



Entrepreneurship: Vocational Skills to Achieve Sustainable Economic Growth in Nigeria

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Abstract: In Nigeria not much emphasis has been laid on vocational skills as regards to sustainable economic growth which is the main subject this paper is going to cover. This paper will examine how stakeholders if focus on making entrepreneurship development easy in Nigeria and provide the necessary Technical and vocational Education and training to sustain Sustainable Development, shall create avenues for industrialization of the country. Looking at the countries that have achieved sustainable economic development, the paper shall highlight how economic developments can satisfy Nigeria's needs economically, politically, socially and otherwise should we pursue it following the concept of Brundtland Report of sustainable development.

The paper will also underscore the relevance of vocation skills as a realistic mechanism for sustainable economic growth considering the experiences of other developed nations.

Key words: Economy, Training, Environment, Opportunity, Sustainable, Government, Vocational Skills.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship is the process that begins when anyone at all perceives an opportunity and takes decision to exploit it. Exploitation of such entrepreneurial opportunities can naturally involve developing a business plan, securing financial and other necessary resources including applying personal efforts for its success. Entrepreneurship which may operate as in this case study, within a sustainable development is a concept coined in the Brundtland Report (World Commission on Environment and Development Report, 1987) to describe development that “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Zhang, J. (2012). In Nigeria there is striking needs and incredible benefits for the nation to channel all possible energy into sustainable developments seen our rural sector, oil and non-oil economy. Nigeria still needs a strong sustainability development reform as a sound economic growth will lead to environmental improvement.

1.1 Impact of the Economy and Its Potential Opportunities

Nigerian economic pursuits from the independence have had profound impacts on the environments especially in the Niger delta area and the south west forestry. Though not agreeing with the club of Rome that to stop environmental disasters we should limit economic growth instead it is advisable to applying technology as was the case in china and India. Technology has a positive impact on resource conservation and pollution abatement, which might offset the adverse consequences of population and income growth. Zhang, J. (2012). Advantages could be derived in exploiting the myriads of entrepreneurship opportunities that can sprout from such adverse effects like the clean-up and the residual oil that usually soak into the soil or oil that stick to vegetation from oil spillages. UNDP report, states that there has been up to 6817 oil spillage between spdc the pioneer and leader of the petroleum industry in Nigeria.

We all know the consequences of pollution in these areas as regards to reduced quality of life and health of the population. The cost borne by the externalities in the Niger Delta area in terms of fishing business, drinkable water, serious health effects etc and putting these ill effects right can surely result to a very strong economic growth.

There was a similar case in some European countries like Italy and UK some years ago, when asbestos were posing serious health hazards, the disaster became opportunities for creating enterprises and jobs. This sort of European disaster turned to social good and wealth can be applied in the Niger Delta to create opportunity for jobs and enterprises. Even the gas constantly burnt daily polluting the air can become a great source of diversified entrepreneurship opportunities within sustainable development that can lead to great economic growth. The major problem facing the development of gas sector is lack of demands and infrastructures. When demand for gas becomes like in Europe where every family uses it for cooking and industries depend on gas for their production. The demand will prompt progress in technology; the result will be decrease in pollution and a harmonized inverted-U shaped relationship between economic growth and the environment, called "environmental Kuznets curve" (Grossman and Kruger, 1994) Dr. J. Zhang (2012).

Incredible opportunities can be derived also from the agriculture sector with all the abundant production from every state of the federation on cotton, yam, onions, groundnut, cocoa, palm oil, beans, rice, poultry, fishery, forestry etc. Nigeria also produces mineral resources such as iron and tin ore, gold, diamond and other different types precious stones and ore. Millions of entrepreneurship opportunities within sustainable development can sprout out of the above economies in Nigeria if well harnessed.

1.2 Objective of Paper

The objective of this paper is to highlight the importance of vocational skills for sustainable economic growth in Nigeria and the factors mostly human that prevent the acquisition of essential vocational skills required for national economic and market system. Highlight too ways to surmount the challenges for the benefit of every stakeholder involved in the national economy building and individuals to meet their economic goals and prosperity. Propose inspiring recommendations that will lead, to realize potentials of strong and relevant vocational skills development for industry and employment.

