significant issue in Nigeria because many youths lack employability skills, which are often acquired through vocational education (Oguejiofor and Ezeabasili, 2014).

To promote sustainable development in Nigeria through entrepreneurship and vocational education, several recommendations have been made, including the formulation of flexible policies, establishment of specialized training centers at the local level, improved linkages between training institutions and industries, provision of adequate training facilities, grants for successful trainees, and soft loans for established businesses.

#### **4. Challenges facing vocational education in achieving sustainable development in Nigeria**

Entrepreneurship and vocational education training in Nigeria faces various challenges that hinder its contribution to sustainable development. According to Adekunle and David (2014), some of the challenges of entrepreneurship education are highlighted by two scholars; Amoor (2008); and Brown (2012) includes:

6. Lack of adequate training facilities and equipment: Many vocational education departments in Nigerian universities lack laboratory or workshop space, and where they exist, the facilities are often inadequate or in poor condition. This limits the practical training that students can receive.
7. Lack of lecturers with practical entrepreneurial training: Not all lecturers have practical entrepreneurial training and may not possess sufficient knowledge and understanding of entrepreneurship education. This can affect their ability to effectively impart the desired knowledge and entrepreneurial skills to students.
8. Acute shortage of vocational technical teachers: There is a shortage of vocational technical teachers in Nigerian schools. This shortage hampers individualized instruction and supervision, which is crucial for skills acquisition.
9. Poor funding of entrepreneurship and vocational education: Entrepreneurship and vocational education in Nigeria suffer from insufficient funding. The allocation to education as a share of the GDP is minimal, resulting in a lack of necessary facilities for effective implementation of the programs.
10. Poor remuneration of entrepreneurship and vocational teachers: Many universities in Nigeria do not provide adequate remuneration for entrepreneurship and vocational teachers. This has led to inadequate staffing and

#### **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

It is crucial for Nigeria to prioritize entrepreneurship and vocational education to achieve sustainable development. The country's future depends on the resourcefulness of its young people, and quality education is essential in equipping them with the skills and opportunities to address social and economic challenges. To promote entrepreneurship and vocational education, national education policies should focus on creating functional education systems that encourage entrepreneurial thinking and provide practical skills. This can be achieved by incorporating entrepreneurship and vocational training into the curriculum of schools and universities, enabling young people to develop the necessary knowledge and capabilities for job creation and self-reliance.

Furthermore, there is a need for radical reform in the education system to prioritize skills development and equip the youth with the tools for self-reliance and employment. This requires reprioritizing resource allocation to entrepreneurship and vocational education and training, ensuring that adequate funding is available to establish and maintain well-equipped vocational institutes and training centers.

Additionally, the government should refocus its policies to strengthen tertiary education institutions and vocational institutes, emphasizing the importance of entrepreneurial and vocational skills for sustainable national development. This may involve revisiting remuneration structures for entrepreneurship and vocational teachers, attracting and retaining skilled educators in the field.

Overall, by investing in entrepreneurship and vocational education, Nigeria can create a pathway to sustainable development, empower its youth, and enhance per capita income. It is through the acquisition of practical skills and a focus on entrepreneurship that the country can address unemployment, harness its resources effectively, and foster a culture of innovation and self-reliance.

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