

THE IMPACT OF EDUCATION ON SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This research examines the impact of education on sustainable development in Nigeria with special focus on sustainable economic development. Secondary method of data collection was used. The study showed that there are two other dimensions to sustainable development apart from economic sustainability. These include social and environmental sustainability. It was revealed that education impacted on sustainable economic development by fostering knowledge which is useful for productive skills from which various degrees of competencies are derived in application that foster development. Education also improves literacy; produces skilled manpower at all levels and contributes to economic growth. Sustainable economic development is besetted by some challenges which includes poverty, income inequality, loss of biodiversity, changing demographic profiles, increased population growth and others. Strategies to confront these problems and to ensure sustainable economic development were suggested to include good governance, manpower training and development ensuring harmony between man and environment, addressing the problems of poverty and income inequality. Based on these, it was recommended that all the strategies suggested must be holistically adopted to ensure overall sustainable economic, social and environmental sustainability.

Introduction

Development exhibits itself in various dimensions. But no matter the nature of these developments, what is paramount is not only development that is enduring and currently beneficial to mankind, but development that is futuristic and sustainable, hence, the crave for sustainable development in Nigeria. Sustainable development has become a universal theme which also has different dimensions prominent among which are economic, social and environment dimensions, which are found to be interdependent.

Several international debates and summits have taken place on sustainability, but a gigantic step towards sustainable development was the publication of an international report known as the Brundtland report of 1987 which stated that

the major objective of development should be to ensure the satisfaction of human needs and aspirations of a material kind. The report also emphasized that over-exploitation and exploration of resources may hampered the societies' ability at meeting future needs.

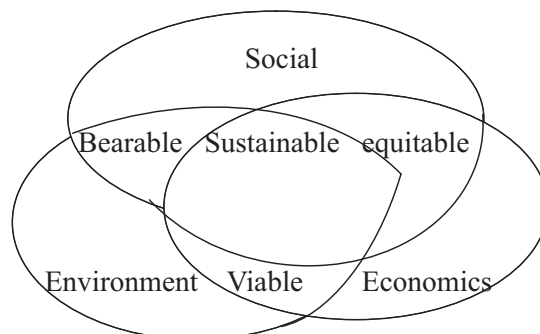
All the aforementioned are pointers to the fact that sustainable development has become a worldwide phenomenon which cannot be over-emphasized. While sustainable development have been narrowed down majorly to economic, social and environmental dimensions, it needs to be emphasized that the term is a broad term that is all-encompassing. Thus, it may be broadened to encapsulate all human endeavours including sustainable political, human-cultural, educational development and many others.

Sustainable development in all ramifications is impossible without a capable and well-equipped human capital which can only be supplied through education. As observed by Erhun (2015), it takes a diversely skilled and qualified workforce that is well-equipped to meet the demands of the economy if sustainable economic development is to be attained. And as also noted by Agiobenebo and Ajie (2004), the principal institutional mechanism for developing human knowledge and skills is formal educational system. Thus, the impact of education on sustainable development cannot be over-emphasized. However, attempt would be made here to succinctly examine the impact of education on sustainable economic development. Sustainable economic development becomes germane because it encompasses other developmental issues which have been attracting the attention of scholars and policy makers. These developmental issues include poverty, hunger, malnutrition, unemployment, and many others which have been the major precursors to environmental degradation, social evils and terrorisms which are prevalent in many countries of the world. An attempt to mitigate these macroeconomic disequilibrium worldwide has led to international summits given birth to the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) metamorphosing to Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) all emphasizing the inevitability of sustainable economic development.

Conceptual Framework Sustainable Development

Blewitt (2008) viewed sustainable development as protecting and conserving the planets natural environment and promoting social equity and a degree of economic equality within and between nations. Vincenta (2014) defined it as attaining a balance between environmental protection and human economic development and between the present and future needs. Nsiah (2002) opined that sustainable development involves development which not only generates economic growth but also distributes benefits equitably, regenerating the environment rather than marginalizing them. From all these definitions, sustainable development could be seen as the process of judicious use and conservation of natural resources for the overall improvement in the quality of life for the present and future generation on long term basis (Erhun, 2015). The World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) defines sustainable development as “development that meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

Adams (2006) in Akeusola (2016) defines sustainability with reference to the pillars of social environmental and economic sustainability illustrated in the diagram below:



Source: Akeusola (2016)

Figure 1: The three pillars of sustainability.

