UTILIZING SKILL ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT FOR ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
The 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets were announced by the United Nations (UN) in 2015. The Goals and targets were set to stimulate action over the next fifteen years in areas of critical importance for humanity and the planet. But five years after the declaration of SDGs by the UN, Nigerians are yet to see the roadmap for its achievement. This paper thus investigated how skill acquisition and development can be utilized to achieving Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria. Two research objectives and two research questions guided the study. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population consisted of 120 training instructors operating skill acquisition training centres in Central Business District of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. All the population constituted the sample for the study, using census sampling technique. Ten items structured questionnaire titled “Utilization of Skill Acquisition and Development in Achieving Sustainable Development Goals Questionnaire” was used as instrument for data collection. Content validity was used. A pilot study was conducted at Bwari Area Council. A total of 10 copies of the questionnaire were administered to selected training instructors operating skill acquisition training centres within the community. Test-retest method of reliability was used to obtain the internal consistency. The reliability index was obtained through Cornbrash's alpha (0.89). Out of the 120 questionnaires administered, 109 were returned valid, representing 90% success rate. Data analyses were carried out based on the specific objectives and research questions of the study. Data collected was imputed into the SPSS (25) software package where descriptive statistics, in the form of tables were generated. The study discovered among other that many youth prefer to work in government establishments than acquiring skills of craftsmanship for self-employment, skill acquisition and development for self-employment can ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. Recommendations were made among which include that government at all levels should establish vocational skill acquisition and development centres in all the geo-political wards in the country, parents should encourage their children to enroll in informal apprenticeship training programme for skill acquisition and the National Orientation Agency should roll out programmes that would encourage the youth to patronize skill acquisition centres.

Keywords: Skill Acquisition, Utilizing, SDGs, Skill Development,

Introduction
In year 2015, the United Nations announced 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets. They seek to build on the Millennium Development Goals and complete what MDGs did not achieve. According to Kamau and Donoghue (2015), the United Nations adopted a historic decision on a comprehensive, far-reaching and people-centred set of universal and transformative Goals and targets, with total commitment to working tirelessly for the full implementation of this Agenda by 2030. The SDGs seek to realize the human rights of all and to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. They are integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental. The Goals and targets were set to stimulate action in areas of critical importance for humanity and the planet.

The Sustainable Development Goals Agenda is of unprecedented scope and significance. It is accepted by all countries and is applicable to all, taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities (Kutesa, 2015). The ideas behind these Goals and targets are to create a world free of poverty, hunger, disease and want, where all life can thrive. A world free of fear and violence, a world with universal literacy, a world with equitable and universal access to quality education at all levels, to health care and social protection, where physical, mental and social well-being are assured (United Nations, 2015). A world where we reaffirm our commitments regarding the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation and where there is improved hygiene; and where food is
sufficient, safe, affordable and nutritious. A world where human habitats are safe, resilient and sustainable and where there is universal access to affordable, reliable and sustainable energy (United Nations, 2015). The highlights of Sustainable Development Goals according to United Nation (2015) are:

- Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
- Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
- Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
- Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
- Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
- Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries.
- Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
- Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
- Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
- Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
- Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
- Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
- Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

Regrettably, five years after the declaration of SDGs by the UN, Nigerians are yet to see the roadmap for its achievement in the country. Unemployment, hyper inflation, youth restiveness, poverty, insecurity, epileptic power supply, infrastructural deficit, endemic corruption, policy somersaulting and others are visible features of Nigerian society. With these problems, the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals remains a tall dream in the country. When a large percentage of citizens are unemployed, Goal 1 of the Sustainable Development Goals which is aimed at ending poverty in all its forms everywhere cannot be achieved in the country.

United Nations (2015) expressed that by 2030, every country ought to have eradicated extreme poverty by bringing the number of people living on less than $1.25 a day to zero. Also, by 2030, countries of the world ought to have fully implemented nationally appropriate social protection measures with a focus on coverage of the poor, the most marginalized and people in vulnerable situations, achieve equal access to productive employment and decent work for all, including the poor, persons with disabilities, and other people in vulnerable situations as well as women and young people. It is unfortunate that high percentages of Nigerians are still living below poverty line, no thanks to endemic political corruption that stall every policy directed at employment generation and poverty alleviation (Ameh, 2019).

Skill acquisition and development has become area of interest that can stimulate speedy actualization of SDGs in Nigeria. Douli (2002) sees skill acquisition as the manifestation of idea and knowledge through training which is geared towards instilling in individuals, the spirit of entrepreneurship needed for meaningful development. Similarly, Idoko (2014) sees skill acquisition as the form of training by individuals or group of individuals that can lead to acquisition of knowledge for self-sustenance. It involves the training of people in different fields of trade under a legal agreement between the trainers and the trainees for certain duration and under certain conditions. According to Donli (2002), if individuals are given the opportunity to acquire relevant skills needed for self-sustenance in the economy, it will promote their charisma in any work environment.

