

**Global Partnership in Achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Nigeria: The Role of Technology and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)**

Mohammed A. Auta

Department of Technology and Vocational Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka-Nigeria  
ma.auta@unizik.edu.ng

**Abstract:** The paper examined the need for a global partnership with TVET to ensure that the sustainable development goals set out by world leaders are convincingly achieved. The paper dwell on the three dimensions of SDGs identified during the declaration- economic, social and environmental. With respect to the economy, a case was made for adequate investment in the areas of agriculture and manufacturing. The need to establish a strong partnership with TVET institutions for the training of the unemployed without regard to sex, tribe, religion or physical challenges has been advocated as a panacea to some of the challenges facing Nigerian society. With regard to the environment, this paper advocates for a global partnership on sustainable green TVET.

**Keywords:** *Global, Partnership, SDGs, TVET, Nigeria.*

---

## **1. Introduction**

At the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations in 2015 which coincides with the meeting of heads of state and governments drawn from 193 countries of the world, the leaders declared as follows (United Nations, UN, 2015): We have decided today on new global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), we have adopted a historic decision on a comprehensive far-reaching and people-centered set of universal and transformative Goals and targets. We commit ourselves to the full implementation of this Agenda by 2030. We recognize that eradicating poverty in all its form and dimension including extreme poverty is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. We are committed to achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions- economic, social and environmental in a balanced and integrated manner. We are announcing today 17 sustainable development goals. We will implement the agenda for the full benefit of all, for today's generation and the future generation. We will not be able to achieve our ambitious goals without a revitalized and enhanced Global Partnership (p. 5). Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a successor initiative to Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

They are blueprints designed to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all in the areas of poverty eradication, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice among others. The declaration by prominent world leaders as quoted above underpinned the need to recognize the existence of the challenges, the goals sought to surmount, and the need for all and sundry to put all hands on deck to achieve these lofty goals. However, as the leaders aptly recognized in their declaration, this cannot be convincingly achieved without the active role of partners drawn all over the world and from diverse disciplines. The role of partnership in the achievement of the SDGs cannot be over-emphasized; no wonder, goal number 17 of the SDGs specifically sought to "strengthen the means to implement and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development (UN, 2015). This paper shall explore the modest role Technology and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) can play when globally partnered in actualizing the SDGs. The discussion will be centered on the economic, social and environmental dimensions of the goals to bring to the fore the need and benefits that shall accrue when the partnership is vigorously pursued.

## **2. Concept of TVET**

Currently, different terms are used in different countries and in different contexts to define "Technical and Vocational Education and Training" otherwise known as TVET. Terms such as "education and vocational training" (EVT), "vocational education and training" (VET), "technical and vocational education" (TVE), and "the development of technical and professional skills" (DTPS), are often used to describe the acquisition of employable skills (VOCED Plus, 2021). However, since the discussion here centered on the SDGs- a program championed by the UN and taking place in Nigeria, which is located in Africa, the definition of the term must be drawn from the perspectives of the organs of these bodies. According to the United Nations Education

Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO (2013), TVET is a comprehensive term referring to those aspects of educational processes involving addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life.

The African Union (AU) (2017) on the other hand, sees TVET as a term when used in its broadest sense, covers all aspects of training and skills development of all cadres, whether formal, non-formal or informal; including the issues of demand and supply of skills, employability, improving skills, the ability for self-employment, and retraining, versatility and continuing apprenticeship. From these two definitions, it can be deduced that TVET:

- Recognizes the traditional apprenticeship system;
- Is a catalyst for training citizens for the world of work in diverse occupations;
- Is a mechanism for promoting a green environment; and
- Can be an effective means of poverty alleviation.

Therefore, there appears to be a strong connection between TVET and what the SDGs are set to achieve.

### **3. TVET, SDGs and the Economy**

Countries all over the world are ranked based on the strength of their economy. The United States of America for instance, which is today referred to as the world's largest economy has its economic dominance anchored by service-oriented industries, particularly in areas such as technology, financial services, health care and retail (Focus Economic, 2019). These industries provide jobs for a large number of US citizens. It is a fact that the most visible sign of a healthy economy is the number of jobs it creates for the teeming population and its ability to sustain and progressively improve on these numbers over time. It is common knowledge that most of the countries that are recognized today as “developed” were at one time or the other, “under-developed”. Therefore, in achieving job creation which is the cornerstone of poverty alleviation as contained in the SDGs, TVET can play a vital role when a partnership is established in this regard. In order to give credence to this thesis, two vital sectors of the economy- Agriculture and manufacturing/construction industries will be briefly discussed-Agriculture and Manufacturing/Construction industries. Sustainable Agriculture which is goal number 2 in the SDGs is a key component of the TVET program.