2.0 ACHIEVING SUCCESSFUL ECONOMIC GROWTH: STRATEGIES

Though the federal/state governments in the recent years have made some important policies to encourage entrepreneurial initiatives and consequently vocational education within vocational schools that prepares people for a specific trade; example every state in Nigeria has at least a polytechnic. Much more has to be done because in Nigeria private firms are mostly small and medium enterprises. It is well known the difficulties enterprises in Nigeria have in accessing bank credits talk less of loan for startup business. The federal and the state governments have to works out initiative to eradicate, problems such as difficulty in obtaining credit facilities, bad roads, endemic corrupt practices in public offices, power supply failure, etc if it has to solve the unemployment problem and attract foreign investments. In Nigeria there are states that do not have up to three active producing industries which shows the impact of the private sectors is much lacking in our economy and society, for instance, Ghanaian micro-enterprises employ less than 5 people, yet accounted for 70 percent of country's workforce (Government of Ghana, 2003; World Bank, 2006). Oyelola, O. T., Ajiboshin, I. O. and others (2013)

The same cannot be said of Nigeria, where all tiers of government are the highest employers of labors and state governments are finding it difficult to pay their workers; many states like Abia and Imo have not paid any pension gratuities since the past 15 years. If this trend is not reversed by our policy makers Nigeria will not be able to realize her goal of Vision 2020. The solution is not to increase the national unemployment figure, by sacking 50 percent in civil service to maintain a sustainable economy, as former (CBN) Governor Sanusi L. advocated instead governments, especially the federal government should learn and start investing in existing and new industries, banks, entertainments, stock markets etc, as the Italian government does, by buying a 20 percent share in companies called 'Golden Share'. The Golden Share gives the government some veto powers in time of acquisition or dissolution of any of the companies so as to safeguard the interest of small shareholders, savers and workers apart from the fact that government makes money too.

2.1 Fundamental Actions to Transform Lives

It is time, for the Nigerian governments to undertake fundamental actions that would radically transform the lives of the people. Undertakings that will facilitate the creation of sustainable wealth and generate employment opportunities for the ever increasing population of unemployed youths and stir peoples mind and spirit towards serious entrepreneurship and real business pursuit. The policy makers should think out ways of reversing the over-dependence in civil service jobs by effecting a change that would allow maximum utilization of the huge human resources that abound in all parts of the country. The stakeholders involved in the national economy, government, private enterprises, banks etc cannot achieve these aims without engaging technical and vocation education recognized world wide as the best instrument to achieving sustainable economic growth. Countries, enterprises and persons all perceive skills development as strategic, and consequently seek to step up investments in skills. In

Seoul, in November 2010, Leaders pledged to continue to support national strategies for skills development, building on the G20 Training Strategy. ILO (2010).

2.2 Economic Growth like an Athlete

In reality, economic growth is much like a long-distance runner whose aim is to establish a long-run potential. There is a limit to what any economy can produce, no matter how fast it grows it tends to return always to its long-run potential. As athlete's interest is about his or her long-run potential, governments, central banks and economists are mostly interested in supporting the economy to increase its long-run potential. Economic growth then is when an economy's long-run potential output increases or when the economy can produce more. College Macroeconomics: Homework (2015).

Currently this is clearly seen from the economic boom which is attributed to China's market-oriented reforms, which prioritize economic growth. An extensive growth model that relies on high resource input and heavy pollution is not sustainable. Although China has significantly stepped up efforts to soften the environmental impact of its economic growth, policy makers still face numerous obstacles. Zhang, J. (2012).

In contrast, we appreciate the UNDP, NNDC and many other agencies efforts in Nigeria for adopting strategies that tends to protect natural resources, the populace and the environments especially in the rural communities. In the past, there was a nonchalant attitude towards environmental management practices in Nigeria.

3.0 MANAGING NATURAL RESOURCES

Sustainable economic growth is managing resources in a way that they will not be exhausted but will remain available for future generations. In sustainable economic developments, needs are usually conflicting example is an industrial growth that could

be conflicting with preservation of natural resources or a house wife whose needs for firewood conflict with the need not to cause deforestation and erosion. Erosion and life consuming flood has become a reoccurring decimal in the unfolding dynamics of environmental problems in Southern Eastern Nigeria. The 2012 floods that ravaged nearly 25 states with untold economic, social and political consequences clearly debunk the notion that Nigeria is insulated from such environmental problems. Robinson, J. O. (2013).