Skill acquisition programme aims to stimulate creativity in individuals, enable them to identify opportunities for innovation and motivate them to transform the ideas into practical and targeted activities whether in a social, cultural or economic context. Skill acquisition programme provides opportunities for individuals to assess their attitude, aptitude and skills relating to those necessary for developing and running business. It must however be stressed that, if Nigeria must achieve the SDGs, it must provide necessary infrastructure and friendly work environment that encourage the youth to embrace self-employment through skills acquisition and
Magbagbeola (2004) posited that skills acquisition requires the accumulation of different skills that enhance task performance through the integration of both theoretical and practical forms of knowledge. He enumerated the guidelines for the sustenance of skill acquisition programme to include the followings:

i. Provision of training that gives the trainees the opportunities to acquire skills that are appropriate for preparation in a field of trade for gainful employment.

ii. Provision of definite skills that relate to each trade that makes one a professional in one field instead of the others.

iii. The training has to be done by competent, experienced and qualified instructors.

iv. Skill acquisition requires much practice, patience, interest, ability, aptitude and personality traits.

v. Skill acquisition requires conducive environment.

vi. Training requires constructive human relationship, business skills, imitation and constructive ideas.

vii. The principles guiding training in a particular field in terms of attitude, customer-relationship, productivity, efficiency, supply and demand needs to be appreciated (Idoko, 2014)

To achieve the United Nations’ 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets, the Nigerian government must invest heavily in skill acquisition and development centres. Basically, most parents especially those in rural communities have championed the course of skill acquisition for their children and many of these children are doing well in their chosen vocational jobs. Many youths in these communities have acquired skills in motor mechanics, electrical, electronics repairs, mason, carpentry, furniture, cobbler, tailoring, hair dressing, printing, welder and a host of other skills. These skills acquired by these youths have created job opportunities for them and many of them have become employers of labour. The government can support the course of skill acquisition for the youth by establishing vocational schools or apprenticeship with knowledgeable practitioners across geo-political wards (Oladunjoye and Audu, 2014).

The growing unemployment is an obstacle to the achievement of SDGs by the Nigerian government. To end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture, the citizens must be employed. Also, to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages, citizens must earn a living. It is in this line that Oladunjoye and Audu (2014) argued that vocational skills can be acquired through proper training either at the universities, polytechnics, colleges of education, vocational schools, apprenticeship with knowledgeable practitioners, or expression of talents. Oladunjoye and Audu (2014) added that with the growth of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), the Federal Government of Nigeria can assist the youth to tap into the arrays of business opportunities that are open in the world of ICT. Several areas of ICT have been identified over the years in Nigeria as a special means of providing services and income generation. These include: Networking; Programming; Repairing and maintenance; Computer sales; Computer training; Phone sales; Parts and accessory sales; Document processing; and Phone calls, among others. It is on this note that this paper investigated how skill acquisition and development can be utilized to achieving Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria.

Meanwhile, Aliyu (2007) expressed that the unemployment among school leavers, especially graduates, has always been attributed to the fact that most graduates were ill-equipped with sufficient skill content for a particular job. The greatest danger posed to society by a great number of unemployed is that such people are capable of destroying the society. What is more economically, the society loses a great deal when it cannot put to work so many millions of hands that are ready and capable of working. However, Nigeria graduates leave school without acquiring relevant skills while many of them leave school to take positions requiring unlimited knowledge and skills. Frequently, these positions are temporal and the youths in time find themselves unemployed because of lack of required skilled needed for employment opportunity.

Statement of the Problem

With less experience and fewer skills than many adults, young people often encounter particular difficulty accessing work. Many youth lack relevant skills, experience and credentials that could get them start a business on a good note. Worst still, Nigeria educational system’s curriculum placed more emphases on paper certificate and theories which often detached from practical applications in the workplace. The education system does not better prepare graduates for self-employment. It is obvious that the three tiers of government cannot provide jobs for the teeming population of unemployed citizens, to this end, young graduates and unemployed people in the country need to acquire necessary skills if they must
survive Nigeria’s current harsh economic realities. How can these necessary skills be acquired to reduce high rate of unemployment and also, help to achieve sustainable development goals in the country remain the focus of this study.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the investigation were to:

I. Find out the attitudes of youth towards skill acquisition and development

ii. Determine the effectiveness of skill acquisition and development in achieving sustainable development goals

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the investigation:

i. What are the attitudes of youth towards skill acquisition and development?

ii. How effective is skill acquisition and development in achieving sustainable development goals

Research Method

The study adopted descriptive survey research design.

Results

Research Question One: What are the attitudes of youth towards skill acquisition and development?

