

# Education for Sustainable Development in Nigeria: Challenges and Way Forward

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**Abstract**— The paper considered education for sustainable development and the challenges associated with it. The authors highlighted several definitions of education by various scholars in general and in specific terms. The concept of development is vigorously discussed, highlighting the relationship between education and development. The authors are of the opinion that development is a multipurpose and an omnibus social concept that has to do with the improvement of human life and the society in general, through the advancement and improvement of institutions and structures created by man in the society for the overall benefit of man. The authors also emphasized that education for sustainable development must be focused on discussing, exploring and developing avenues, opportunities and mechanisms to meet the needs of the present generation with minimal damage to the environment, as to preserve it for the future generations meeting their own needs too. This, the authors maintain, must be done through deliberate and a determined education programme with mass mobilization and social orientation. However, the authors observed that there are many challenges to a successful sustainable education programme in Nigeria. These challenges include: ignorance, lack of the will, lack of proper funding, lack of teaching personnel and poverty, besides others. Based on the identified challenges, the authors made recommendations to contain the challenges for an effective education for sustainable development in Nigeria.

**Keywords**— Education, Sustainable Development, Challenges Introduction.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Education has been a veritable instrument for cultural transmission, human development and societal change and upliftment right from cradle till date. As human societies evolved, faced with various societal challenges, education has always been the beacon to which societies anchored to have its problems solved. From the primitive society of antiquity to the modern industrialized/ globalized world, education has played and continues to play the role of navigating new frontiers for the enhancement of human life. This twenty first century, there are many daunting challenges that demand urgent attention to ensure that the earth is a safe place for all now and for the future generations. One of such challenge is the problem of containing the excessive negative impact on the environment by humans, as not to cause irreplaceable damage on the globe. To accomplish this demands a deliberate, consistent and concerted effort by man to engineer the society to be conscious of the need to do so has become imperative. One of such effort is education for sustainable development. Education for sustainable development is one of the sustainable development goals aimed at educating the society to be safety conscious and innovative at meeting the immediate needs without hindering the future generation from meeting theirs. This paper advocates that education as a veritable tool for national development can also be a tool for galvanizing the society in this twenty first century into achieving the sustainable development ideals. This, the authors believe, if accomplished, can secure the environment today by meeting its needs and also securing it for the future generations meeting their needs also.

## II. THE CONCEPT OF EDUCATION

Education as a concept does not have a once and for all definition, though the meaning remains the same despite the

multiplicity of the definitions. Okorosaye-Orubite (2022) considers education in its broadest sense as cultural transmission, given the fact that every society, be it traditional, transitional, or developed, has the cultural values that are considered vital to be transmitted to the citizens. Onyido (2016) considers education as a hub upon which the wheels of the society revolves. While Osokoya (2008), sees education as a dynamic tool for change. As a tool for change, education brings about change in behavior in response to skills transmitted to the individuals. Farant (1964) in Onyido (2008), maintains that education is the process of learning that would enable individuals live as a useful and acceptable member of the society. For an individual to be a responsible member of the society he needs to learn and acquire certain skills, values, norms and ethos that will enable him have a rewarding life in the society he finds himself. This is in agreement with Udoh (2010) view, when he affirmed that the purpose of education is to awaken and develop in the child those physical, intellectual, and moral skills that are required of him by both the society and other situations he may find himself.

While societies strive to awaken those intellectual and moral skills in the child, it is imperative to observe that the process and organization of education differs from community to community and from society to society. This is also determined by a lot of variables like: the aim and objective of education the environment, the worldview/mythology etc. of various societies. However, despite the approach and the process of organization of education acceptable in any society, the common denominator about education is that certain vital skills, cultural values, norms, beliefs, technology and philosophy purposefully, are transmitted by the older generation, to the younger generation for the purpose of equipping the receiving generation with requisite skills that will enable them live a fulfilled and responsible adult life. Education

for sustainable development therefore, is aimed at equipping the citizens with requisite relevant skills and technology that will enable them survive, be sustained and sustain the environment for future use, having met their own immediate needs from the environment.

### III. THE CONCEPT OF DEVELOPMENT

The concept of Development does not have a once and for all definition and meaning. Like many other concepts in the social sciences, the concept of development has attracted several definition as there are scholars and various schools of thought. While some scholars see development as synonymous with infrastructural development, social change, progress, evolution and modernization, others see it as economic growth, and increase in economic production. Osokoya (2008), opined that most discussion about the concept of development generally centers around the production system, economic growth, the state of the economy as well as progress in business. Very often, indices of economic growth are identified as output of goods and services produced internally by the country, increase in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country and increase in per capital income. Okorosaye- Orubite (2022) also affirm that the concept of development has been one of the most ambiguous concepts in the socio-economic thought given its multivariate nature, the context of usage and the political and ideological leaning of the scholar defining it.

