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REALISING THE EDUCATION AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the role of education in realizing sustainable national development in Nigeria. The paper clearly presents the education agenda of Nigeria, how it compares with the UN 2030 Education Agenda and the ingredients of sustainable national development. The paper further examines the impediments to realizing the education agenda for sustainable national development in Nigeria and made suggestions on how to realize sustainable national development through education. The paper highlights that there is a connection between the education agenda of a nation and its development. It also revealed the trend in the gap between the expected budgetary allocation for education and the actual budgetary allocation since 2010 considering the role of finance in goal attainment. An analysis of the 2030 UN Education Agenda and its Relationship with the National Agenda showed that there is no much difference in terms of content of agenda except in financing and commitment. The paper suggests further empirical research on the current state of education as it relates to realizing sustainable national development.

Keywords: Education Agenda, National Development, Sustainable Development, Sustainable National Development, 2030 Education Agenda, National Development Plan.

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INTRODUCTION

All over the world, premium is placed on the education of citizens of nations. This is because of the role education plays in the attainment of sustainable national development. Here in Nigeria, several attempts and efforts have been made to expose the citizens to different forms of education. Before the advent of the missionaries and the introduction of formal school education, the indigenous or traditional system of education was prevalent. According to Nwaenyi (2003) in Ogbondah (2016), indigenous or traditional education is a training community values, beliefs, traditions, and vocations, which have been cherished and practiced over generations. Before the missionaries introduced western education in 1842, communities, tribes and households in Nigeria had a culture of consciously tailoring the training of their citizens to specific skills which were considered desirable for their collective survival. Although, there were no physical/formal classrooms then, education was organized along well-defined lines and training happened at times by moonlight, family gatherings, through imitations, etc. and the necessary skills and values were developed in men, women, boys and girls.

The purpose of education (which represents the education agenda) in the traditional Nigeria was to produce men and women with skills that can enable them to live peacefully with people and contribute to the overall development of the societies. Hence, the traditional/indigenous education was tailored towards occupation and economic development, special education such as traditional medicine, priesthood, character, moral, intellectual skills development and appreciation of culture and tradition (Adiele et al., 2017; Ogbondah, 2016). These goals were achieved. It is on record that during the ancient times, nations like Sparta, Athens, China, Rome and Egypt also achieved fame through a coordinated programme of citizenship training that was very relevant to their peculiar development needs (Adiele et al., 2017). So, education has been used as a tool for change and development in the pre-colonial era. Even during the colonial government from 1842 to 1960 when Nigeria gained independence, several educational policies and ordinances were enacted in order to give the educational system a direction and to attain national development. Within that period till 2013, twenty three (23) education codes, ordinances and policies have evolved in the country (Daniel-Kalio, 2018). These ordinances and policies were enacted to pursue different predetermined educational goals which should invariably lead to the development of the nation. The education agenda to be pursued and achieved were determined by the policy direction of the government. In other words, government determines the expected national development goals and sets the education agenda which will facilitate the achievement of the national development goals in the long run.

After independence, the Federal Government of Nigeria formulated and developed a National Policy on Education (NPE) in 1977 which also incorporated the national development goals of Nigeria signifying the fact that the government understands that national development can mostly be achieved through education. In order to fully realize the education agenda in Nigeria and gain from its contribution to sustainable national development, government is expected to take necessary measures and actions. To this effect, the federal government has since 1970 been working in that light and building partnerships with other nations, organisations, development agencies such as the United Nations (UN), UNICEF, UNESCO, World bank, the Common Wealth of Africa, etc. in order to ensure the education of the citizens and for sustainable national development of the country.

Despite all these attempts and the different programmes and policies on NEEDS, the MDGs and now SDG and vision 2030, uncertainties trail the educational system globally and invariably sustainable national development of nations (Ololube, 2013). It is in this light that this

paper is designed to clearly present the education agenda of Nigeria, how it compares with the 2030 UN education agenda and the role of education in realizing sustainable national development in Nigeria. The paper further examines the ingredients of sustainable national development in Nigeria, impediments to realizing the education agenda for sustainable national development in Nigeria and made suggestions on how to realise sustainable national development through education.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

The Education Agenda of Nigeria

The term education has been defined by different scholars in different ways depending on the perspective of the writers. As defined by Ololube (2013), education is a process of facilitating learning, or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and habits. Clark (2015) in education 2030 said “in our world, knowledge is power and education empowers. Over the years, the education policy thrust of Nigeria has changed several times from the first Ten (10) year Education Plan of 1944, to the first national development plan of 1945, when the administration of education was decentralized to the regions with the 1948 Act which was consolidated by the 1952 Act. Further changes were made by the Ashby report of 1959 which had the critical feature of being the first comprehensive review of higher education in the country and recommended the upgrading of the University College at Ibadan to a full fledged University and the establishment of three other Universities at Nsukka, Ife and Zaria. This was to develop the high level man power needs at the time.

