

# **Tertiary Education in Sudan: Empowering Vocational Institutions in the Post War Era**

**Dr. Elhafiz Mohammed Ahmed Elwaly**

Assistant Professor, General Education Department, Modern College of Business and Science

## **Abstract**

This article outlines key steps for vocational training institutions while supporting the concept of redefining higher education in Sudanese society to meet the challenges of the new socio-economic reality under post-war conditions. Over the past few decades in Sudan, vocational disciplines have received little attention and have not been integrated into the tertiary education system. Consequently, there exists a glaring gap between the practical needs of the job market and the qualifications possessed by university graduates. This gap, complemented by other socio-economic challenges, may in part explain the growing youth unemployment rate coupled with educated youth migrating legally and illegally to other countries in search of better prospects. This amateur migration leads to a serious threat for the development of vocational skills needed in Sudan, which is critical for post-war reconstruction of the country. This paper examines the foundational consequences of this educational gap and shifts focus to the reorientation of the educational system that primarily emphasizes vocational training for higher learning institutions.

## **1. Introduction**

While recovering from war, education becomes one of the most important factors that aid in building the country's capacity and stabilizing the economy. However, in the case of Sudan, higher education institutions have structured academic programs, which are more theoretical in nature rather than vocational. Consequently, the job market has a high supply of unemployable graduates, leading to a saturated workforce and high youth unemployment rates. This has led to dire social issues such as increased emigration to Gulf countries, and in more extreme circumstances, illegal migration to Western states.

Simultaneously, there is a lack of those professionally trained within technical and vocational sectors such as construction, mechanics, agriculture, and healthcare – all of which are important for national recuperation as well as sustainable growth. The lack of strong, well-supported vocational institutions has widened this existing gap, showcasing that the country's higher education system must transform to address the existing demand.

This paper aims to explain the implications of Sudan's higher-learning institutions that lean towards theoretical frameworks, highlighting the shortcomings of such an approach. Furthermore, it outlines specific steps, which aim at shifting the focus of higher education to vocational training, thereby, improving employability and contributing to effective post-conflict rebuilding efforts.

## **2. Initial Exploration about vocational studies in Sudan**

In respect to academic and theoretical tracks, vocational education in Sudan has received little attention and development. Educational policies since the mid-20th century in the Sudan have focused on university

education, particularly on professional training for law, economics, education, and the humanities (Yousif, 2014). This emphasis stemmed from colonial influences and post-independence desires to create a modern educated bureaucracy (Ahmed, 2017). Consequently, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programs were neglected and underfunded socially and institutionally. The socially perceived status of vocational training as subordinate further limited student participation although it could significantly aid economic development and create employment opportunities (ILO, 2019).<sup>3</sup>. Current Situation of Vocational Institutions

### **2.1 The Influence of Warfare on Educational Facilities and Attainment**

Sudan's armed conflict stretches many years back, and, unfortunately, the education system does not escape its toll. These effects are felt most sorely in the non-urban and remote areas. Numerous vocational training centers and technical institutes have been damaged or looted, and many others were compelled to close due to rampant insecurity (UNICEF, 2020). Education in all its forms was disrupted because teachers, administrative staff, and vital records underwent displacement (Osman & Eltahir, 2022). As a result, the obliteration of infrastructure, in combination with the cessation of educational services, built an untrained youth 'paradox' with no formal skills training opportunities. Consequently, this led to a situation where the country became unprepared for the reconstruction processes that follow warfare, especially for the high demand, skilled-labor intensive sectors (World Bank, 2021).

### **2.2 Post-Conflict Governing and Aid Strategies**

Subsequently, both the Sudanese government and international donors have recognized the need for urgent reform in the education system. Sadly, most attempts have been made towards rebuilding primary and secondary education, while vocational and tertiary institutions have received little to no attention (MHESR, 2022). Some donor-funded projects and collaborations, supported by UNESCO and UNDP, and even the African Development Bank, have sought to rehabilitate technical colleges and integrate skills training for the youths and ex-combatants (UNESCO, 2021; UNDP, 2022). Though there is stark importance placed on these efforts, they are still limited in scope and often short-term. There is a growing need for a harmonized national framework plan aimed at integrating vocational training as an essential component of holistic national development (African Union, 2021).