Really, needs may seem to conflict with each other in the short term, but a responsible management of the natural resources for a long period may help ensure that resources are available for sustained industrial growth far into the future. The best way to do that is by creating national resources preservation awareness and proper vocational skill training as each of our countries will need, through its own national policies, to strengthen the ability of our workers to adapt to changing market demands and to benefit from innovation and investments in new technologies, clean energy, environment, health and infrastructure as was called for by the G20 Leaders in Pittsburgh September 2009. ILO (2010)

3.1 The Role of Agencies in the Management Exercise

Nigerian governments are generally not known for being good in business development and management as such the responsibility should be handled to organizations including government agencies to provide technical and vocational skills that allow potential output increase in Nigerian sustainable economy. The nation needs agencies or organizations that will promote and provide vocational Skills Development Programs to solve one of the critical aspect of unemployment which is the skill mismatch as companies in need cannot even recruit due to difficulty in finding the required trained and or experienced labor in the mist of so many unemployed people. The potential agencies have to run programs that would stop rural urban migration,

help train women, school drop outs, and school leavers and complement the lack of experience gaining from the existing training institutions. The theme of entrepreneurial training should be well integrated into the programs apart from the noble objective to provide specialization trainings for industries and organizations which are costly for unemployed persons to bear personally

The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) is a good example of such agencies for the many vocational trade trainings it provides, like vocational skills development acquisition programs and entrepreneurship development trainings which are to acquaint the unemployed with business and self-employment opportunities apart from introducing them to initiatives that can boost business Start-ups.

3.2 The Role of Women in the National Resources Management

It is important to consider the role of women who are the neck that carry the head in our society and are inborn managers, to conceptualize the national resources management.

Great amount of women activities are heavily related to pollution like cooking with firewood and coal, managing electricity and gas at home, bush burning for agriculture as women are the main farmers in many parts of the country. Aremu, I. O (2011)

Women should be much involved in the vocational skills training by establishing natural resources management preservation awareness campaign with organizations and government agencies that can take the campaign to the rural communities. It is evident that a lot of women in this country are uneducated, thus do not perceive the importance of allowing the future generations enjoy the present ecosystem. They should be helped to change their lifestyle and orientation towards the environment in which they live at least to save our planet for those still coming. Government agencies like NDDC which is already doing great in rural developments through electrifications and road constructions can add to their expertise the campaign by taking it to the rural

areas, meeting the women and showing them demonstrations of ways to save their environment like how to farm without bush burning. Participating in this campaign meets the objectives of NDDC which is also to maintain and conserve the environment in order to improve the people's standard of living. By so doing the agency contributes to preparing people for these essential vocational skills required for sustainable economic growth of the country.

4.0 CONCEPT OF VOCATIONAL SKILLS AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH

Vocational skills are skills focusing on specific trade with a hands-on approach, like construction, agriculture or health, as well as general employment skills, such as typing and blacksmithing etc Revermann, S., Demand Media (2015). As such when we talk of vocation, we mean the skills needed to do job successfully and directly develop expertise in techniques related to those particular trades that lead to career. Also known as career or vocational education and training, it provides skilled people in specific trades, crafts and careers at various levels from a trade, a craft, technician, or a high professional practitioner position in careers such as engineering, accountancy, nursing, medicine, architecture, law etc. Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (2015)

Vocational skill is an aspect of gaining knowledge designed to prepare anyone mostly workers for industry, agriculture, commerce, etc, it can be acquired at schools or in any other form of organized training; so vocational skill can be said to be that acquisition of a training experience that transmits knowledge and acquisition of skills for industrial experience within any work-oriented society. Furthermore, vocational skills can also be seen as that impartation designed to prepare individuals for gainful employment as skilled or quasi-skilled worker or technicians or semi-professional in existing or new enterprises. Its purpose is to prepare for occupational life as its recipients are trained to face the challenges at the work place.