After independence and the incessant military coups in the country, the Federal Republic of Nigeria instituted a seminar of distinguished experts to deliberate on a truly Nigerian National Education Policy in order to consolidate on the gains of the curriculum conference (Daniel-Kalio, 2018). In 1976, due to the tremendous increase in revenue as a result of the oil boom, the Federal Government of Nigeria embarked on the over-ambitious Universal Free Primary Education (UFPE) programme, expanded access into tertiary education and increased the number of unity schools in the country. The most significant in this same period was the takeover of schools from the missionaries, by the government resulting in a unified education system based on the 7-5-2-3 educational policy replacing the 8-5-3-3 (Hauwa, 2012). As the demand for a well-defined national policy increased, the Nigeria Government in 1977 issued a policy statement on education which contained the governments’ views on the philosophy of Nigeria education from preschool through to the university level. This became the first policy on education by Nigeria’s indigenous government in 1977. Since then, the policy has been reviewed five (5) times to soothe the needs and aspirations of the nation.

This chronicle has been given just to state unequivocally that nations set education agenda to achieve desired goals and objectives at every given time. The education agenda of Nigeria is succinctly expressed in the National Policy on Education (NPE) which is premised on the five (5) national development goals. The five (5) main national development goals of Nigeria as stated in the constitution of Nigeria and also enshrined in the National Policy on Education as a guide to education are:

- a free and democratic society;
- a just and egalitarian society;

- a united, strong and self-reliant nation;
- a great and dynamic economy; and
- a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens

The education agenda for the country was thus developed to enable the government achieve its national goals. The goals of education in Nigeria are the:

- Development of the individual into a morally sound, patriotic and effective citizen;
- Total integration of the individual into the immediate community, the Nigerian society and the world;
- Provision of equal access to qualitative educational opportunities for all citizens at the levels of education, within and outside the formal school system;
- Inculcation of national consciousness, values and national unity; and
- Development of appropriate skills, mental, physical and social abilities and competencies to empower the individual to live in and contribute positively to the society.

Specifically, the education agenda of Nigeria intends to achieve the following:

- Ensure and sustain unfettered access and equity to education for the total development of the individual;
- Ensure the quality of education delivery at all levels;
- Promote functional education for skill acquisition, job creation and poverty reduction;
- Ensure periodic review, effectiveness and relevance of the curriculum at all levels to meet the needs of society and the world of work;
- Collaborate with development partners, the private sector, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and local communities to support and fund education and promote information technology capability at all levels (NPE, 2013). The various aspects of this five (5) point precise agenda is further broken down and elaborated in the National Policy on Education.

This agenda resulted in the development of the educational programmes and organizational structure to enhance agenda realization. The education programmes are:

- **Basic education:** The basic education is the education given to children aged 0-15 years. It is designed to achieve five (5) main goals which are provision of basic knowledge and skills, development of patriotic young people, inculcation of values and morally upright individuals, inspiration of national consciousness and development of manipulative skills in the children (NPE, 2013).
- **Post-Basic education and career Development:** This is the education children receive after a successful completion of ten (10) years of basic education. It comprises of senior secondary education, higher school and continuing education in Vocational Enterprise Institutions. The goal of this level of education is to inspire with a desire for self-improvement, provide entrepreneurial skills, and develop manpower for the nation.
- **Mass and Nomadic Education:** This is an equivalent of basic education given to adults, children and youths outside the formal school system. It aims to provide functional basic

education for adults, and youths who have never had the advantage of formal education or who left school too early as a result of their chosen occupation.

