

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL FOUR (SDG4): CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD

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Abstract: -

Education has been variously recognized not only as a fundamental human rights but also as a veritable instrument for sustainable development and equally as a vehicle for confronting the challenges facing the society. Equally, sustainable development Goal four (SDG4) has been identified as constituting a force to social and economic development of a nation. Sustainable Development Goal Four is a major driver in the achievement of all the SDGs in Nigeria. As a matter of fact, Nigeria as a member of the united Nations, is committed to the achievement of not only the human rights enshrined in the Universal declarations of Human right of 1948 but also the Global Goals, especially Sustainable Development Goal Four, tagged inclusive education, this paper analyzes the concept of sustainable development, examines the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) sustainable Development Goals four and its conceptual dimensions. It also highlighted the challenges facing the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal Four in Nigeria and suggested some of the way forward, these include amongst others, provision of conducive environment for learning, reorganization of the curriculum of learning, effective communication, proper teaching methods e.t.c. The paper concluded that Nigeria is still in a long way to achieving this sustainable Development Goal Four.

Keywords: - Sustainable, Development, Goals, Four, Education

INTRODUCTION

One of the far reaching decisions made by the United Nations (UN) in 2015 was the adoption of the resolution of the agenda for sustainable Development by its General Assembly comprising of 150 Heads of State, Government and Representatives. The resolution is expected to tackle the menace of poverty, scourge of insecurity and ensures prosperity of the citizens by the year 2030. This was with the view of stimulating collective action towards addressing major problem of hunger, insecurity, poverty amongst other issue confronting the people across the globe.

Sustainable development could be regarded as the development that meets the needs of the people without compromising the effort of the future generations from meeting their own development needs. There are quite a lot of sustainable development goals in practice in Nigeria but this study is basically centered on sustainable development goal four (4) which is focused on quality equitable and all-inclusive education. Sustainable Development Goal Four is centered on all-inclusive and equitable quality education and promotion of lifelong learning opportunities to all. The emphasis under this goal has worldwide coverage of quality education, and then to more advanced skills training (Sacks 2015). The purpose of this goal is to establish a nation that will facilitate a realization of the full potential of each child, so that the child could contribute to building a just, tolerant and egalitarian society. The vision of an inclusive quality education is anchored on the understanding of education for all, especially for those groups who are seen to be vulnerable.

The declaration and framework for action, approved in may 2015 at the World Education Forum incheon, republic of Korea, started that education agenda captured in Goal 4 is all encompassing, holistic, ambitious, aspirational and universal, and inspired by a version of education that transforms the lives of persons, communities and societies. The possibility of education in terms of promoting and assuring environmental, economic and social sustainability has been widely acknowledged. In fact, there is the awareness that education can play a significant role in confronting the challenges of the 21st century (Madsen, 2013).

Therefore, education is perceived as the first step of sustainable development and a very important move in improving a generation of people to appropriate the importance of sustainability (Zenelaj 2013). In short, full access to quality education at all levels is an indispensable condition for achieving sustainable development, eradication of poverty, gender equality, and women empowerment, as well as human growth for the attainment of the internationally agreed development goals, including Goals four (4), and for the full involvement of both young women and men (UN, 2012). This implies that, a national sustainability plan can be put in place to ensure that all boys and girls complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcome. Hence the repositioning of all inclusive education can expedite changes in values, world view and behavior at all levels (UNESCO, 2016).

Again for sustainability in education, lifelong learning is paramount. It facilitates reflective or ethical learning, knowledge and skills acquisition and greater agency to address complete sustainability issues (UNESCO, 2016). Lifelong learning conceptualizes learning as the life wide, voluntary and self-motivated quest to knowledge for personal as well as professional reasons. It recognizes that learning is not confined to childhood or the classroom, but taken place throughout life and in a diversity of circumstance. (Ates & Alsai, 2012). The ultimate years of lifelong education is to enable learners acquire more of the skill, required by the knowledge economy as well as more traditional academic skills (Sonia 2012). In fact, lifelong learning indicates an inclusive education and learning model that embraces all children, youths and adults-both as learners and educators (Torres, 2003).

