

Sustainable Development Goal Four: Challenges and Strategies to be Adopted for Achieving the Objectives in Nigeria by 2030 and Beyond

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Abstract

Education is an instrument of change, and to achieve sustainable development, all countries of the world should ensure investment in formal education. This paper is meant to highlight why the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) concisely adopted Sustainable Development Goal Four to ensure global development that supports the welfare of people and the planet. The paper also elucidated the Nigerian government's effort regarding pre-primary, primary, secondary, and tertiary education for children and adults. It went further to analyze the achievements so far in science, technology, and innovation (STI) and some challenges hindering the full realization of sustainable development objectives. Strategies to be adopted by the Federal government to actualize the objectives were discussed. Furthermore, conclusions and recommendations for actualizing the objectives of sustainable development goal four were consequently proffered, such as strict supervision of projects, probity and accountability, provision of additional schools and classrooms, more learning and teaching materials, and additional teaching staff with better welfare.

Keywords: Sustainable development, Goals, Challenges, Strategies, Objectives.

Introduction

Education has been widely recognized as a fundamental human right. It is also a catalyst for sustainable development and a vehicle for confronting the problems facing societies regarding socio-economic, environmental, and ecological realities (Usman, 2017). Sustainable development goal four has been identified as constituting a force that can contribute to the social and economic development of people of the world. As a signatory of the United Nations, Nigeria is committed to achieving not only human rights as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 but also the revised Nigerian Constitution of 1999 as well as the National Policy on Education. Nigeria is also inclined to achieve global goals, especially SDG4, which is on equitable quality education. (Hanachor & Wordu, 2021)

According to Usman (2017), Africa and, particularly Nigeria, is blessed with human and natural resources that, if well exploited and utilized, the resources can bring far-reaching development of individuals in the field of science and technology. Currently, nearly 10 million children are not in school, while less than 65% of those who complete primary education transit to junior secondary school. (World Bank, 2010) This is by no means a big challenge for a country that hopes to be among the top 20 economies by the year 2020. The recognition of education, being for manpower development, is one of the cardinal items of the agenda, and which, of course, is a response to this yawning gap. To further compound the nation's sorry state, Nigeria has recorded slightly by more than 60 million people as illiterates. Nigeria is not pulling her weight considerably in all aspects of education. (Tahir, 2011).

According to Tahir (2011), many attempts have been made in the past to arrest problems in education, yet the square peg is still put in a round hole. For instance, when the Universal Primary Education scheme was launched in 1976, it could not be fully implemented because of gross underestimation of the enormity of resource requirements for implementing the campaign. Furthermore, the 1976 Local Government Reform, which transferred the management of Primary Education to the Ministry of Education in all matters of Education at all levels, did not help matters either. Above all, albeit in the spirit of the 1979 constitution, a new formula for sharing funds was agreed upon. Thus, the Federal Government's share of the Federal Account was reduced from 71% to 55% in favour of State and Local governments. States and Local Governments were directed to extend 15% of their share in funding primary education.

The Federal Government was compelled to withdraw its support to the UPE scheme by this singular decision. By 1982, the grant for the Central Government given to LGAs for the payment of salaries and allowing of teachers and non-teaching staff were withdrawn. The fact that the nation was undergoing a difficult economic time made it reasonable to expect states and LGAs to reengage in fulfilling their part of the bargain. A closer examination of 1988 and the Universal Basic Education Programme of 2000 will reveal that not much has been learnt from previous experiences. No sooner had the National Primary Education Commission (NPEC) begun to settle down to address the twin questions of access, quality, management, and funding primary education. It was dissolved, and the LGAs took over its functions in 1991. Meanwhile, it is common