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According to him, sustainability tends to suggest the cooperative interaction between the society, economy and the environment on sustainable development. This shows that the relationship between the three pillars is intertwined.

The term sustainable development, according to Basiago (1999), first appeared in the world conservation strategy drafted by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in 1980. It could, according to them, be advanced through conservation which is defined as the management of human use of the biosphere that may yield the greatest sustainable benefits to present generations while maintaining its potentials to meet the needs and aspiration of future generations (Ehlen & Ehlen, 1994).

According to Basiago (1999), the results of international development policies caused many to question the basic assumptions about economic, society, and the environment. The World Bank and International Monetary Fund has financed construction projects which had degenerated to social and environmental consequences through environmental destructions. Thus, it was agreed that development had aggravated social disparities and accelerated loss of biodiversity. The UN's World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987 renewed the call for sustainable development to alleviate poverty, safeguard the environment and feed the world. Thus, the definition of sustainable development was coined and accepted as being authoritative.

In 1992, the Earth Summit took place where five Pacts were signed framing sustainable development as the overarching policy of the 21st century. The 27 principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development defines the rights and

responsibilities of nations as they pursued human development and well-being. Thus, many references to sustainable development suggest a form of development that integrates economic growth and environmental protection.

Economic Development

Economic development could be defined as a sustainable improvement in living standards that encompasses material consumption, education, health and environmental protection (Ojo, 2004). In broader sense, it is understood to include other important and related attributes, like more equal opportunities, political freedom and civil liberties. The overall goal of development is to increase the economic, political and civil rights of all people across gender, ethnic groups, religions, races, regions and countries. Several countries that have achieved rapid development since the end of world war II have two features in common: First, they invested in the education of men and women and in physical capital and secondly, they achieved high productivity from these investments by providing markets.

Dimensions of Sustainable Development

There are three basic dimensions of sustainable development according to Basiago (1999) and Erhun (2015). They include Economic, Social and Environmental sustainability.

Economic Sustainability: Economic sustainability, according to Kahn (1995), has guided conventional development science in the past. Economic sustainability is the maintenance and sustenance of a high real growth rate of the economy to achieve development or economic objectives. Its hall-marks include market allocation of resources, sustained levels of growth and consumption, an assumption that natural

resources are unlimited and a belief that economic growth will trickle down to the poor. It forms an important component of sustainable development.

Also, according to Basiago (1999), economic sustainability implies a system of production that satisfies present consumption levels without compromising future needs. The sustainability, that economic sustainability seeks is the sustainability of the economic system itself. Economists, before this time, have placed undue emphasis on the capacity of the efficient resource allocation while assuming that the supply of natural resources is unlimited. It was also believed that economic growth would bring the technological capacity to replenish natural resources. However, it has been discovered that natural resources are not infinite, more so, increased size of the economic system and development has affected the natural resources base. In recent times, certain challenges have been confronting Nigeria economy and this necessitates the use of holistic approach that integrates economic, social and environmental dimensions.

Erhun (2015) highlighted some of the required elements to achieve high rates of sustainable economic development. They include:

- i. sound environmental management;
- ii. capable and well-equipped human capital;
- iii. a government that is accountable;
- iv. engaging the private sector;
- v. building economic foundations;
- vi. building a strong financial base;
- vii. effective policies and institutions;
- viii. sustainable economy initiatives;
- ix. increased agricultural productivity.

Social Sustainability: Social sustainability encompasses the notions of equity, empowerment, accessibility, participation,

sharing, cultural identity and institutional stability. It aims at preserving the environment through economic growth and poverty alleviations. Akeusola (2016) highlighted some indices of social sustainability in Nigeria to include mortality rate (maternal and infant), unemployment, literacy rate, social and economic inequalities.