4.1 Vocational Skills Acquisition in Nigeria

In Nigeria the most practiced by more than half its work force are craft vocations, which are usually based on manual or practical activities and are traditionally non-academic but related to a specific trade and or occupation. This is a crucial feature of the training package in Nigeria, almost all apprenticeship training 90% of traditional trades and traineeships is provided by this system. The apprenticeships or traineeship normally last more or less two years, usually arranged between the families of the apprentices and the business owners who gives the apprentices and or trainees little or no wages. This is the way almost 79% of Nigeria small scale enterprises are sustained in skill acquisition for the nation's sustainable economic growths. Then education within vocational schools that directly develops expertise in techniques related to technology, skill and scientific technique that cover all aspects of trade accounts for the rest acquisition of vocational skills in Nigeria. Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (2015)

Nigerian governments have to identify opportune strategies like below to develop its human capital through intensive vocational skills acquisition that match our economy.

As it is; in the United States, Great Britain, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, and many other countries, where there also exists a vocational training system for skilled workers that have an apprenticeship period of two to five or more years. In addition, there are state, public, and private schools, and adult vocational training courses that are offered after working hours. Ministries or departments of education have control over the vocational schools' methodology, while economic, financial, and administrative matters are under the jurisdiction of ministries or departments of industry and agriculture. The apprenticeship system of vocational training is managed by the ministries or departments of labor. The Great Soviet Encyclopedia, 3rd Edition (1970-1979). Even Malaysian ministry of Youth and Sports is going to introduce in January 2016 a National Service Training Program (NS) 2.0, two-month program for the

development of soft skills which will expose the trainees to a healthy living and set of skills that can be implemented after the end of the program. Jamaluddin, K. (2015).

4.2 Essential Projects to Embark for Vocational Skills

Nigerian governments like the above nations can provide projects that will contribute to poverty reduction through human resource development and facilitate access to quality vocational skill training institutions. The objective to attain should be to provide employment-oriented skills training for Nigerian youth and women to gain employment and income generating opportunities. The project should aim too at improving access to skills training and vocational education enhances its quality and efficiency thereby strengthening public-private partnership. Also improve access to training for the poor and underemployed men and women as well as increase female participation rates in vocational training education which is very low.

Create centers with purpose to provide skills and expertise that should facilitate the integration of young Nigerian women and men into the mainstream of the economy; so that they can acquire entrepreneurship skills and be guided into starting their own businesses. These centers should be able to produce enough skilled workers, craftsmen and women for industrial and the commercial sectors. These sectors have urgent needs for a wider choice of qualified workers which will consequently result in gaining productivity and national wealth.

There should also be provision for income generating mechanisms for business owners and the vulnerable groups especially school dropouts and women, since the sustainable wealth produced will have beneficial effects on quality of their lives, health and safety as poverty will be reduced and people's potential harnessed through vocational skills training. African Development Fund (2006)

5.0 BENEFITS OF INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY/ POLICIES

Vocational skills and technical development are needed for the benefit of all stakeholders involved, government, work force and enterprises to produce and make profit. Without the essential technical skills, enterprises cannot grow and national growth cannot be realized. Sustainable economic growth demands for skilled workers that should constantly train to update their skills because of rapid global technological changes. Furthermore, it is a fact that generally one's education does not count much till one gains experience and updated skills to prove his or her worth at the real work place. As such the nation needs to adopt innovative technology and policies that will provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills needed through trainings for all economy agricultural, mineral ores, oil and non-oil economy.

This will lead to a very stable sustainable economic growth that will have great impact on job creation by many men and women who shall become self-independent economically. The problem now is in a country where there is no constant power supply and near comatose state of the industrial sector is affecting skills development in the country and as it is obvious that with the right environment, individuals with skills would not only provide employment for themselves but also for others. Kazaure. M. A. (2015) "Good Morning Nigeria"(NTA)

Individuals should be encouraged to create jobs and Nigeria should welcomed the ILO's Global Jobs Pact and agreed on the importance of building an employment-oriented framework for future economic growth and the required vocational skills.

It is empirically proved that the need for skilled workers is the direct effect of the demand of technological innovation and national economic growth which means that the need for vocational skills increase in direct proportion to the rapidity of technological change, changes in work organization, growth in economic market, competitiveness and for individual prosperity in terms of personal income.

The Nigerian governments and other stakeholders cannot achieve the above goals without strongly investing in technology and in the area of education; the rural farmers should undergo regular updates on ways to improve their farming including mechanizing agriculture. Nigeria is due now for this system of farming and also they should have access to loans to finance the sector.

Should this be done Nigeria will achieve a very successful and durable sustainable economic growth.