knowledge that the LGEAs lacked the technician, managerial skills, and financial muscles to drive the UPE programme. The long and short of it was that the National Primary Education agenda had to be set aside until some other time. Luckily enough, it did not take long as NPEC was once again legalized through Decree 96 of 1993, with the mandate to coordinate the implementation of the National UPE. The NPEC law was modified slightly to curtail what others perceive as its excessive powers. (UBE, 1994). In all its travails, NPEC was able to achieve some impressive gains in ensuring quality primary schools through massive renovation and construction of facilities, provision of instructional materials, furniture, and equipment, as well as prompt mobilization of children for enrolment. Issues of management and funding, which had been the bane of this sub-sector of education, were addressed to a large extent. The imposition of the first three years of secondary education onto the primary education layer and the eventual interpretation of the 1999 constitution as judgement by the Supreme Court in April, 2002, following the on-shore/off-shore suit No.SC 28 2001, were two significant events that compelled the Federal Government to re-design its interpretation strategy in the area of UBE. This was done by enacting aside 2% of its consolidated revenue fund to intervene by assisting states in the areas of Early Childhood Care Development and Education (ECCDE) and primary and junior secondary education. It also encouraged states to buy into the scheme through a coordinated collaboration towards restoring the country's basic education sub-sector.

The UBE Act of 2004 stipulates that Basic Education should be free, universal, and compulsory, and the programme should ensure the realization of equality, access, and quality. In spite of all these, implementation of the provisions has become problematic, largely because the political parties were operating at cross purposes while others deliberately shy away from it. As the political party campaign geared up in late 2006 and early 2007, the programme became highly politicized. In the interim, the list and the Millennium Development Goals are increasingly becoming a window dressing. Thus, education for boys and girls, the physically challenged, adult and non-formal education programmes, and technical and vocational education have all become a mirage. (World Bank, 2010, Tahir, 2011).

Sustainable development

The United Nations Agency in charge of education has worked extensively to popularize the concept of sustainable development. Simply, it is a pattern of resource use that aims to meet human needs while preserving the environment so that these needs can be met not only in the present but even in the definite future as well. Thus, it is a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. According to Fasokun (2011), the United Nations Organization (UNO) declared 2005-2014 as the decade of Education for Sustainable Development. United Nations Educational Scientific Cultural Organization (UNESO) states that quality education is a prerequisite for Education for Sustainable Development at all levels and in all education modalities. The whole idea is behind the desire to change everybody to

adopt new behaviours and practices to secure the future. Education for Sustainable Development has seven key objectives: Interdependence of society, economy, and the natural environment, from local to global. Citizenship and stewardship- rights and responsibilities, participation and cooperation; needs and rights of future generations; diversity in the cultural, social, economic, and biological aspects; quality of life, equity and justice; sustainable change in development and varying capacity; and uncertainty and precaution in action. (UNESCO, 2010). Sustainable development objectives are very difficult to achieve in Nigeria due to many factors. According to Oludipe (2014) and Olubasayo (2019), Nigerian children in primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions have found it difficult to meet the objectives of sustainable development and education for all (EFA) as a result of the poor school environment, lack of enough water and electricity supply, lack of enough classroom accommodation, lack of teaching staff, inadequate instructional and learning materials, illiteracy and ignorance among parents, who have failed to enroll their children in schools.

Historically, inclusive education, which is part of SDG4, emerged as a result of the clarion call made to the international community by UNESCO to give each child the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning for all their citizens. At the World Conference on Special Needs Education in Salamanca, Spain, in 1994, UNESCO reaffirmed its commitment to provide education for children, with or without special educational needs, with the regular education system (UNESCO, 1994). According to Unachukwa (2008), Ozoji, and Babudoh (2012), an inclusive classroom refers to a setting where all children in a given school are placed within the confines of the general classroom with special needs children all day. Special needs children are taught all subjects in the school curricula together with other peers without disability. However, arrangements can be made to "Pull out" special needs children for specific instructions or hands-on activities in the resources room using assistive technologies, such as Braille Machine, Braille papers, tape recorders, and overhead projectors. In Nigeria, favourable and conducive classrooms have not yet been provided. Apart from this, there is a lack of Braille textbooks, reading, reading machines, computers with speech software, an adequate number of sign language interpreters, and transcription services, and principally, a lack of trained instructors to use some of the assistive devices and sciences notation for effective instruction or teaching of science. (Ozoji and Babudoh, 2012).