This sector can be efficiently fine-tuned to achieve a healthy and robust economy (SMEDAN and National Bureau of Statistics, 2013). When TVET institutions are partnered to give the citizens adequate training and to equip them with appropriate skills in the areas of modern agriculture, they will have the capacity to go into farming and be able to produce sufficient food that will accommodate the need of their countries. When that happens, hunger will be dissipated and food security will be assured. Furthermore, with adequate incentives from the government; farmers can export their produce to other parts of the world. The multi-pliers effect is that the rate of importation will be drastically reduced thereby curtailing the much-dreaded demand for foreign exchange from the government for food importation; because when the agricultural products are exported, foreign exchange is earned. It will also provide means of livelihood to the farmers, the pick-up driver, the wheelbarrow pushers, the market women and other categories of people on the value chain (United Nations Development Program, UNDP, 2020). This is in addition to the nutritional value that the citizens stand to gain from the unpreserved food commodity thereby ensuring healthy lives and well-being for all ages. In the manufacturing/construction industry, there are reports of the paucity of skilled labor (Ihua-Maduenyi, 2018).

For instance, in most of the construction sites around Abuja, the capital city of Nigeria, or in Agbara, Ogun State, Nigeria, it is common to see expatriates doing carpentry, joinery, painting, tiling or operating machines respectively. These are jobs that ought to be handled by locals when they are properly trained and equipped with appropriate skills by the various TVET institutions. This unwanted situation is mostly attributed to the skill gap existing among the locals, as most of them may not be able to handle these tasks competently to the satisfaction of their employers (United Nations Development Program, UNDP, 2020). Where these situations continue unchallenged, the economy will be negatively affected. Fortunately, there is a way out of this

unwanted situation, TVET is synonymous with skills acquisition, when the government partners with TVET institutions in the areas of training and retraining of the citizens, the economy stands to benefit from it. When citizens acquire requisite skills, they will have something productive to do in the industry; through this, and earn their living (Auta, 2021). When citizens spend part of their earnings in the market either for food, cloth, land or medical bills, more funds are injected into the economy. This will be used to sustain the job of those employees in the production line of those industries as well as enhance the profit margin of the investors. Through these acts, the circular flow of income will continue for the betterment of the economy.

#### **4. TVET, SDGs and Society**

Modern societies around the world are currently battling with some emerging social problems which threaten the peaceful coexistence that should be in force. For instance, in Nigeria, there are incessant cases of communal clashes, banditry, armed robbery, kidnapping and so on which at the moment is threatening the sovereignty of the nation. Most of these societal problems can be attributed to several factors such as unemployment, under-employment, and poverty (George & Ukpong, 2013). These identified problems are becoming a threat to the realization of Goal number 11 of the SDGs which sought to “make human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” (UN, 2015). How can this goal be achieved in the face of this “impossibility”? It is a fact that no society is immune from one form of problem or the other (Weiping, 2018). However, the size, shape, and nature of the problems vary from one society to another. What is not in doubt is that these threats are not insurmountable, at least to achieve the lofty goals of the SDGs. This is practically possible when appropriate measures are put in place to subdue them. Establishing a strong partnership with TVET institutions for the training of the unemployed without regard to sex, tribe, religion or physical challenges will go a long way in achieving the SDGs. When individuals complete a training program in TVET institutions and are properly equipped with appropriate skills that will make the individual productive members of society; therefore, the likelihood to engage in social vices will be very slim.

In fact, such an individual may likely be carried away by the multitude of tasks to be accomplished in a chosen occupation without idle time. For instance, the demand for construction workers has been on the increase in recent years. A highly skilled carpenter who works on a construction site will naturally leave the house around 7 am and may not likely return until sometime around 5 pm. By the time he returns, he is most likely to be fatigued, all he needs is to bath, eat, and prepare for another day. The carpenter may not likely have time to engage in other unproductive endeavors. Poverty, which is one of the major areas of concern of the SDGs, can only flourish where there is a skill deficit among the people; where the majority of the people are highly skilled in one occupation or the other, their chances of survival are very minute. In China for instance, despite the fact that they have a very high population of about 1.42 billion people as of 2018 (Woldometers, 2019), China has been able to lift about 850 million people out of poverty. Using a benchmark of 1.9 dollars per day earning, the percentage of people living in extreme poverty fell from 88% in 1981 to 1.85% in the year 2013 (Weiping, 2018). This was largely achieved through the instrument of skill acquisition because China has a subsisting policy that ensures that an average secondary school student in China is skillful in a particular craft. Therefore, strong partnerships with TVET institutions in the training of a highly skilled workforce will go a long way in ensuring that the SDGs are achieved and their effect on society is positively felt.