- **Tertiary Education:** This is the education given after Post Basic Education in Universities. It aims to contribute to national development through high level manpower training. It reduces skill shortages.
- **Open and Distance Education:** This is education where learners and teachers need not be in physical contact. It has the capacity to deliver variety of skills through technology.
- **Special Needs Education:** This is a customized educational programme designed to meet the unique needs of persons with special needs that the general education programme cannot provide like the disabled citizens of the nation. The aim of this education is to provide access to education for all persons in an inclusive set up (FRN, 2013).

These educational programmes are well designed and expected to facilitate the realization of the national development goals. However, the goals are not achieved as expected. Gaps still exist between the expected outcome and actual outcome. Government is still working out modalities for improvement and attainment of national development goals through education. The quest to achieve the developmental goals continues to motivate the government to review educational policies and also seek for collaborations globally. This introduced the era of collaborative partnership for development. The UN, World Bank, UNESCO, UNICEF, etc. began to play critical roles in setting sectoral agenda for member countries. This is explicitly expressed in the MDGS, the Education For All (EFA) Initiatives and the recent Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) particularly, goal number four (4) of the 17 point Sustainable Development Goals which is centered on education and the UN 2030 education agenda (UNESCO, 2019). The Incheon declaration of the UN 2030 education agenda is the current global education agenda upon which member nations are focusing their education activities, programmes and projects.

Sustainable National Development

Development is the transformation of individuals, communities, state and nations. This transformation can be socially, economically, politically, educationally and materially based with the aim of improving the quality of life of the people. Minda (2008) referred to development as the uniform distribution of resources, and the integration of the people into national economy. Boyi (2013) defined sustainable development as a process of improving the range of opportunities that will enable individuals and communities to achieve their aspirations and full potential over a sustained period of time while maintaining the resilience of economic, social and environmental systems. This is in line with Brundtland Commission (1987) in Azundah Wejinya and Ogbondaya (n.d) who defined sustainable development as the development that meets the needs of the present without comprising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs. The acceptance of the concept of sustainable development is the foundation to sustainable national development. The concept of sustainable national development derived its impetus from the concept of sustainable development. Since after 1987, nations all over the world are making efforts to ensure that they achieve sustainable national development. Azundah-Wejinya and Ogbonnaya (2016) stated that sustainable national development is prioritizing the development of the present generation without comprising the future generation. It means, a nation that does not only think of today but seriously considers the impact of their decisions and actions on the

“tomorrow” of the nation. In the same vein, Okonkwo (2012) opined that a nation is sustainably developing, if it is addressing the many cruel dimensions of poverty, combating inequality and injustice more holistically and widening the breadth of environmental targets to tackle climate change. He further stated that this change puts the responsibility of developing a country firmly on the shoulders of citizens and government of those countries.

In similar vein, TSAV and Iyala (2016) referred to sustainable national development as the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs. They stated further that the objective of sustainable national development is to increase national income, enhance high rate of employment, promote the welfare of citizens by providing their basic needs and protecting the environment. The protection of the environment and the future generation are two major features of sustainable national development

Ingredients of Sustainable National Development in Nigeria

Prior to the independence of Nigeria, the idea of sustainable national development as we know it today barely existed. The structures of imperial and colonial power which dominated the world in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries made little provision for economic and social advancement in what we now call developing world. As development policies evolved, different approaches have been emphasized at different times. According to Harris (2000), in the late 1970s, a focus on basic needs of education, health, nutrition, sanitation and employment was advocated reflecting an acknowledgement that the benefits of development did not necessarily ‘trickle down’ to those who needed them most. According to him, this perspective inspired the creation of the United Nations Development Index which uses health and education and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to calculate an overall index of development success. The focus shifted slightly in the 1980s to ‘Structural Adjustment Programme’ (SAP) including liberalization of trade (Danladi & Naankiel, 2016). However, the overall record of development came under two serious criticisms. It was the general belief that the benefits of development have been distributed unevenly, with income inequalities remaining persistent and sometimes increasing over time. This is expressed in the fact that the global number of people living in extreme poverty and malnourished people have remained high. Secondly, there have been major negatives of development in the environment and in existing social structure (Harris, 2000). These problems aroused deep thinking and critics of the existing development structure advocated for a paradigm shift. In fact, the then President of the World Bank John Wolfensohn and Chief economist Stiglitz acknowledged in (1999) stated that it is critical to resolve these issues if global development should succeed. It became evident that changes are required in order to address the absolute gaps between the rich and the poor nations, groups and within individual countries and for the ecosystem to survive the greatly increased demands on its resources and environmental absorption capacity.