### **2.3 Labor market needs in Sudan**

Sudan has both obstacles and possibilities within its labor market after enduring a conflict. The country is trying to rebuild infrastructure and restore basic services which is why there is an increasing demand for skilled labor in construction, agriculture, healthcare, mechanical trades, and information technology (ILO, 2021). In addition, there is a need to shift towards more resilient and diversified economies which require workforce to possess practical and adaptable skills (World Bank, 2022). Unfortunately, university graduates do not have sufficient practical experience and technical skills which is why they face unemployment and underemployment (Altayeb, 2018). Filling this gap is crucial for economic recovery and social stability which is why revitalizing vocational institutions should be treated as a national priority (UNESCO, 2021).

## **3. Challenges:**

Even with its growing prominence in Sudan after the war, there are still some problems within the system, which hinder its advancement and effectiveness. These issues are multifaceted and stem from lack of focus investment, policy neglect, and structural areas in need of reform. In these chronically underfunded

environments, there are numerous wide-ranging vocational institutions in desperate need of attention.<sup>5</sup>  
Suggested Strategies for Empowerment.

### **3.1 Lack of Funding and Policy Support**

In Sudan, vocational education is in a perpetual state of under-funding. Financial resources are allocated to academic bodies at the expense of technical and vocational training centers, which make running on a shoe-string budget. Great financial constraints also apply to the employment and retention of skilled teachers, most of whom leave the country for greener pastures. More surprisingly, there is a conspicuous absence of enduring policy documents or strategic proposals designed to cater to specific exigencies of vocational education. The influence of insufficient finances alongside policy neglect has stunted the growth of vocational institutions in quality and scope.

### **3.2 Poor Coordination between Ministries and Institutions**

The management of technical and vocational education is not centralized in one ministry but spread over several ministries including; education, labor, industry, and youth. In each case, there is a jurisdiction overlap, which creates redundancy, wastage of resources, and lack of clear institutional functions. All these factors lead to vocational institutions operating in a silo mentality devoid of uniformity in curriculum design and standardized objectives. There is poor collaboration between policymakers, training providers, and employers, making it impossible to design vocational training programs that integrate into the national labor market requirements and post-war rehabilitation efforts.

### **3.3 Low Public Perception of Vocational Education**

Way too many students choose not to enroll in vocational tracks simply due to societal biases lacking real foundational reasoning. Even as students struggle with their academic performance, vocational education tracks, which have proven very efficient and beneficial, are regarded as secondary or backup options. The lack of public awareness is perhaps the most dominant explanatory factor portraying skilled trades as required employment makes matters worse for aspiring students. As a result, entire families together with their households are forced to pick up idealistic, theoretical degrees that bear no relevance to the world of work, struggling with a growing issue of unemployment and underemployment.

### **3.4 Insufficient Access to Contemporary Technologies**

The use of modern technology and the internet is a prerequisite for contemporary vocational training. Unfortunately, most vocational schools in Sudan have inadequate digital infrastructure. Most training centers lack access to stable power, internet networks, and modern technical devices. This lack of technology prevents learners from attaining essential digital competencies while hindering instructors from adopting modern pedagogical practices. Rural regions are more disadvantaged, exacerbating inequalities in education and employment opportunities across regions.

### **3.5 Disjointed Certification and Accreditation Systems**

Sudan's vocational education credentials lack recognition due to the absence of a transparent and coherent routine. Institutions use various criteria, such as issuing certificates, which are not standardized or accepted on a national level. This lack of integration hinders the mobility of the graduates in the job market while diminishing the trust of employers on vocational skills. The absence of coherent accreditation methodologies results in no control over quality, monitored outcomes, or systematic integration of subdivision education within the entire national educational schematic.

## **4. Recommended Approaches for Empowerment**

Empowerment of vocational institutions in post-war Sudan entails a meticulous multi-dimensional effort

involving policies, infrastructural frameworks, human resources, and societal perceptions. These strategies have been formulated to transform vocational education into a vital national asset for recovery and sustainable development.

