UNIJERPS
Unizik Journal of Educational Research and Policy Studies VOL.8;
https://unijerps.org
***2021 Impact Factor: 5.641; 2020 Impact Factor: 5.355.***
*July-December, 2021*
***Indexing and Impact Factor URL: http://sjifactor.com/passport.php?id=21363***

# EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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***ABSTRACT***
*This paper examined education for sustainable development in Nigeria. Education is an activity we all feel that we know something about, having had practical experience of it. Every societies, past and present whether simple or complex, traditional or modern have always been engaged in the transmission of the culture to their youths. The paper looked at the meanings of education, sustainability, development, sustainable development, goals of sustainable development, education for sustainable development and challenges of education for sustainable development. It was recommended among others that government at all levels in Nigeria should continue the contribution towards achieving sustainable development through education. However, the need for monitoring, supervising and ensuring that all the financial and other investment on education for the purpose of achieving sustainable development are not diverted for other purposes.*

**Keywords:** Education, Sustainability and Development.

## Introduction

Education is an activity we all feel that we know something about, having had practical experience of it. Every societies, past and present whether simple or complex, traditional or modern have always been engaged in the transmission of the culture to their youths. These include their beliefs, customs, ideologies, philosophies and so on, which are highly valued by the people and which are of benefit to their society at any particular time. It is this transmission of culture that is known as education. Depending on the type of society, education would be intentionally transmitted formally or non-formally.

Education is seen or believed to be the activity of preserving, developing and transmitting the culture of people from one generation to another (Ekwueme, Ekon & Ezenwa-Nebife, 2016). It enables the people to develop the knowledge, values and skills to participate in decision making about them, individually, collectively and globally. This vision of development embraces environmental concern as well as issues such as the fight against poverty, human right, gender equality, cultural diversity and education for all. To this end, Education is a means through which sustainable development can be achieved.

Development is an eclectic paradigm of social change aimed at improving the condition and quality of life of the people, especially that of the majority of the poor and vulnerable people in the society. For development to be meaningful it has to be sustainable, that is continue for a very long time, without causing damage to the environment, to the benefit of present and future generations. Julian and Susann (2017) posited that sustainable development means an ongoing process with systemic approaches that require creativity, flexibility and critical reflection. It emphasized the creation of sustainable improvements in the quality of life of all people through increases in real income per capital, improvements in education, health and general quality of life and improvements in quality of natural environmental resources.

Education for sustainable development has a special role in vindicating how various processes in education, which lie at the heart of promoting change in human behaviour, can be used on a

global level to help turn things around (Nnabuo & Asodike, 2012). Ekwueme, Ekon and Ezenwa-Nebife (2016) stressed that education for sustainable development allows every human being to acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to shape a sustainable future. Hence, this article on "Education for Sustainable Development in Nigeria", and an issue that has global dimension, is appropriate in times like this.

**Concept of Education**

Education is a concept that does not lend itself to a clear-cut definition. This is because it is a lifelong process, starting before we begin school and ongoing for life. Its definition may also differ depending on the perspectives of those who are trying to define it. Leonard, Collins and Felix (2014) defined education as the development of the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domain and abilities of an individual for optimal function and performance in the society. The individual has to be helped to maximize his mental, emotional and psychological abilities which will be beneficial to him and the society in which he belongs. Itari and Ugbe (2018) defined education as a process of acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes and experiences. They further stressed that education is seen as all experience acquired in the process of living, acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitude and experiences in institutions of learning and as a relatively organized learning activity intended to make some persons(be they adults, youths or children) learn. This presupposes that the teacher/facilitator, learner/student, content/ programme and method must be present in the learning situation.

According to Nnabuo and Asodike (2012), education is power, it is a process of acquiring knowledge and ideas that shape and condition man's attitude, actions and achievements; it is a process of developing the child's moral, physical, emotional and intellectual power for his contribution in social reform; it is the process of mastering the laws of nature and for utilizing them effectively for the welfare of the individual and for social reconstruction; it is the art of the utilization of knowledge for complete living. Gbadegesin (2010) defined education as that process of physical and mental culture whereby a man's personality is developed to the fullest as he identified literacy as the foundation on which an edifice of sound education may be built. Drawing distinction between education and literacy, he submitted that while literacy is an important aspect of education, it is not its equivalence and it may jeopardize the object of true education, which is the full development of the entire personality of a human being.

According to Erhunse (2013), education is a process by which an individual acquires many physical and social capabilities demanded by the society in which he or she is born into, in order to function. He however stressed further that education in an ideal sense, is an ultimate value and hence, through the provision of social service and its agent of change.