Objectives of Sustainable Development Goal Four (SDGs)

The International Education Framework and the 2030 Agenda (2016) is the education goal objectively based on guaranteeing all-inclusive and equitable education that promotes lifelong opportunities for all. SDG4 is embodied with 10 definite targets/objectives, which include the following:

❖ Free primary and Secondary Education: By 2030, the government should ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable, and quality primary and secondary education, leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes. This

- means that 6 years of primary and 3 years of junior secondary education should be free, including both genders.
- ❖ Equal access to quality pre-primary education: By 2030, the government should ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education. Convenient classrooms for nurseries or kindergartens and teaching and learning materials should be provided to lay a sound educational foundation for primary education.
- ❖ Equal access to affordable technical, vocational, and higher education: By 2030, the government should ensure access to all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational, and tertiary education, including university. Skills in technical and vocational education and training should be encouraged for children, being an opportunity for self-employment and sustainability.
- ❖ Increase the number of people with relevant skills for financial success: The government should ensure that by 2030, it will be suitable to increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs, and entrepreneurship. Cognitive and psychomotor skills such as project work, creativity, and teamwork should be encouraged.
- ❖ Eliminate all discrimination in education: By 2030, the government should eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and children in vulnerable situations. These, of course, include the nomadic, displaced persons, and reverie areas.
- Universal Literacy and Numeracy: By 2030, the government should ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, men, and women, achieve literacy, and non-formal education should be encouraged to meet the country's target of universal literacy and numeracy.
- ❖ Education for sustainable development and global citizens: By 2030, effort should be made to ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, education for sustainable development and sustainability. Lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, and global contribution to sustainable development. This allows all citizens access to education, irrespective of gender, ethnic indication, religious background, physical ability, or disability.
- ❖ Build and upgrade inclusive and safe schools: The government should ensure that by 2030, it builds and upgrades education facilities that are child, disability, and gender-sensitive for all. This means that all facilities, including toiletries, for children with or without disabilities, both males and females, should be provided.
- ❖ Expand higher education scholarships for developing countries: By 2030, the government should ensure that youths are offered scholarships to pursue their

- further education within or outside the country. Donor agencies and non-governmental organizations can help to sponsor boys, girls and the physically challenged for continuing education. This could help the youth to improve their abilities in science and technology, vocational skills, innovative skills and creativity.
- ❖ Increase the supply of qualified teachers in developing countries: By 2030, the government should substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least-developed countries and Small Island developing States. This requires more teacher trainees, expansion of teacher training institutions, provision of teaching and learning facilities, and consideration of financial motivation in terms of salary, incentives, and awards for both genders and physically challenged teachers (UNESCO, 2016, Global Goal, 2022).

Science and Technology in Africa and Beyond

It is globally known that Egypt laid the foundation of science, technology, socio-cultural research, and innovation about three hundred (300) decades before other parts of the world woke up from their slumber. Egypt is recognized as the cradle of civilization for her innovative use of writing with the use of hieroglyphics and papyrus, the building of tombs and pyramids, shaduff irrigation, glass-making, and miming to preserve dead pharaohs or kings. The pyramids of Gaza are about 13 acres (53,000 in) and are one of the Seven Wonders of the World. (Epock Times, 2014).

Historical records on conventional scientific and technological innovation lead credence to the Salmon Fishery in Chile, herbal medicine in China and India, and the Kindo basket among Kikuyu and Kamba in Kenya. (Gakuru, 2009, Usman, 2017). There are useful cases of indigenous innovations that have come to line light in Africa, such as Bronze casting in Benin, the Fabrication of Aluminum is Saki in Oyo State (Nigeria), the production of beads in Bida (Niger State), leather works in Zaria (Kaduna Skin Friendly Dyes (Lalle), in Northern Nigeria, Traditional Spinning and Weaving Textile in western Nigeria, to mention a few. These Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) account for about 90% of all industrial enterprises, 10% of total manufacturing output, 70% of industrial employment in Nigeria, 30% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and account for 58% of the global working population. (Siyanbola, Egbetoki, Oluseyi, Olamade, Aderemi and Sanni, 2012). According to Acharya and Shirvastara (2008), China, India and North Korea use Natural products as preventive and curative devices, medicinal chemistry, chemistry, synthetics, organic chemistry, biotechnology, aromatic economic plants, agro-technology, biological and oil field insecticidal and anti feedant properties, making of carpets and wears etc.

