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## Education and Extent of Achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for Sustainability through Technical and Vocational Education

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### Abstract

*This paper attempts to examine how education in general can be used to achieve the objectives of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The angle as seen by technical and vocational education is also examined to see to what extent TVE is contributing to the goals of MDG. The relevance of TVE in contributing to the goals of MDGs, the relevance of TVE to the achievement of the goals are examined in areas such as job creation, wealth creation and entrepreneurial skills. Some of the problems confronting the actualization of the objectives of TVE are also listed. Educational strategies to be applied and the challenges facing the objectives of MDGs are also highlighted and conclusions drawn.*

Nigerian is one of the 189 countries that signed the Millennium Declaration in September of 2000 in New York, USA. Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are

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therefore the outcomes of the international conferences and summits thereafter. The Millennium Development Goals was adopted to end poverty and hunger through improved education, health, environmental sustainability and new global partnership by 2015. According to Ohia (2010), the MDGs commit the international community to an expanded vision of development, one that vigorously promotes human development as the key to sustaining social and economic progress in all countries, recognizing the importance of creating a global partnership for development. Umaru, Idris and Ibrahim (2010) listed the eight (8) goals of MDGs and their targets as follows:

**Goal 1:** Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger before the year 2015. Half the proportion of people who are living on less than one dollar a day.

**Goal 2:** Achieve universal basic education. Achievement of universal primary education not later than 2015.

**Goal 3:** Promote gender equality: Eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education enrolment by 2005 and achieve equity at all levels.

**Goal 4:** Reduce child mortality and disease: Reduce by two thirds, child mortality rate by 2015.

**Goal 5:** Improve maternal health. Reduce by three quarters the proportions of women dying in child birth by 2015.

**Goal 6:** Combat AIDs, malaria and other diseases: Halt and begin to reverse the incidence of HIV/AIDs, malaria and other diseases.

**Goal 7:** Ensure environmental sustainability; integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environment resources.

**Goal 8:** Develop a global partnership for development. Having listed the eight goals and their probable targets the question(s) remain

- (a) To what extent is technical and vocational education (TVE) contributing to the achievement of the MDGs?
- (b) How is the present education system relevant to the objectives of the MDGs?
- (c) To what extent has the objectives been achieved? An attempt to profer answers to these questions will form the central theme of this paper presentation.

### **Imperatives of TVE to the Achievement of MDGs**

The National Policy on Education (2004) defined Technical and Vocational Education to be.

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- (a) An integral part of general education
- (b) A means of preparing for occupational fields and for effective participation in the field of work.
- (c) An aspect of life long learning and a preparation for responsible citizenship
- (d) An instrument for promoting environmentally sound sustainable development and
- (e) A method of alleviating poverty; the policy also stated the mission of TVE to include:
  - (i) Providing trained manpower in applied science, technology and commerce particularly at sub-professional levels.
  - (ii) Providing the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agriculture, industrial, commercial and economic development
  - (iii) Providing people who can apply scientific knowledge to the improvement and solution of environmental problems for the use and convenience of man.
  - (iv) Giving an introduction of professional studies in engineering and other technologies.
  - (v) Giving training and impacting on the necessary skills leading to the production of craftsmen, technicians and other skilled personnel who will be enterprising and self-reliant and
  - (vi) Enabling our young men and women to have an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology.

With these in mind, one cannot, but conclude that the MDGs is a nationally co-ordinate framework of action which can only be achieved if appropriate mechanisms, knowledge and procedures are put in place (Awotunde, 2009).

According to Usman and Hassan (2009), the MDGs, being a development strategy in different perspectives, requires the application of the right type of education that will bring about the required developments. Close examination of the goals or objectives of the MDGs will show that they are all the outcome of technical and vocational education (TVE). Among other things, TVE is the foundation of employment generation, science application, wealth creation and poverty reduction. According to Lucky and Emehi (2008), education remains a vital transformational tool and formidable instrument for socio-economic empowerment, wealth creation, employment generation, poverty eradication and value orientation of the nation can only be achieved through efficient, functional and relevant educational system. This functional and relevant education system for Nigeria are outlined in the National Policy on Education (NPE 2004) which is inclined towards inculcating the following values:

- (a) Respect for the worth and dignity of the individual;
- (b) Faith in man's ability to make radical decisions;

- (c) Moral and spiritual principle in interpersonal and human relations;
- (d) Shared responsibility for the common good of society;
- (e) Promotion of the physical, emotional and psychological development of all children; and
- (f) Acquisition of competencies necessary for self-reliance

Awotunde (2009) saw technical and vocational education as the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge related to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life.

Ezeji (2005) saw TVE as a formal type of technology education conducted in the school system such as:

- (i) Pre-vocational education in primary and secondary school for general technological awareness, acquisition of technological literacy and general technical versatility
- (ii) Production of craftsman in specific vocation of manpower levels
- (iii) Technical education in polytechnics for the production of manpower in technology level.
- (iv) Professional education in university level for the production of professionals.

### **Factors Affecting TVE Objectives**

The objectives of technical and vocational education are laudable and achievable but unfortunately this system of education is beset with some problems. Ezeabikwa (2009) listed some of these problems to include underfunding, understaffing with qualified staff, dysfunctional infrastructure and teaching aids for training and practice, lack of student's interest due to wrong impression and discrimination and lack of thorough implementation of developed curriculum and policies. Apart from the familiar and traditional problems of under-funding, non-adaptable curriculum, inadequate technical teachers, lack of industries for Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES), poor training and teaching equipments, poor public attitudes towards technical education, poor political will on the part of the government, etc, the followings also constitute a cog in the wheel of technical and vocational education progress.