Environmental Sustainability: This, according to Kahn (1995) involves ecosystem integrity, carrying capacity and biodiversity. It requires that natural capital be maintained as a provider of economic inputs (called sources) and as an absorber of economic output (called wastes) (Serageldin, 1993). At the source site according to Goodland (1995), harvest rates of resources must be kept within regeneration rates, while at the sink site, waste emissions from industrial production must be controlled so as not to exceed the capacity of the environment to assimilate them without impairment.

According to Goodland (1995), overlapping exists among economic, social and environmental sustainability. Especially there is strong linkage between economic and environmental sustainability. He opined that “unprecedented attention has been given to environmental sustainability in recent years given the fact that development theory has focused on matters of economic underdevelopment and poverty alleviation in developing countries and was late in responding to unprecedented threats to global environment”.

It is posited that all these sustainabilities must be integrated and interlinked. The essence of this is for negative synergies to be arrested and for positive synergies to be fostered and real development encouraged.

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The paradigm of sustainable development is illustrated here under:

Element	Criteria
Economic sustainability	Growth, development, productivity, trice down
Social sustainability	Equity, empowerment, ac cessibility, participation sharing, cultural identity and institutional stability
Environment sustainability	Eco-System Integrity, carrying capacity biodiversity

Source: Kahn (1995)

Education and Sustainable Economic Development

The roles of education in sustainable development cannot be over-emphasized. As noted in the definition of education given by Yesufu (2000), education is a process, a vehicle and a means. As a process, according to him, it involves the acquiring of knowledge of some basic facts of life; as a means, it is the means by which one generation transmit it to its succeeding generations those of its own cherished cultural values which are essential for the society's positive development. The important contribution of education to knowledge was echoed by Agiobenebo and Ajie (2003) who opined that the basic product of an education system is knowledge derived from the quantity and quality of information it supplied in varied configurations. The link among education, economy, society and development is knowledge – both basic and applied – through the instrumentality of humans. According to them, human receive information, process it for creative digestion, understanding and assimilation into knowledge and further into wisdom useful for productive skills from which various degrees of competencies are derived in application that foster developments.

Education enables people to read, write and communicate effectively thereby reducing the level of illiteracy in the country. It is in a bid to achieve high literacy rate that policies were formulated to encourage formal and non-formal education. This accounted for increased enrolment in primary schools and many other levels of education.

Human resources constitute the ultimate basis for the wealth of nations. Capital and natural resources are passive factors of production, human beings are active agents who accumulate capital, exploit natural resources, build social, economic and political organizations and carry forward national development (Agiobenebo & Ajie, 2003). However, it needs to be emphasized that without education, human resources development and training would be hampered, thereby retarding development. Also, along the same line, Ebong (1996) stated that for any country to attain sustainable national development, there is need for skilled manpower and those skills required are basic ingredients for national development and can only be acquired through education

Education and economic growth have been proved to be substantially related. Agiobenebo and Ajie (2003) opined that a developed society and economy are less than fully effective if anyone is educated to less

than the limit of his/her potential. According to him, the undereducated is fast becoming unproductive and an economic liability. Also discussing further, he observed that in the modern industrial societies, education attains an unprecedented economic importance as a source of knowledge, skills, competencies, scientific research, inventions and technological innovations.

Challenges to Sustainable Economic Development in Nigeria

The challenges to sustainable development cut across the three dimensions of economic, social and environmental sustainability's. However a major challenge is poverty which cuts across all the countries of the world including Nigeria. According to World Economic and Social Survey (2013), more than 1 billion people are still living in extreme poverty. The world reached the poverty target five years ahead of the 2015 deadline. In developing regions, the proportion of people living on less than \$1.25 a day fell from 47 percent in 1990 to 22 percent in 2010. About 700 million fewer people lived in conditions of extreme poverty in 2010 compared with 1990.

Income inequality within and among countries is another challenge and this has been rising and has reached high level generating tension and social conflicts. The problems of poverty and income inequality have made worse the conditions of hunger and malnourishment in many developing countries.