From the foregoing this paper will analysis the concepts of sustainable development, examine the objectives of sustainable Development Goal Four Goals, articulate the challenges of sustainable Development Goals Four and make suggestion for achieving Sustainable Development Goal Four in Nigeria

Sustainable and Development: A Clarification of concept.

Sustainable Development Goals is a United Nations effort designed to bring governments, organizations, foundations and Non Governmental Organizations (NGO) together to solve basic global problems. There is no single acceptable definition of the concept of sustainable development. Different organization and scholars perceived the concept according to those areas they expected the scope to cover, as well as their professional background.

According to the Rio de Janeiro declaration of 1992, sustainable development is a continuous development of the society, in order to satisfy people's presents and future needs, through judicious management and utilization of natural resources. The UN General Assembly [2012] define sustainable development as a type of development that meets the needs of the present without comprising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs. Also the overall goal of sustainable development is for a long time Stability of the economy and environment (Emus 2015). Also, Strange and Bayley (2008) see sustainable development as a development that benefits different categories of people. In fact, whenever developmental polities are being planned, the planners should take into cognizance its effects on people and the society.

According to Harris (2000), the concept of sustainable development could be viewed from economic, environmental and societal angles. From the economic dimension, sustainable economic system should be able to produce goods and services continuously. The system must improve the citizen's standard of living, create jobs and eradicate poverty, as well as remove all forms of imbalance in the society. From the environmental perspective, a sustainable environment must sustain a stable resource base avoid exploitation, pollution and other environmental hazards that are detrimental to the lives of the citizens. In the social sustainable system, there must be fairness in the distribution of the state resources and people should freely participate in political issues and affairs.

Sustainable development should be seen as execution of polices and programmes that aid of immense benefits which will meet the present needs of the populace, without compromising their future needs such needs should be centered

on ensuring dignified standard of living, equal opportunities, respect of human rights and maintaining the principle of fairness that will endure for the future generations.

Objectives of Sustaining Development Goal Four (SDG4)

According to the international education framework and the 2030 Agenda, Sustainable Development Goal Four (SDG4) is the education goal objectively based on ensuring all inclusive and equitable quality education that promotes lifelong opportunities for all (Global campaign for education .2019): Sustainable Development Goal Four is saddled with ten targets/objectives. These include:

1. By 2030, to ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes. The provision of 12 years of free, publicly funded, inclusive, equitable quality primary and secondary education of which at least nine years are compulsory, leading to relevant learning outcomes should be ensured for all, without discrimination.
2. By 2030, to 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. The provision of at least one year of free and compulsory pre-primary education is encouraged, to be delivered by well trained educators, as well as that of early childhood development and care.
3. By 2030, to ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university. It is necessary to reduce restriction to skill acquisition, technical and vocational education and training, beginning from the secondary level, to tertiary level, including university, and to provide lifelong learning opportunities for youths and adults.
4. By 2030, to greatly increase the number of youths and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills for employment decent jobs and entrepreneurship. Learning opportunities should be increased and diversified, using a wide range of education and training modalities, to enable all youths and adults, especially girls and women, acquire relevant knowledge, skills and competencies for decent work and life. Aside from working towards specific skills, attention must be paid on developing high level cognitive and non cognitive/transferable skills such as problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, teamwork, communication skills and conflict resolution, which can be used across a range of occupational fields.
5. By 2030, to ensure the elimination of gender differences in education and equal access to education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations. In short, everyone, irrespective of sex, age, race, color, language ethnicity, political, persons with disabilities, migrant, indigenous people, children and youth, especially those in vulnerable situations or other status, should have access to inclusive equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities.
6. By 2030, to ensure that all youths and a substantial proportion of adults both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy. In fact, the intention of this target is to ensure that by 2030, all young people and adults all over the globe would have achieved relevant and recognized proficiency levels in functional literacy and numeracy skills that are comparable to the level achieved at successful completion of basic education.
7. By 2030, to ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development. It is important to give a centre place to strengthening education's contribution to the fulfillment of human rights, peace and responsible citizenship from local to global levels, gender equality, sustainable development and health. The knowledge, skills, values and attitude required by citizens to live productive lives, make informed decision and assume active roles locally and globally in facing and resolving global challenges can be acquired through Sustainable Development Goal Four.
8. By 2030, to ensure the building and upgrading of education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive friendly and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environment. This objective centres on the need for adequate physical infrastructure and safe inclusive environment that nurtures learning for all, irrespective of background or disability status.
9. By 2030, to ensure the substantial global expansion of the number of scholarships available to developing states and African countries, for enrollment in higher education, excluding vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and specific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries. Scholarship programmes is a way of providing opportunities for young people and adults who would otherwise not be able to afford to continue their education. In line with the Sustainable Development Goal four (SDG4), education by 2030 is focused on equality, inclusiveness and quality and so, scholarships should be transparently targeted at youths and adults from disadvantaged backgrounds.
10. By 2030, to ensure increase in the supply of qualified teachers, through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developing countries and small island developing states. Teachers are the major instrument to achieving all the Sustainable Development Goal four (SDG4) target. As teachers are the necessary conditions for the attainment of quality education, teachers and educators should be empowered, adequately recruited and remunerated, motivated and supported within well resourced, efficient and effectively governed system.