Nigeria's gross GDP expenditure for research and development is 0.2%, less than half the world average of 0.4%. Smaller countries like Mozambique spend 0.5%, Mauritius 0.4%, Uganda 0.4%, and Botswana 0.5%. Nigeria used to be a world leader in the Palm oil industry, but Malaysia and Indonesia have taken over because of better

technology, commitment, and patriotism. Despite being the world's largest cassava producer, Nigeria has lost its position as a market leader to Thailand because most Nigerian farmers have down tools, and agriculture has not been supported by key stakeholders with mechanization. In the past five years, Asia's share of global research and development investment has increased from 33% to almost 40%. China has gone up from 10% to more than 20%, making it the second-largest spender after United States. Investment in China contributed to less than 60% to economic growth and reduced reliance on foreign technologies to less than 30%. The country produced 1.5 million new Science and Engineering graduates in 2011, compared to 857,000 in the European Union (United Nations, 2010).

In Nigeria, the Federal Ministry of Science and Technology is positioned, discharging its mandate through the operation of seventeen (17) professionally managed Agencies/Parastatals, including health, education, agriculture, industry, transportation, security, and environment. The agencies under the supervision of the Ministry include the Federal Institute of Industrial Research Oshodi, the National Agency for Science and Engineering Infrastructure for Chemical Technology, the Nigeria Institute for Science Laboratory, Technology, and the National Space Research and Development Agency, to mention very few.

So far, the Ministry can boast of assisting sixteen (16) investors and innovators with grants ranging 5million-10million, the establishment of a Model Science and Technology Park known as SHESTO Silicon Valley (SSV in Abuja, 4 Biotechnology products, seven crop varieties, registered and released for circulation, disease free plantlets for plantation, agriculture, afforestation and erosion control, scientifically processed Maringa Capsules and powder as institutional supplements, productions, of cancer treatment drugs (prodigiosin), procurement of 1.6 and 2.0 tons of sancott 11 and 13 cotton varieties, improved oil palm seedlings, 60 tons of sugarcane seeds, targeted to create 20,000 jobs for 5years, nitrogen fertilizer and organic fertilizer from Maringa Oleifera seeds which boosts crops yield by 25-30% intervention on hemorrhagic and viral disease (Ebola) and other diseases, mosquitoes repellant control of trypanosomiasis.

In addition, Usman (2017) reported that the Ministry trained 150 traditional medicine practitioners, 711 Medicinal Romantic and Pesticide (MAP) plants were identified, and 20% cassava inclusion in baking can save Nigeria N127 Billion from wheat importation annually and can provide 3 million jobs for Nigerians. In terms of renewable energy, solar PV street lights of 7,522 (1.204MW), solar-powered water boreholes of 88 (0.768 MIV), one pilot hydrokinetic electricity, and four solar PV minigrids. There are Gari processing areas in Ondo, cassava processing, Owode in Ogun State tomatoes processing catalytic factory in Kano Ceiling Boards using Molasses. Regarding automobiles, the National Agency for Science and Engineering Infrastructure (NASENI) commissioned the first made-in-Nigeria motorcycle with 65% local content in a 2013 ad by test-running cargo and production satellite technology (70 million Users), Federal Ministry of Science and Technology (FMST, 2014).

Challenges of 2030 Sustainable Development Goal. 4

Challenges that could impede the achievement of 2030 sustainable development Goal four are briefly discussed below:

- Non-enrolment of all children in schools: Data has shown that more than 10 million children are not in school and less than 65% of those who complete primary education transit to junior secondary schools. The federal government should redouble its efforts to enforce policies against child abuse, child neglect, and human child abuse.
- ❖ Lack of enabling school environment: The present situation is that the population of school-going children cannot be adequately accommodated in various schools. This calls for more schools and infrastructural facilities to make learning more effective.
- ❖ Inadequate learning and teaching materials: Children, parents, and teachers are currently providing both learning and teaching materials. However, there are shortages of books in the library and of laboratory and academic results, as satisfactory curriculum coverage cannot be achieved. The gifted and children with disabilities are more at a disadvantage.
- ❖ Lack of funds: Adequate funds are not provided to meet the demands of various academic institutions regarding physical facilities, equipment, and teachers' salaries, not to mention welfarism.
- ❖ Inadequate supply of electricity and water supply: These social amenities are paramount for academic activities in respect of students and teachers. Academic assignments, project work, teamwork, and research will be negatively affected, which consequently bring about poor academic results.
- ❖ Ignorance and literacy among parents and adults: Many parents are illiterate and do not know the value of formal education, and some of them who do know are not ready to invest in education for their children. The issue of adult or non-formal education is even worse because of the poor attendance of learners, which is always recorded. Also, few educators are recruited who are not regularly paid.
- ❖ Violence and Criminal offenses: Many youths are now involved in criminal offenses such as theft, stealing, rape, kidnapping, cultism, destruction of lives and property, and all these result in creating fear, anxiety, and forced displacement of people and force migration. Furthermore, students and teachers cannot attain a peaceful environment for learning and teaching, and sustainable development goals will be difficult to achieve.