- (a) TVE is yet to be made an integrate part of general education as spelt out in the NPE.
- (b) Fundamental orientation for dependency. In the words of Sesay (1989), "Technical education which is so vital for the production of the much needed middle level manpower for our technological development had for long not been given due emphasis"
- (c) According to Nwaokolo and Otubelu (1998); Some of the problems faced by TVE are:

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1. Lack of patriotism
2. Low regard for dignity of labour
3. Lack of patience
4. Lack of clear technological vision
5. Propensity for insufficient planning
6. Inadequate evaluation modality
7. Low tolerance for change
8. Lack of motivation for exploration and discovery
9. Prevalence of cargo-built mentality.

Imonigie and Omozuarwo (2008) also listed the problems of TVE to include lack of proper curriculum for TVE; inadequate technical and vocational teachers; lack of appropriate industries for students industrial training; lack of teaching/learning facilities; deplorable attitude of employers and general public towards TVE; lack of proper funding and lack of political will on the part of the government.

### **Educational Strategies and Challenges of MDGs**

The constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria gives all citizens the right to education. Education is on the concurrent list in the constitution and this means that the three tiers of government are supposed to devote a greater part of their resources to education. According to Okafor (2008), this constitutional provision is not followed because currently the national literacy level is only 57 percent compared with about 70 percent in India, 76 percent in China and 80 percent in Malaysia, coupled with the fact that 49 percent of the teaching force in all Nigerian schools is unqualified. MDGs recognize that education is a vital tool that will transform societies and empower the individuals and, since development is knowledge driven, quality and accessible education is a sine-qua-non. Okafor (2008) listed some educational strategies to be put in place if the objectives of MDGs are to be achieved:

- (i) Unfettered access to education;
- (ii) Improvement of the quality of education at all levels;
- (iii) Using education as a tool for improving the general quality of life;
- (iv) Evolving a dynamic curriculum;
- (v) Creating a network on improvements and developments in education
- (vi) Providing a sustained source of funding for education. These strategies provide immense challenges for any country which would want to keep abreast with the global trend which recognizes education as a panacea for many ills. General education is expected to enhance productivity while tertiary education will stimulate entrepreneurial activity.

Improving the quality of life through education implies that the contents of the curriculum should be focused on life building, skill acquisition and exposing the students to work study for practical knowledge and experience. MDGs therefore target a hundred percent level at primary school, 50 percent in secondary level that will move to the tertiary level. According to John (2009), the attainment of the MDGs has been rather poor in sub-Saharan countries and especially in Nigeria where there are serious doubts if Nigeria can achieve the MDGs. He also revealed that Nigeria's MDGs report for 2004 and 2005 showed that Nigeria is far off the mark in terms of the implementation of the goals. Umaru and Ibrahim (2010), also pointed out that because 2003-2007, National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) was put in place to tackle poverty through restructuring the economy, ensuring wealth creation, empowering the citizens and transforming the national mindset.

- According to Ezeugo (2009), some of the challenges faced by MDGs include;
- (a) The rural nature of our society makes it difficult to reach out to the unemployed and unskilled in that area
  - (b) Gender inequality based on sex, religion, social status, quality and equality, funding and corruption had prevented access to universal basic education.
  - (c) Maintaining gender equality in Nigeria is a far cry because the full participation of women in various spheres of the society still lag behind.
  - (d) Malnutrition and unhealthy environment continue to contribute to preventable diseases. Child and maternal mortality are still very high due to health inaccessibility, challenges of funding, research and training personnel
  - (e) Inadequate provision of drugs, sanitation, insecticide treated bed nets, ignorance and care-free attitude on the part of the citizens.
  - (f) Deforestation, poor access to potable water, sanitation problems, soil erosion, oil pollution, lack of appropriate institutional framework, unsustainable exploitation and exploration of national resources is against the goals of MDGs.
  - (g) The current insecurity level in the country coupled with corruption, electoral malpractices, external debts burden and unfavourable impression by foreigners are also against the goals of MDGs
  - (h) The majority of the population lack basic human needs such as food, water, shelter, fuel, natural resources, healthy living and adequate income

### **Methods of Achieving the Objectives of MDGs**

Has education in Nigeria been equipped to respond to the MDGs? The answer to this question may attempt to prefer some methods of achieving the objectives of MDGs

1. According to Okafor (2008), improving the quality of life through education implies that the contents of the curriculum should be focused on life building,

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- skill acquisition and exposing the students to work study for practical knowledge and experience
2. Blessing (2008), agreed that to achieve the listed goals of MDGs, the knowledge of entrepreneurial skill in technology and information technology is required.
  3. Lucky and Emehi (2008) were of the opinion that any strategy for alleviating poverty in Nigeria must include empowering people through the right type of education and that any worthwhile educational system in Nigeria should emphasize business, vocational, technical and entrepreneurial education aimed at empowering people.
  4. Ohia (2010) were of the opinion that the problem posed by the realization of the MDGs can be solved through metal work technology by educating youth and adults to acquire skills on different areas of metal work technology such as machining and fitting, foundry, forging welding and fabrication.
  5. Agencies like the Education Trust Fund (ETF) and Petroleum Technology Development Fund (PTDF) whose interventions have significant effects on the realization of MDGs should be given enough income to finance their projects

**Conclusion**

There is no doubt that the goals of the MDGs can only be achieved through education. The problems and challenges facing the achievement of these goals can only be surmounted through generating and transmitting the appropriate value system. This will enhance the acquisition of science and technology and its application will transform Nigeria through economic prosperity, political stability and social harmony into a developed nation. This will in no small measure enhance the realization of the goals and objectives of the Millennium Declaration outcomes.

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