From the above identified ten objectives of Sustainable Development Goal four (SDG4), one will affirm that there will be sustainable development in education in Nigeria. However, this will be in a mirage considering the challenges facing the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal in Nigeria.

Challenges of Sustainable Development Goal Four (SDG4)

The objectives of sustainable development goal four could be a mirage as a result of the following:

- Inability to set appropriate objectives. Nation differs in setting objectives for the entire education system. At times, the strongest single influence in the determination of objectives arises from a traditional conception of what an educated person should be. The curriculum content and processes, which have promoted this view of the educated man, over many decades still have a measurable influences upon the concept of what education will make one to achieve. The inability to create a balance between the demands of education in learning to operative growth and progression of the individual, the inculcation of values, morality and ethics among them, and production of trained and skilled human resources needed by the economy, constitutes the incompetence of the educational system, Therefore, education goals and objective should be such that will enable the nation to achieve the objectives of Sustainable Development Goal four (SDG4).
- Inability to provide Universal Basic Education: children are future generation and if they receive good and quality education, they would efficiently and effectively contribute their quote towards the progress of the country. However, Nigeria, Government is paying lip service to the development of Universal Basic Education. Nothing much is happening in this sector.
- Inability to recruit children into the system: The demand for education is normally higher than the supply of education. In fact, lack of resources, infrastructure, public amenities, effective teaching and learning processes, instructional strategies and other facilities are the factors that could lead to inability to recruit pupils into the education system. Recruitment into the basic sector of an education system depends upon ensuring that the pupils and their families recognize the objectives and the framework of education as compatible with their own goals.
- Inability to achieve objectives: Every educational institution has certain goal and objectives. The goals of enhancement of the educational system, leading to the progressive growth and development of the students, making use of modern and innovative strategies and methods, and providing necessary facilities and equipment are some of the common goals. In order to achieve these goals, it is necessary for the major actors in the system to be skilled, competent, knowledgeable and work in collaboration with others. There is also the need to create a conducive atmosphere within the school environment. Absence of any of these factors would result to inability in the achievement of objectives.
- Inability to retain student within the system: the social and economic condition of educational system are responsible for retaining students Good quality education, extra-curricular activities, qualified, kind and approachable teachers, good facilities and conducive learning environment are some of the factors that contribute to the retaining of students in the system. Absence of any of these factors could bring about dropout of students from the school. However, in Nigeria, the number of available school places of successive levels of education decreases. Every year.
- Underfunding of Education: Education is the key that can unlock a country's potential for sustainable development. In fact, there is no way a nation can develop without investing in its educational system. However, funding has been one of the major bottlenecks to Educational Development in Nigeria. Underfunding is an albatross to the provision of quality education in Nigeria. For instance, the national budget in 2017 allocated ₦455.4 billion to education, out of a total expenditure of ₦7.4 trillion; that is 6.1 percent. The 2018 budget proposal allocated ₦605.79 billion to education, out of a total expenditure of ₦6 trillion; that is 7.04 percent. The fund allocated to education fell short of the minimum 25 percent recommend by UNESCO (2016). Since this paltry sum from the budget cannot sustain education sector in Nigeria, one is put to wonder on how the nation could pursue Sustainable Development Goals.
- Out-dated Educational Curriculum: A curriculum of education is a systematic planned of learning activities and efficiencies in order to achieve behavioral changes. It has been observed that the educational curriculum of Nigeria could not produce the expected outcomes for the realization of the Sustainable Development Goal four (SDGs). Schools curricular in Nigeria are out-dated which cannot be compared to curricular of education in other parts of the globe. For Nigeria to be able to achieve Sustainable Development Goal four (SDGs), its educational curriculum needs to be updated.
- Low morale and lack of motivation for teachers: this is manifesting in the undue treatment of teachers who are the major actors in the education sector. According to Morton (2017), teacher's demoralization and demotivation occur when teachers are being subjected to negative emotional experiences. Excess workload, low remuneration, unpaid salaries and allowances, lack of prospects for promotion, poor work environment, are among sources of job dissatisfaction and demotivation of teachers in Nigeria. Thus, the school systems are being gradually destroyed, as teachers are unfulfilled, frustrated and depressed for lack of motivation and encouragement. Consequently, their output in terms of teaching-learning activities is grossly low. This has the capacity of undermining the active participation of Nigeria in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Prospects of Sustainable Development Goal four (SDG4)