Education can be referred to as the procedure by which each successive age learns the accumulated knowledge of their community, the transmission of which was necessitated by the need to enable people to fit into the existent pattern of life and associate with others in a predictable, efficient and humane way (Ubogu, 2020).Abubakar (2013) defined education as an institution that enables individual to think freely and rationally which makes social progress and innovation possible. Social progress and innovation are the key elements of development, when a society progresses, its members are free; they think rationally, innovate certain social changes which will invariably enhance development.

The aims of education include the development of the whole child-body, mind and spirit and the development of a sound character that is beneficial to the child and his entire community. Above all, education performs the following functions;

1. Instrument of change
2. Instrument of innovation and invention
3. Development of the whole child and

4. Enabling individuals in the society to function productively in the world of work.

**Concept of Sustainability**

Sustainability is the ability to sustain, maintain, provide for or nourish something for an indefinite period without damaging or depleting it. In recent years, an understanding of the concept of sustainability has been firmly established by many scholars and researchers. Sustainability consists of three dimensions: the protection of natural environment, the maintenance of economic vitality and observance of specific social considerations about human development. The notion of sustainability can be understood in various meanings and is defined in many contexts as a technical term used in forestry; as an ecological term; as well as a new definition which refers to the development of humanity and of human societies (Itari &Ugbe, 2018).

**Concept of Development**

Over time, 'development' has carried quite a number of definitions. Too many works exists on the subject, from the writing of orthodox economist, modernization theorist of those of the Marxist and Neo Marxists. Zaki (2012) defined development as a continuous process of positive change in quality and span of life person or group of persons. In this respect, other forms of developments taken as contributory factors of change in the finality and life span of people. Such contributing factor as economic, social, political, technological, and cultural developments are interrelated and inter dependent. In the same vein, Oghator and Okoobo (2015) pointed out that development goes beyond the increase in per-capita income or economic growth, but also include sustainable improvements in the living standard of the people, which is guaranteed through the provision of gainful employment, coupled with the presence and availability of social and economic infrastructures. On the other hand, Seers (2017) defined development by posing certain questions such as; what has been happening to poverty, unemployment and inequality. To him, if all three indices (poverty, unemployment and inequality) are at a relatively high rate, there is absence of development, and vice versa. It follows therefore that for a country to be classified as developed, there are parameters to look out for which are: the state of poverty, unemployment and inequality.

According to Agwu (2016), development can also said to simply mean providing qualitative improvement in the lives of people or providing greater quality of life for humans. Development also means the act or process of bringing to a more advanced state, growth or progress; or progressed state or form. Oguntimehin and Nwosu (2014) noted that the term "development" is employed, four distinct but interrelated processes are usually borne in mind, namely: a developing society is changing from simple and traditional techniques towards the application of scientific knowledge at the realm of technology; the developing society evolves from subsistence farming towards commercial production of agricultural goods; the developing society undergoes a transition from the use of human and animal power to industrialization; and the developing society moves from the farm and village towards urban concentrations. There are different forms of development which include: social, political, economic, educational, environmental, cultural, green development and so on. So development can also be described as: material progress or economic growth or reformation of social institutions and infrastructures.

The primary objective of all types of development is to promote authentic human development. Catherine (2011) agreed with this by stating that development has recently shifted from economic progress towards a more humanistic view focused on the individual and the quality of life which is often referred to as "integral and sustainable human development". This focuses on the inter-connectedness of economics with political, socio-cultural and environmental spheres, as well as the necessities, capacities and potentialities of human beings.

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**Concept of Sustainable Development**

There is no single definition for sustainable development but the key idea common to all definitions concerns resource exploitation at a rate that would not prove detrimental to future generations. For instance, according to Emeka-Nwobia (2015), sustainable development could probably be otherwise called "equitable and balanced". This means that, in order for development to continue indefinitely, it should balance the interests of different groups of people, within the same generation and among generations and do so simultaneously in three major interrelated areas: economic, social, environmental and so on.

Nnabuo and Asodike (2012) described sustainable development as a construct, which envision development as meeting the need of the present generation without compromising the needs of the future generation. It implies that while education meets the need of the present it does not compromise the ability of the future generations to meet own needs. Nevertheless, this ability to meet the needs is determined by human capital (through education, technology advance) and through physical capital (machine, tool etc). Akintoye and Opeyemi (2014) argued that continued sustainable development is only possible or assured when it is agreed and indeed concrete steps are taken to raise the level of literacy and numeracy in any society. Educational institutions and their programmes are therefore, the tools with which to achieve development and its sustainability.