A good example to follow can be the appraisal conducted in February 2005 by ADF bank for FGN the proposed project comprises four components:

- (i) improve access to skills training and vocational education;
- (ii) enhanced quality and efficiency of skills training and vocational skills education;
- (iii) strengthening public-private partnership; and
- (iv) project management. African Development Fund (2005)

6.0 CONCLUSION

In a country like Nigeria, where the levels of poverty and human development is relatively low, anyone opportune can embezzle public fund with impunity, the rich gets richer and the poor gets poorer and social warfare is inexistence. Here the quest to get rich quick is extremely high, a boy is hoping to become a millionaire through hawking dozens of handkerchiefs on the streets.

Some years ago the economy was crumbling because all over the country every vocational skill was abandoned for motor cycle transportation business known as 'okada' to make easy and quick money. Then mechanics, carpenters, welders, iron benders, masons, tailors even market traders just to mention a few left their trades for 'okada' business.

In this country people do not comprehend the importance of work; a civil servant can boldly say in public that the work he or she is doing for a living is not his or her father's

work. A factory worker would show no love to his or her source of income, even if it is folding up, because to the worker the company belongs only to the industrialist and not to him or her. A state governor does not pay government workers for months and will never utilize them to execute state projects. The general mentality is everyone wants the money no one cares about the work that yields the money till we understand that work should be our lifeblood this country shall be struggling to develop and industrialize, for industrialization is for any nation whose citizens love and appreciate work.

It is true that the amalgamation of Nigeria was not based on work like many European countries a good example is Italy which the first article of its constitution reads “this country’s formation is based on work”. In such countries everyone is aware of the importance of work as the roles of the governments, labor unions and individuals are thoroughly defined for these stakeholders regard work as their means of prosperity.

While in Nigeria someone who has never worked before in life and has no known occupation can be moving around the country with police escort as a billionaire. This type of mentality affects every aspect of life from family to public as it shows that the virtue honesty is lacking.

Honesty as a virtue is very vital in business relationships, family upbringing and the making of the nation as it should be an indispensable asset for all from the common man to the presidency for we should all learn to act with complete honesty.

Categorically, no country in this world where the get-rich-quick mentality abounds will ever develop because this quest usually leads to dishonesty which is the language and the father of corruption. Nigeria cannot afford to miss Vision 2020, we need will and commitment to step up to the plate, come up with solutions that can restore confidence in ourselves – not just among international investors who are very important but among Nigerians and among all people on the continent as well. Dlamini, K. (2013). Where there is a will, there is a way.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

All tiers of government through their ministries of information should strive to encourage the populace to develop love for work as it was in the sixties. The economic revival of the nation should start from the sustainable development of non-oil economy particularly the agricultural sector that can involve everyone employable. In 1948 immediately after the war just for the sake of creating jobs and to satisfy that article one of the constitution Italian government then, had to involve every male employable into digging exercise along roads; similar thing was done in 1930s by the fascist regime to reclaim marshland Sabaudia, south of Rome. A real master piece, a vast malaria-infested swamp was drained by workers from poor areas of northern Italy, transforming the coastal area south of Rome into rich farmlands and beautiful beach towns in 253 days.

Nigerian governments need to introduce radical reforms that will stimulate public participations even if it means going back to such like “Operation Feed the Nation” (1979), which involved almost everyone employable then to farm all the Nigerian river basins. The governments should create local agriculture research centers to help local farmers in improving agricultural productivity; diversifying cultivation, improving rural markets, processing and conserving food stuffs, which would result in creating jobs and transforming people’s lives. In countries like Uganda and Kenya where these local agricultural research centers are widely spread the results are excellent.

The Nigerian economy in general should focus on developing with the prime motive to facilitating the sustainable economic growth of all non-oil economy too like construction, repair and maintenance of roads, provision of good water and health services etc then solve the problems behind the inadequate power supply if it has to industrialize.

Nigeria should pursue market-oriented reforms, which prioritize economic growth as in the case of china but growing the gross domestic product (GDP) should not be at any

cost that would create series of social and environmental problems. Zhang, J. (2012). Anything that will jeopardize the lives and means of sustenance of the people should be avoided instead Nigerian economy should aim at achieving long-run potential output increases, be sustainable and to empower and transform people's lives.

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