The Sustainable Development Goals are contained in a universal agreement to end poverty, protect all that makes the planet inhabitable and ensure that everyone enjoys peace and prosperity, now and in the future (Morton, 2017). It embodies seventeen (17) goals and a total of 169 targets linked to five target area namely, people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership. The goals are stated thus:

1. End poverty in all forms
2. End hunger by promoting sustainable agriculture
3. Healthy lives and wellbeing for all

4. Quality and equitable education
5. Gender equality and empowerment
6. Clean water and sanitation
7. Sustainable energy for all
8. Sustainable economic growth
9. Sustainable industrial growth
10. Reduce inequality within and between nations
11. Sustainable shelters and cities
12. Sustainable production and consumption
13. Combat climatic change and its impact
14. Sustainable use of marine resources
15. Protection of terrestrial ecosystem
16. Peaceful and inclusive communication
17. Global partnership

The Sustainable Development Goals centres on the three dimensions of Sustainable Development. These include, economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection. According to Mohanty and Dash (2018), there is a closer relationship amongst Sustainable Development Goal Four (SDG4) an equitable quality education and the effective implementation of Sustainable Development Goal sixteen (16), which centres on peace, justice and study institutions. This gives credence to the enviable position of Sustainable Development Goal Four (SDG4) which embraces all inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Again, according to global campaign for Education (2019), Sustainable Development Goal Four represents ten targets, seven outcomes and three means of implementation. The outcome targets include, universal primary and secondary education; early childhood development and universal pre-primary education, equal access to technical/vocational and higher education, relevant skills for decent work; gender equality and inclusion, universal youth literacy; and education for sustainable development and global citizenship. The three means of implementation embraces effective learning environment, scholarship and teachers and educators. In the aspect of the ten targets of Sustainable Development Goal four (SDG4), the Muscat agreement of May, 2014 upholds that the post education 2015 education agenda should be right based and reflect a perspective based on equity and inclusion with particular reference to gender equality and removing all forms of discrimination in and through education (UNESCO, 2014).