#### **4.1 Reform Policy: Creating MTPI's TVET Strategy In Accordance With Recovery Objectives**

There is a need for the coherent national strategy which includes Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to be developed within the context of national rejuvenation. This strategy must include clear objectives, identifiable metrics concerning rehabilitation and performance value, funding structure, and stakeholders. Ensuring that Vocational education is synchronized with the nation's socio economic recovery goals will guarantee its effective contribution towards rebuilding crucial economic sectors.

#### **4.2 Global Relationships: International Technical and Financial Assistance**

Sudan's vocational education and training system face challenges that can be solved with external help, and Sudan's vocational education and training system faces challenges that can be solved with external help. Other specialized agencies like UNESCO, UNDP, ILO, and African Development Bank can help construct new modern training facilities and provide/aid the training of international instructors as well as furnish the training centers with modern tools and equipment. Collaborative ventures with foreign-funded NGOs and even foreign governments can equally assist in creating and implementing new training models and in actually trying out those new ideas.

#### **4.3 Recruiting and Training Teachers: Using Retention Strategies and Skills Development**

A highly skilled workforce requires training, motivation and sophisticated mechanisms, which in turn depend on an active vocational system. Vocational as well as pedagogical improvement measures should be taken to promote digital literacy and improve the technical skills of instructors. Special housing grants, bonus payments, and improved job structures offered to teachers at all career levels could be helpful in attracting and retaining instructors as well as dealing with understaffed or difficult to reach teaching locations. Inviting specialists from various fields as guest trainers or lecturers will also improve the quality of instruction offered to students.

#### **4.4 Technological Integration:**

Addressing the barriers to accessing vocational education is vital in expanding opportunities for learners. There is a need to invest in practical skill e-learning platforms, which are integrated with practical and technical subjects. Such platforms can provide flexible and blended learning opportunities, which is highly important in rural or post-conflict areas. Digital and portable tools can be used in mobile training units to bring such education to youth in remote and difficult to reach areas, which fosters inclusivity and strengthens the education system.

#### **4.5 Tackling Societal Stereotypes: A National Campaign for Vocational Education Marketing**

In order to change instructions on working with different machines, we are hosting a publicity event, which includes personal recommendations by business executives, alumni, sponsors, and employers for schools, which aim enhancing vocational learning so that it can truly be celebrated as worthy and pragmatic. Giving due respect to skilled work and promote it as employment bursting with opportunities for self-employment and reveal promotion does and brings to one's country along with job opportunities indicates changes will happen and to their joy, many motivated students will step forward.

#### **4.6 Industry Involvement: Job Readiness Initiatives, Equipment Donations, and Internships**

As discussed in previous sections, engaging the private sector within vocational education is critical for ensuring that it remains responsive and aligned to market needs. Employers are used not only as providers of work but also as experts in equipping, developing curricula, providing workshops, and donating system

tools, facilities, and equipment for use in schools. Actual hands-on training during the course of their studies further ensures that learners become fully competent graduates, prepared for the workforce. Through collaboration with local schools, firms, service providers, and manufacturers, students are taught the skills necessary to meet current and future demands in the labor market

## 5. Conclusion

The Sudanese workforce is grappling with an acute shortage of skilled labor, and for years now Sudan has seen a mass emigration of educated, unemployed graduates. This is the blatant result of Sudan's higher education system being purely theoretical based devoid of practicality. Empirical evidence suggests that Sudan faces an extreme value and skill mismatch with its growing unemployment rates. These graduates are unable to find work due to the lack of vocational training in their fields of study. The recent post-war period has done nothing except worsen this skill gap.

Vocational training has the potential to serve as a primary pivot in reconstructing and reviving Sudan's economy. Enabling students to gain skills like construction, digital skills, healthcare and agricultural modules will help Sudan economically as well as socially. If Sudan enhances vocational education, it will provide a solution to the youth unemployment surge in addition to rebuilding the country's infrastructure which suffered extensive damage during the war.

Nonetheless, harnessing this potential will not be achieved through piecemeal solutions. There and a cross-government, whole-of-society approach is needed that includes international funders, schools and universities, businesses, and non-governmental associations. It requires change in policies, capable structures, funded campaigns, trained educators, active business involvement, and community awareness campaigns to unlock vocational institutions. Such collaborative action is the only way for Sudan to shift criteria and development of higher education to the realities and prospects of the population.

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