Strategies for the Achievement of Sustainable Development Goal Four in Nigeria.

Realizing the significance and importance of SDG4's objectives, it is pertinent, therefore, to explain analytically the strategies stakeholders should adopt to actualize the 2030 SDG4 objectives.

These conclude:

- ❖ Improvement in campaign strategies to enlighten parents on the need to enroll children in formal schools to acquire Western education should be intensified. The use of community-based counseling could do this, the use of local drums, radio, and television for sensitization.
- ❖ Enforcement of policies against abuse of child's rights, child abuse and neglect, and abuse of girl's rights should be boosted. This is to avoid early marriage, child labor, and illiteracy among children and to make them contribute to the country's sustainable development.
- Creating an enabling academic school environment to accommodate all children, including those with or without disabilities, boys, and girls, to meet the objectives of national policy on education and the 2030 sustainable Development goals; inclusive education is one of them.
- ❖ Adequate learning and teaching materials should be provided to actualize the curricular contents in all discipline areas, either theory or practice.
- ❖ More teaching staff should be provided. This is achieved by increasing the number of teacher trainees by motivating teachers salary-wise and by offering other incentives.
- ❖ Adequate security should be provided in various schools to protect the school environment from violence, vandalism, cultism, and kidnapping.
- ❖ Entrepreneurship education should be given to youth to install skills of creativity, innovation, and self-sustenance.
- * Researchers should be supported with enough funds to boost their inventions and innovative ideas.
- ❖ Symbolic linkages and networking among governments, industries, research institutes, and tertiary institutions should be created to create a melting point for new inventions for sustainable development.
- ❖ The government should try to standardize local technologies and practices since traditional medicine and blacksmithing have remained elusive, which has affected the exportation of local products, the Gross Domestic Product, and the national economy.
- ❖ There is a need for diversified and sustainable energy generation to boost industrial production, entrepreneurs, and investors and attract those in the diaspora to come and invest.
- ❖ The government should intensify supervision and inspection of various activities undertaken by those responsible and adopt principles of integrity and accountability to eliminate bribery and corruption among citizens.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper discussed the objectives of Sustainable Development Goal Four (SDG4), which is aimed at propagating the need for all-inclusive and equitable quality education, where lifelong opportunities should be adequately provided. This entails universal coverage from pre-primary through primary and junior secondary education, at least, to

further advance knowledge acquisition and skills training. When this is attainable, it will facilitate the realization of the full potential of individual children so that their potential could be a means of actualizing sustainable development between now and 2030 onwards. This paper highlights the objectives of Sustainable Development Four, science and technology in Africa and beyond, and the challenges of 2030 Sustainable Development Goal Four. To cap it all, strategies to be adopted were also explained analytically. Based on the discourse on Sustainable Development Goal Four, the following recommendations are proffered:

- * The government should ensure strict supervision of projects and adopt the principles of integrity and accountability.
- * The concept of sustainable development should be embedded in the curriculum in order to enlighten learners and teachers on the efficacy of meeting the objectives of SDG4 by 2030 and beyond.
- * More conducive schools and classroom accommodations and facilities should be ensured to meet the needs of the growing population of children.
- * Education policies, including human rights, child rights, and girl's rights, should be enforced to actualize all-inclusive education.
- * Professional counsellors and religious leaders should sensitize the populace on the importance of education and its impact on sustainable development
- * Government and non-governmental organizations should invest in education in terms of needed materials, facilities, and motivation, including scholarships.

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