Sustainable development has also been defined by Ahenkan and Osei-Kojo (2014)as the development path along which maximization of human well-being for today's generation does not lead to the decline in the well-being of the future generation. This definition suggests that sustainable development considers the needs of the future and current generations in tandem, and it is rooted in the pursuit of the well-being and welfare of the people.

Sustainable development is therefore concerned with the creation and sustenance of the conditions for current and future generations of human to live well on this planet. Hence, as noted by Sims and Falkenberg(2013), right from the beginning, a multi-prong approach to the idea of sustainable society was taken that went beyond concerns for only the destruction of the national environment to include the concern for meeting the essential needs of all people and those needs are met in a sustainable way in consideration of the needs of future generations.

Therefore, for any meaningful development to take place and be sustained there must be a medium through which the members of the community or any nation can be made to participate in the programs which will bring positive results. Education is the only means by which people can be conscientized and positive attitudes inculcated into them. This is because education has a central and rather crucial role to play in the mobilization of the citizens for specific national development programs.

**Goals of Sustainable Development**

The goals for sustainable development are made up of 17 items namely;

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

Goal5: 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

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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.

**Education for Sustainable Development**

Education for sustainable development is a lifelong process that leads to an informed and involved citizenry having the creative problem-solving skills, scientific and social literacy and commitment to engage in responsible individual and co-operative actions. Education for sustainability cannot be achieved without quality education of its citizenry which is free from all forms of discrimination. Nnabuo and Asodike (2012) stated that education for sustainable development enables people to develop the knowledge values, and skills to participate in decisions about the ways they do things individually and collectively, locally and globally, that will improve their quality of life now without damaging the planet of their future. Sustainability includes intergenerational equity, just and peaceful societies, social tolerance, environmental preservation and restoration, poverty alleviation and natural resource conservation. The major essential tools for achieving sustainable development include the following areas:

1. Improve the quality of basic education.
2. Reorient existing education programmes to address sustainable economy.
3. Implementing various poverty alleviation programmes
4. Rural electrification
5. Developing employment generation and enhancing agricultural output and income

Education for sustainable development is a holistic approach for school's management and the curriculum, not a separate subject. It therefore requires reflection on what to teach, and how to teach in order to:

I. clarify and extend the ability of students to think for themselves
II. encourage students to reflect and debate issues to enable them to form their own opinions
III. foster learning that emerges from discovery and is relevant to the learner's life experiences

**Challenges of Education for Sustainable Development**

In spite of multiple efforts to strengthen education for sustainable development, many challenges remain. In particular, there is a need (United Nation Environment Programme, 2011):
1. to ingenerate sustainable science and education.
2. to strengthen co-ordination and collaboration between different levels of Education for Sustainable Development; and
3. to mitigate information and knowledge gaps between different parts of the world.

Also, there is the challenge of mainstreaming all educational policies, taxonomy and programmes towards sustainable development.

**Conclusion**

There is no gain saying that Nigeria is in daring need for sustainable development. But there appears to be a number of challenges which have to be addressed in order to make the dream a reality. Education has a major role to play in the area of sustainable development in Nigeria; this is because education for sustainable development is a lifelong process that leads to an informed and involved citizenry having the

creative problem-solving skills, scientific and social literacy and commitment to engage in responsible individual and co-operative actions.

**Recommendations**

Accordingly, to achieve education for sustainable development in Nigeria, this study recommends these action points that:

1. Contemporary sustainable development education should focus on a variety of issues such as health, human rights, conflict resolution, ethics, gender, poverty alleviation, environmental sustainability to mention but a few.
2. The Department on Education for sustainable Development and National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) should ensure that education for sustainable development principles are integrated into all relevant primary and post primary curriculum areas as the curriculum is reviewed.
3. Federal Government of Nigeria should spearhead the establishment of West Africa Education for Sustainable Development (WAESD) Network as it is obtainable in other sub-regions of Africa. The West Africa ESD Network will be collaboration with National Education for Sustainable Development (NESD) steering committees and stakeholders in member countries of the sub-region. The Network will focus on policy dialogue and strategic planning; vision building; advocacy; public awareness; partnership – building; information sharing such as exhibiting education for sustainable development best practices and innovations, training and capacity building; resource mobilization research, monitoring and evaluation. The Network will also be a clearing house to compile and share a data base of expertise in the region, facilitate exchanges and cross-border dialogue and linkages to the global education for sustainable development learning space.
4. Government at all levels in Nigeria should continue the contribution towards achieving this sustainable development. However, the need for monitoring, supervising and ensuring that all the financial and other investment on education for the purpose of achieving sustainable development are not diverted for other purposes.

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