The Way Forward

Sustainable Development Goal Four can be achieved and sustained if stakeholders consider the following measures:

- **Conducive atmosphere:** The environment for learning within the school and home should be sociable and agreeable. Equal educational opportunities should be provided to both boys and girls, in rural and urban areas. In fact, to minimize educational inequality in order to realize Sustainable Development Goal four (SDG4) objectives, it is pertinent that conducive environment should be created within the homes and schools. Both boys and girls should be given equal opportunity.
- **Re-organization of curriculum:** the curriculum has to be in line with the needs and requirements of the students. The reorganization of the curriculum facilitate all-inclusive, quality and equitable education that will ensure students acquisition of relevant academic concepts. This will not only lead to acquisition of educational sustainability but teachers are able to earn appreciation from the students and acquire job satisfaction.
- **Proper Teaching Methods:** it is necessary for the teachers to make use of proper method of teaching so that students are able to acquire understanding of the academic concepts and subject areas. They should be encouraged and motivated, to generate keen interest and enthusiasm towards learning. Also the teachers should be qualified and experienced. As qualified and experienced teachers would possess adequate knowledge concerning the utilization of proper teaching method required for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal four (SDG4).
- **Good Health:** To make education effective, it is vital to maintain good health. When an individual is healthy, he would be able to develop rational thinking and make us of his education to not only sustain the living conditions of his families but also to bring about the development of community. The poverty strikes are unable to take care of the nutritional requirements of their children. When students are provided with nutrition meals, they become motivated towards learning.
- **Professional competence:** Teachers and staff members should be professional in their conduct. Improvements in the professional competence could be through in service training. Within the course of the job, teachers have to undergo training programmes. In fact, teachers have to be trained in methods and strategies of relating with students. They are expected to be skilled and knowledgeable in the teaching of students (Hanachor and word, 2021).
- **Provision of scholarships and Financial Assistance:** The deprived and economically weak people, especially those in the rural areas are unable to meet up with the educational needs and financial requirements of their children. Therefore, provision of scholarships and other financial aid would enable these children to achieve their educational needs. Financial assistance in the form of grants, scholarship would facilitate the realization of the Sustainable Development Goal four (SDG4) in Nigeria.
- **Elimination of criminal and violent acts:** There have been cases of sexual harassment against girls and other vices-in the school system. When they experience such treatment, they not only dropout of school but also feel vulnerable in going

out of their homes. Hence, in order to have access to sustainable development goal four, it is necessary to eliminate various kind of criminal and violence acts.

- **Effective communication:** This centers on mutual understanding and collaborations among the stakeholders in education. The teachers should be kind and approachable. The students should feel free to approach their teachers on issues concerning their welfare. Effective communication not only leads to improvement of teaching and learning but also proper performance of duties and functioning of the school.
- **Activities and creative actions:** It is vital for students to be engaged in various kinds of activities and creativity. For instance, students can engage in extra-curricular activities like sports, music, dancing, singing, handicrafts etc. these does not only motivate them towards learning, but also enriches their mind-sets

Conclusion

The Sustainable Development Goals have seventeen (17) developmental goals to achieve out of these developmental goals, Sustainable Development Goals Four is tagged quality education. It is believed that a well-educated people will be able to protect and free themselves from hazards, poverty, labor, diseases and exploitation. The goal is to build a nation that will facilitate a realization of the full potentials of each child in order to contribute to the building of a just and accommodating society. Therefore, the education managers must give attention to all forms of educations including formal education, since it is not only recognized as a fundamental right but also as a catalyst for sustainable development and a instrument for confronting the challenges facing the society.

Given the fact that education has not been taken seriously by the successive government in Nigeria, some of the Sustainable Development Goals may not be achieved. In fact, education is a requirement for all-round transformation of the people and societies, and its neglect portend a danger to sustainable development of a rapid population growing Nigeria. Though, the study identified some measures for the way forward towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal four (SDG4), but based on evaluation of perspective the study concluded that Nigeria is still in a long way to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal four (SDG4).

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