The growing awareness of the challenges of the traditional development concept led to the change in paradigm to a new concept of development termed ‘sustainable development’ which was presented in 1987 when the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) presented their report on ‘Our Common Future’. They sought to address the problem of conflicts between environment and development goals by formulating a definition of sustainable development. Since the late 1980s, the world has been on the part of sustainable development. The concept is multidimensional and applies to the development of various nations. In 2015, the

UN General Assembly adopted the 2013 Agenda for sustainable development and came up with the 17 point SDGs which aim at a substantial improvement of the living condition of all people now and in the future generation and the protection of the planet earth. A list of 232 global indicators was formulated to measure performance. An analysis of these indicators revealed some of the major ingredients of sustainable national development and they are presented below according to the tripods of sustainable development which are the environment, economy and social factors.

Economic Ingredients

An economically sustainable system must be able to produce goods and services on a continuing basis to maintain manageable levels of government and external debts and to avoid extreme sectoral imbalances which damage agricultural or industrial production. Some of the indicators which can be used to measure a nation that is developing in a sustainable manner in the economic system are:

- Maximization of human welfare: this is the maximization of welfare with the maximization of utility derived from consumption. It includes food, clothes, housing, transportation, health and education. Allocation of resources should have the effect of maximizing utility from consumption;
- Sustained increase in real per capita income;
- Involvement of the private and public sectors at all levels as environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned;
- Compatibility with a free market economy that would integrate the environment in its economic regulation.

Environmental Ingredients

An environmentally sustainable system must maintain a stable resource base, avoiding over-exploitation of renewable resource system and depleting non-renewable resources only to the extent that investment is made in adequate substitutes (Harris, 2000). Environmental sustainability means maintenance of biodiversity, atmospheric stability and other ecosystem functions. This means:

- Development processes that integrates environmental protection practices.
- Conservation of the natural capital including soils, natural habitat and atmospheric functions for inter-generational equity.
- Use of environment-friendly sources of energy, hence, promotion of wind energy, solar energy and other environmentally friendly sources of energy in place of fossil fuels.
- Promotion of organic farming and adaptation of chemical free agriculture;
- Recycling of wastes;
- Stringent laws on the disposal of chemical effluents;
- Use of natural, biodegradable building materials and the minimization of greenhouse gases;
- Use of renewable resources of water;
- Planned replacement for any resources used;

- Non-polluting construction practices and industries;
- Efficient irrigation and integrated pest management.

Social Ingredients

A socially sustainable system must achieve distributional equity, adequate provision of social services including health and education, gender equity and political accountability and participation. The system must adopt the ‘human development’ approach emphasizing issues of basic needs and equity. Specifically, the ingredients include:

- Changes in awareness (value, education) and ethics in relationship to nature in particular as a prerequisite to sustainable national development;
- End extreme hunger and poverty and achieve food security, appropriate nutrition and zero child stunting;
- Enhanced support for highly vulnerable states;
- Realise sexual and reproductive health rights and promote the rapid reduction in fertility;
- When all children under the age of 5 reach their developmental potential through access to quality early childhood development programme and policies;
- Quality primary and secondary education for both boys and girls and reducing dropout rate to zero;
- Transition of youths into the labour market and gainfully employed;
- Gender equality, social inclusiveness and human rights;
- Achieve health and well-being at all ages.

Generally, multi-sectoral (economic, social, environment) and multidimensional approaches (global, local) to development, use of technology as a major medium for the implementation of sustainable development, equitable pursuit of development and present and future environmental needs are major ingredients of sustainable national development.

The Role of Education in Sustainable National Development in Nigeria

There is an important body of development literature that has documented the positive impact of education on various facets of social and economic development. Education is an important catalyst for achieving all developmental goals. There is inter-connection of all development goals with inter-linkages between education, health, poverty reduction and gender equality. Improvement in one area has a positive effect on the others (UNESCO, 2012).

The role education plays in the life of a nation cannot be overrated. Education is an enabling condition for sustainable and inclusive development. It is understood as the transmission, acquisition, creation and adaptation of knowledge, skills and values (UNESCO, 2012). For there to be inclusiveness and sustainable development, education is indispensable. Some highlights of the role education plays in sustainable national development are stated below.

Education as a development tool for Individuals

Quality education develops skills, values and attitudes that enable citizens to lead healthy and fulfilled lives, make informed decisions and respond to local and global changes and challenges.