Table 1: Attitudes of youth towards skill acquisition and development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Many youth prefer to work in government establishment than acquiring skills of craftsmanship for self-employment</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>(89.0)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>(11.0)</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many youth want white collar job instead of developing their inborn skills to generate self-employment.</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>(84.4)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>(15.6)</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth are enrolling in skill acquisition and development programmes</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>(48.6)</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>(51.4)</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many young people want quick money than enrolling in informal apprenticeship training programme</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>(76.1)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>(23.9)</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SPSS version, 25

Table 1 reveals that a large number of the respondents (89.0%) agreed that many youth prefer to work in government establishment than acquiring skills of craftsmanship for self-employment. Large numbers of the respondents (84.4%) agreed that many youth want white collar job instead of developing their inborn skills to generate self-employment, against 15.6% that disagreed. A few number of the respondents (48.6%) agreed that youth are enrolling in skill acquisition and development programmes against a large number of respondents (76.1%) that disagreed. Majority of the respondents (51.4%) agreed that many young people want quick money than enrolling in informal apprenticeship training programmes against 23.9% that disagreed. Based on these findings, conclusion reached here is that, attitude of youth towards skill acquisition and development is poor in Abuja Municipal Area Council. These findings corroborate the finding by Aliyu (2007) that the unemployment among school leavers,
especially graduates, has always been attributed to the fact that most graduates were ill-equipped with sufficient skill content for a particular job. Nigeria graduates leave school without acquiring relevant skills. It contradicted the work of Oladunjoye and Audu (2014) that many youths have acquired skills in motor mechanics, electrical, electronics repairs, mason, carpentry, furniture, cobbler, tailoring, hair dressing, printing, welder and a host of other skills. And that the skills acquired by these youths have created job opportunities for them and many of them have become employers of labour. The point taken from this study is that substantial percentages of youth are enrolling in skill acquisition and development programmes.

**Research Question Two:** How effective is skill acquisition and development in achieving sustainable development goals

**Table 2:** Effectiveness of skill acquisition and development in achieving sustainable development goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocational skill acquisition can help to empower all women and girls</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>(72.5)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>(27.5)</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill acquisition for self-employment can ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>(74.3)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>(25.7)</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill acquisition could promote productive employment and decent work for all</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>(84.4)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>(15.6)</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People with skills of craftsmanship could build resilient infrastructure and promote sustainable industrialization</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>(79.8)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>(20.2)</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill acquisition and development can ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns in the country</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>(66.1)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>(33.9)</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill acquisition and development for self-employment can end poverty in all its forms everywhere</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>(70.6)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>(29.4)</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SPSS version, 25

Table 2 reveals that all the respondents agreed to the effectiveness of skill acquisition and development in achieving sustainable development goals in Abuja Municipal Area Council and Nigeria at large. Large number of the respondents (72.5%) agreed that Vocational skill acquisition can help to empower all women and girls, against 27.5% that disagreed. Large numbers of the respondents (74.3%) agreed that skill acquisition for self-employment can ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages, against 25.7% that disagreed. Large number of the respondents (84.4%) agreed that skill acquisition could promote productive employment and decent work for all as against 15.6% that disagreed. Majority of the respondents (79.8%) agreed that people with skills of craftsmanship could build resilient infrastructure and promote sustainable industrialization as against 20.2% that disagreed. 66.1% of the respondents agreed that skill acquisition and development can ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns in the country, against 33.9% that disagreed. Large number of the respondents (70.6%) agreed that skill acquisition and development for self-employment can end poverty in all its forms everywhere as against 29.4% that disagreed.

These findings were in line with the study by Idoko (2014) who revealed that skill acquisition as the form of training by individuals or group of individuals can lead to acquisition of knowledge for self-sustenance. Douli (2002) affirmed that skill acquisition is the manifestation of idea and knowledge through training which is geared towards instilling in individuals, the spirit of entrepreneurship needed for meaningful development. This implies that skill acquisition and development has become area of interest that can stimulate speeding actualization of SDGs in Nigeria. Donli (2004) added that if individuals are given the opportunity to acquire relevant skills needed for self-sustenance in the economy, it will promote their charisma in any work environment. By implication, individual morale with be boosted to contribute meaningfully to social, political and economic development of the nation.

**Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that, despite the fact that many youth prefer to work in government establishments than acquiring skills of craftsmanship for self-employment, effectiveness of
skill acquisition and development in achieving sustainable development goals can never be underestimated. This is because; skill acquisition and development for self-employment can ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. skill acquisition could promote productive employment and decent work for all.

Recommendations
In view of the findings of the study, the following recommendations were suggested:

1. Government at all levels should establish vocational skill acquisition and development centres in all the geo-political wards in the country.

2. Parents should encourage their children to enroll in informal apprenticeship training programme for skill acquisition in order to ensure self-employment.

3. National Orientation Agency should roll out programmes that would encourage the youth to patronize skill acquisition centres to promote productive employment.

4. The Federal Government of Nigeria should provide stable electricity supply that could encourage unemployed citizens to take into skills of craftsmanship that could promote sustainable industrialization.

5. The Federal Government of Nigeria should lead by example by purchasing locally made goods so as to encourage skillful local artisans and manufacturers.

6. The Federal Government should direct its educational policies to such that placed premium on skill acquisition than theory.

References


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