For Ake (2001), development is seen in terms of a situation where people create and recreate themselves and their life circumstances in attempt to realize higher levels of civilization is based on their own choice and values. In this regard, the people are responsible for the development as the agent of development and the means of development. According to Ake, development can be instigated by the people concern or it can be facilitated by the help of others. Okorosaye-Orubite (2004) collaborates Ake's position on development by opining that "development is of the people, by the people, and for the people". As people oriented venture, it is the society that establishes relevant and specific institutions "to create and recreate "itself toward a desired and a desirable society. In this regard, development is not limited to economic progress or prosperity alone, but encapsulates psychological, social, political, and environmental improvement. From the above postulations we can affirm that development is a multipurpose and an omnibus social concept that has to do with the improvement of human life and the society in general through the improvement and the advancement of the structures and institutions created by man in his society for the general welfare of man.

This is made possible through the acquisition of needed and relevant skills, information, knowledge and technology which are deliberately transmitted through the educational system of the society concerned. Therefore, it can be conveniently maintained that education and development are inter-related, the one stimulating the other, while the other is improved and advance by the other. In other words, the authors maintain that education brings development, and for sustainable development to be visible in Nigeria, it must be the education process that is

responsive to the Sustainable development goals which must be education for Sustainable development.

### IV. CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Brundtland commission or world commission on environment and development (was a sub-organization of the United Nations that aimed to unite countries in pursuit of sustainable development.) defined sustainable development as meeting the needs of the present generation without putting at risk the capacity of the generation to come in meeting their own requirement. The concept of sustainable development was first discussed at the United Nations conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm (Sweden 1972). There had been two other global conferences since then.- The United Nations world commission on environment and development 1987 tagged "our Common Future Report", 2 and the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development 1992 – Rio Earth Summit. Sustainable development is aimed at environmental protection, ensures balance economic growth and social inclusion. Sustainable development emphasizes the uncompromising preservation of the environment as to meet the need of the future generation, while meeting the needs of the present. Preserving the environment entails pollution reduction, protecting and preserving the bio-diversities in an ecosystem, be it aquatic or terrestrial, encourage gender equality and inclusive education, for safety increased economic activities to reduce poverty and improved living standard for all while preserving the earth. The Sustainable Development goals were the 17 United Nations interconnected Goals initiated in 2015 to address among others deliberate climate action to preserve the environment for safety usage now and for the future generation thereby increasing living equal opportunity and living standard for all.

### V. EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Education for sustainable development is defined as an interdisciplinary learning methodology covering the integrated social, economic and environmental aspects of formal and informal curriculum. This academic approach can help graduates nurture their Knowledge, talents and experiences to play their role in environmental development and become responsible member of the society.

Education for sustainable development, according to UNESCO, comprises integrating vital sustainable development concerns into instruction and learning. This could involve, for instance, education on sustainable consumption, poverty alleviation, biodiversity, climate change, and disaster risk reduction.

Sustainable consumption and production implies the use of services and related products, which respond to basic need and bring a better quality of life while minimizing the use of natural resources and toxic materials as well as the emission of waste and pollutants over the life cycle of the service or products so as not to jeopardize the need of future generations. Sustainable consumption further implies the use of material products, energy and immaterial services in such a way that their use, minimizes impacts on the environment so that human needs can be met not only in the present but also for the future generation.

It also requires participatory teaching and learning methods that motivates and empower learners to change their behavior and take action for sustainable development.

Education for sustainable development consequently, promotes competences like critical thinking, imagining future scenarios and making decisions in collaborative way. Education for sustainable development requires learners (students) to resolve common problems and tensions amicably.

## VI. CHALLENGES TO EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

There are many challenges to achieving sustainable development in Nigeria. Development itself as a process does not come by chance or by mere wishes, but has to be deliberately stimulated by the people for themselves. Similarly, Education for sustainable development has to do with a type of education that focuses on actualizing the sustainable development goals through educating the citizens for that purpose. Ordinarily, the Nigerian educational system is facing many Challenges that require urgent attention to be fixed. These challenges are hydra-headed and very complex due to the nature of the Nigerian society. Education for sustainable development in Nigeria is faced with more difficult challenges that limits the accomplishment of the sustainable development goals in Nigeria. Some of these challenges are:

### *Ignorance*

Ignorance is a major challenge to education for sustainable development in Nigeria. Given the fact that many persons, including teachers or educators do not fully understand the meaning of education for sustainability, neither do they understand the need for it. The ignorance is sometimes reinforced by illiteracy that limit many persons from reading to understand and observe simple rules and instructions that can sustain the environment for future use. (Le Van, D & Le Van N., 2023 Communist Party of Vietnam with the Promotion of Socialist Democracy. Peoples Ownership in the Innovation Period).

### *Lack of the will to do so*

Lack of the will to implement the sustainable education for development is also a major challenge. This stems from the fact that many education stake- holders and education actors are ignorant of the education for sustainable development concept. Therefore, being ignorant and lacking understanding of the concept, there is no plan or wiliness to implement the programme. Jon-Erik (2023) maintains that this ignorance and lack of the willingness to implement the education for sustainable development in the schools is informed by lack of the integration of education for sustainable development into the school curriculum. The non-incorporation of the education for sustainable development into the school curriculum has seriously limited the teachers ability to effectively teach and instruct students on the relevance of the concept.