Loss of biodiversity is another major challenge to sustainable development. Countries of the world are "endowed with phytogeographical and plenty of plant and animal species. The biodiversity is found in forests, grasslands, mountains, wetlands, deserts and marine ecosystems. Economic growth leading to expansion of agriculture, reckless exploitation of forest and mineral

wealth and development of projects in biodiversity areas has led to the destruction of habitats. Consequently, there have been extinction of plant, animal and microbiological species and loss of genetic resources". (Jhingan, 2008).

The World Economic and Social Survey (2013) recognized the fact that the global challenges to sustainable development have been driven by a broad set of megatrends such as changing demographic profiles, changing economic and social dynamics, advancement in technology and trends towards environmental deterioration. All these manifest themselves in form of increased population growth, market failure, urbanization and industrialization which results into pollution, environmental degradation and others.

Good governance is another impediment to sustainable development. This manifests itself in form of corruption, policy overlapping and inconsistencies, nepotism and favoritism. This affects the ability to formulate policies that ensure sustainable development.

Strategies for Ensuring Sustainable Economic Development

To curtail the challenges confronting sustainable development, pro-active actions are needed to stem it in the bud. For instance, economic growth and development gives birth to rapid urbanization of cities. This calls for necessary and renewed actions in which urban development is designed and managed. Urban renewal may be to the rescue which calls for concerted efforts from both private and public sectors for investment in urban infrastructure and services.

Also, according to World Economic and Social Survey (2013), recurrence of financial crises need to be prevented and the financial system has to be redirected

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towards promoting access to long-term financing for investments required to achieve sustainable development.

Erhun (2015) noted that harmony between man and nature is the prerequisite for sustainable development, depicting that the development of humanity should not be on the cost of environmental health. The path of development adopted should be such that is always within such limit that nature allows, beyond which a threat to survive is inevitable. It was also adduced that in order to avoid environmental deterioration in the quest for economic development, correct policies need not only be established but must also be implemented with the necessary political will in order to ensure a better environments.

All countries depend on natural resources and the continued dependence on natural resources highlight the fact that greater cooperation and coordination are necessary among the nations regionally and globally to address environmental problems because environmental issues are inextricably linked to economic issues such as poverty (Awan, 2013).

Addressing poverty and income inequality would go a long way in ensuring sustainable development. Poverty encouraged deforestation and over-exploitation of water resources.

The roles of education in ensuring sustainable development cannot be over-emphasized. It has been the major pillar on which the country's development rests. However it is being plagued with varieties of problems ranging from under-funding to increasing student population, poor infrastructural facilities, irregular school calendar and many others. The strategy would be the holistic solutions to all education problems to guaranteeing and ensuring sustainable development.

Capable and well- equipped human capital is also a major prerequisite for

sustainable development. This becomes germane since no country can develop above the level of her human capital. It takes diversified skilled and qualified work force that is well- equipped to meet the demands of the economy if sustainable economic development is to be achieved. Also, manpower development and training across levels should be given priority to encourage sustainable economic development.

Ensuring good governance go a long way in promoting sustainable development economic development. For sustainable economic development to be achieved, there is need for transparent and corruption free government. Government must also be able to provide a safe, stable and attractive business and industrial environments that will strengthen its ability to fulfill its responsibility to the citizens, Effective Policies and Institutions are germane factors in ensuring sustainable development.

Policy conflicts, inconsistencies an overlapping endangered sustainable economic development. This is rampant in Nigeria and most other developing nations. Therefore, effective policy formulation is necessary devoid of overlapping and other inconsistencies.

Conclusion

This paper examines sustainable development in Nigeria with special emphasis on sustainable economic development. The objective of sustainable economic development boils down to lifting the standard of people both now and in the future. For sustainable economic development to be achieved, good governance, policy stability and others have to be fully addressed while strategies suggested must be adhered to for full implementation. Since strategies to whittle down the challenges to sustainable development have been highlighted, it is recommended that holistic approach should

be adopted to address all these challenges. Transparent management of the economy is also vital while policy overlapping, inconsistencies and conflict must be avoided. Ensuring infrastructural development would address the associated problems of population growth and urbanization. Above all, good governance will ensure that all the aforementioned problems are addressed thereby acting as a fillip to sustainable development.

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