#### **5. TVET, SDGs and the Environment**

Achieving sustainable development may become a mirage when environmental issues are not given the necessary attention they deserve. In recognizing this reality, the SDGs specifically sought to “protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystem, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss” among other key goals that are tangential to it (UN, 2015). To achieve this, this paper advocates for global partnership on sustainable green TVET. Green TVET is any training program designed to inculcate in the participants the knowledge, and skills needed to deal carefully with the environment to reduce the environmental impact of production activities while enhancing productivity and the quality of goods and services being produced (UNESCO, 2013). In other words, green TVET is centered on instilling green knowledge, and green skills so that the trainees can engage in green jobs after graduation. According to the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) (2008), Green jobs are works undertaken in the areas of agriculture, manufacturing, research and development that assist in

preserving and restoring the quality of the environment through the protection of the ecosystems and biodiversity, reduction of energy, materials and water consumption, de-carbonization of the economy and minimizing the generation of wastes and pollution.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) (2012) characterized green jobs as follows:

- Reduced consumption of energy and raw materials.
- Limitation of green, house gas emission.
- Minimizing waste and pollution.
- Protecting and restoring the ecosystem

In order to actualize this “green revolution”, TVET institutions must ensure that environmental considerations are given all the attention they deserve. This according to UNESCO (2013) can be achieved by adopting the following concrete steps:

- Evaluation of the need for a green economy;
- Evaluation of green jobs and their working tasks;
- Development of curricula for education and training for green jobs;
- The training of teachers and trainers in this field;
- Development of learning and teaching materials;
- Development of infrastructure for training and education;
- Development of cooperation network between companies, schools, state institutions and vocational research institutions (p. 14). When these steps are adequately implemented, it will go a long way in ensuring that the training programs in TVET institutions are environmentally friendly. This will lead to the realization of the SDGs.

## 6. Conclusion

The paper examined the need for partnership with TVET to ensure that the sustainable development goals set out by world leaders are convincingly achieved. The paper dwell on the three dimensions of SDGs identified during the declaration- economic, social and environmental. It is expected that when the issues raised are properly addressed, it will go a long way in ensuring that the SDGs are achieved for the betterment of society.

## References

- Auta, M. A. (2021). The milk of human kindness: curbing Almajiri vulnerability through vocational skill training in construction crafts. *Canadian Journal of Educational and Social Studies*, 1(1), 63-77.
- Focus Economics. (2019). The world's largest economies. Accessed <http://www.focus-economy.com/blog/the-largest-economies-in-the-world>.
- George, I. N. & Ukpung, D. E. (2013). Contemporary social problems in Nigeria and its impact on national development: implication for guidance and counseling services. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 3(2), 167-173.
- Ihua-Maduenyi, M. (2018). Nigeria records an annual decline in skilled construction workers. Accessed <http://www.punchng.com/nigeria-record-annual-decline-in-skilled-construction-workers/amp>
- International Labor Organization, ILO. (2012). Green jobs. Accessed [www.ilo.org/global/topics/green-jobs/lang--eng/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/green-jobs/lang--eng/index.htm).
- SMEDAN and National Bureau of Statistics. (2013). SMEDAN and National Bureau of Statistics Collaborative Survey: Selected Findings. Accessed at <https://www.smedan.gov.ng/images/PDF/2013-MSME-Survey-Summary-Report.pdf>
- UNESCO. (2013). Greening TVET for sustainable development. Germany: UNESCO-UNEVOC
- United Nations Development Program, UNDP. (2020). Human Development Report 2020. Accessed at <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2020.pdf>
- United Nations Environmental Program, UNEP. (2008). Green jobs report. Accessed [www.unep.org/labour-environment/PDFs/Grejobs/UNEP-Greenjobs.report.pdf](http://www.unep.org/labour-environment/PDFs/Grejobs/UNEP-Greenjobs.report.pdf)

- United Nations, UN. (2015). Transforming our world: the 2030 agenda for sustainable development. Accessed [www.sustainabledevelopment.un.org](http://www.sustainabledevelopment.un.org)
- VOCED Plus. (2021). Glossary term: Vocational education and training. Accessed at <https://www.voced.edu.au/content/glossary-term-vocational-education-and-training>
- Weiping, T. (2018). China's approach to reduce poverty: taking targeted measures to lift people out of poverty. Addis-Ababa: International Poverty Reduction Center
- Worldometers. (2019). China population (live). Accessed at [www.worldometers.info/worldpopulation/china-population](http://www.worldometers.info/worldpopulation/china-population).