### *Funding*

Poor or lack of funding is another major challenge to education for sustainable development in Nigeria. Lack of funding has resulted to lack of materials and resources to

support education for sustainable development in Nigeria. In Nigeria, the budgetary allocation to the education sector is so poor that it barely supports the regular normal school programme, not to talk of supporting education for sustainable development that will be more demanding. (Oriji and Nnadioze 2023)

### *Teaching personnel*

Another challenge to the successful implementation of education for sustainable development is lack of teaching personnel. Not many teachers in the education sector are informed and trained to understand the philosophy behind education for sustainable development as to pass it on to pupils and students in the schools

### *Poverty*

Poverty is another major challenge to education for sustainable development in Nigeria. Unhealthy life style that negates education for sustainable development induced by poverty include activities like: slash and burn practice in agriculture, illegal and continuous felling of trees for energy and furniture without replanting, illegal and unprofessional mining without observing mining rules that sustains the environment; thereby causing high incidence of pollution that degrades the environment. In the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria, besides the gas flaring by oil exploring companies that causes serious damage to the environment, the unconventional oil distillation by hungry unemployed youths of the Niger Delta Region causes more harm to the environment than the Multinational oil companies operating in the region. Hunting and consumption of some endangered species, both animals, fisheries and plants which ordinarily should be protected and conserved by all, are all induced by poverty. The determined will to survive today, pushes citizens to ignore all rules that encourage sustainability.

## VII. THE WAY FORWARD

### *Ignorance*

The challenge of ignorance can be contained by mass and social mobilization and orientation respectively, to create awareness and disseminate information bordering on sustainable education. The government, policy makers, educators, public spirited individuals and Non-Governmental Organizations can vigorously mobilize and provide information and materials and educate citizens on the need for education for sustainable development.

### *Lack of the will*

Lack of the will to teach education for sustainable development can be controlled by integrating the sustainable education programme into the regular school curriculum at all levels of the education system. Jon-Erik (2023) opines that specific curriculum and resources on education for sustainable development can be designed and incorporated into the existing subjects and courses. Education state actors should also arrange and organize Colloquium and seminars on the need and importance of education for sustainable development in the

schools and other public places to create awareness and interest on the sustainable education development.

#### *Lack of Fund*

Lack of funding can be contained by way of sourcing for extra fund for education from other non-governmental sources, like partnering and collaborating with other non-government agencies, institutions and philanthropists. The government can form partnership and collaboration with other institutions, agencies, business associations and Inter-governmental organizations to raise and provide fund and resources to support and actualize education for sustainability in Nigeria

#### *Lack of teaching Personnel*

To contain the challenge of lack of teachers, there should be deliberate effort by the government and other stake-holders in the education sector to train and educate the teaching personnel in the schools on the values, philosophy and principles of education for sustainable development. Teachers should be equipped with the teaching techniques and materials that will enhance their teaching and create impact on the students to understand and imbibe the concept and philosophy of sustainable education for development.

#### *Poverty*

It takes the living to conserve and sustain the environment for the future generation. Since most, if not all disobedience to safety and conservation rules in Nigeria are induced by poverty and hunger, the Nigerian government should ensure equity redistribution of resources to accommodate the less privileged vulnerable groups in the society. There should be Investments on industries by the government to create avenues for legitimate employment and engagements of idle hungry Nigerians.

### VIII. CONCLUSION

Having discussed education for sustainable development and the challenges, recommendation are also proffered on how to contain the challenges to sustainable education development in Nigeria. However, these recommendations are not exhaustive. There are many other avenues and procedures through which sustainable education for development can be achieved in Nigeria. The development and advancement in technology has created greater interconnectedness and provided avenues for exchange, cooperation and solidarity for easy

dissemination of information on how education for sustainable development in Nigeria can be sustained. In Nigeria today there are a lot of non state actors, cultural and religious intolerant groups and the infiltration of fifth columnist to the country, identity based political mobilization etc. All these groups seeking for attention from the government legitimately and/or clandestine have serious challenge at the Nigerian state's effort at galvanizing all and sundry to a desired development effort for sustainability. Education for sustainable development must therefore, find ways of responding to such challenges with a view to accommodating multiple world views and alternate knowledge systems. Education for Sustainable Development should also seek to apply/explore and employ new frontiers in science and technology such as the advances in neurosciences and the development of digital technology. (for example Zoom teaching, conferences and telecasting) To sustain the globe rethinking the purpose of education and the organization of learning has become an urgent task and very imperative (Rethinking Education: towards a Global Common goals ([http://Unesco.Unesco.org/images/002325/232555\\_e.pdf](http://Unesco.Unesco.org/images/002325/232555_e.pdf) UNESCO2015 PP9-10 ISBN978-92-3-100088-1)

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