According to Ebiong (2007), education is a systematic procedure for the transfer and transformation of culture through formal and informal training of people in a society. It deals with mental, psychological and social development. In recognition of the important role of education as a tool for the development of individuals, the society and the nation, the federal government adopted education as an instrument par excellence for enhancing development (National Policy on Education, 2004).

Education as a Sustainable National Development Tool

Sustainable national development refers to the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future to meet their own needs. This means, making progress in life carefully and intelligently. The role education plays in sustainable national development is simply, teaching and training the citizens to live responsibly and think about tomorrow and the future generation in their endeavors. This entails integrating key sustainable development issues into teaching and learning, like climate change, disaster risk reduction and biodiversity, poverty reduction, and sustainable consumption. No country can achieve sustainable economic growth and development if the environment is allowed to degrade, if the prosperity of the nation is not fairly distributed and if the development of the human resources is neglected. When participatory teaching and learning methods that motivate and empower learners to change their behaviors and take actions are applied, sustainable development happens.

Development of Life Competencies

Education promotes life competencies, like critical thinking, imagining the future scenarios and making decisions in a collaborative way. The aspiration of sustainable development requires resolution of common problems and tensions and recognition of new horizons (Adesulu et al., 2016). Economic growth and the creation of wealth have reduced global poverty rates, but vulnerability, inequality, exclusion and violence have increased within and across societies throughout the world. Unsustainable patterns of economic production and consumption contributes to global warming, environmental degradation and an upsurge in natural disasters. These are not ingredients of sustainable national development. So, education finds different ways of responding to these challenges, taking into account multiple world views and alternative knowledge systems, as well as new frontiers in science and technology and the development in digital technology.

Education as a National Cohesion Tool

Sustainable national development is about a national responsibility and solidarity between generations, between women and men and between different cultures. It is about safeguarding and an efficient use of existing natural resources in a coherent manner (Abubakar, 2017; ANC, n.d). Education is critical in promoting sustainable national development and cohesion. Both formal and informal education is indispensable to changing people's attitude so that they have the capacity to appreciate other people, understand the importance of brotherliness and assess and address their sustainable national development concerns:

Education Reduces Conflicts and Fosters Cohesion: When people have deep understanding of different aspects of life and the attitude of different classes of people, they will learn to live with one another with understanding and reduce areas of conflict and unnecessary violence.

Education Fosters Inclusiveness: Boundaries are broken as people are exposed to education, Njoku (2006) in Azundah-Wejinya and Ogbonaya (2017) said that education and sustainable national development are interwoven, intertwined and inter connected. Ebiong (1996) opined that for any country to achieve 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.

The 2030 UN Education Agenda and its Relationship with the National Agenda

UNESCO, together with UNICEF, the World Bank, UNFPA, UNDP, UN woman and UNHCR organized the world education forum 2015 in Incheon, Republic of Korea. Over 1,600 participants from 160 countries including over 120 ministers, heads and members of delegations, heads of agencies, officials of multilateral and bilateral organizations and representatives of civil society, the teaching profession, youths and the private sector adopted the Incheon Declaration for education 2030. It sets out a new vision for education for the next fifteen years for member nations. The Incheon education 2030 declaration has as its main purpose inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all. The education 2030 declaration is a follow up on the vision of the worldwide movement for Education For All (FFA) initiated in Jomtein in 1990 and reiterated in Dakar in 2000. The vision is inspired by humanism and development, based on human rights and dignity, social justice, inclusion, protection, culture, ethnic diversity, shared responsibility and accountability. The 2030 UN education agenda sets a new vision for education towards 2030. Some components of the vision of the 2030 UN Education Agenda as can be deduced are:

- Transformation of lives;
- Inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all;
- The provision of 12 years of free publicly funded, equitable, primary and secondary education;
- One year free and compulsory quality pre-primary education;
- Meaningful education and training opportunities for the large population of out of school children and adolescents;
- Address all forms of exclusion and marginalization, disparities and inequalities in access, participation and learning outcomes;
- Education for the disadvantaged, especially those with disabilities;
- Gender-sensitive policies, planning and learning environments;
- Well-trained, empowered and adequately trained teachers and educators;
- Provision of quality technical, vocational education and higher education;
- Provision of flexible learning pathways;
- Provision of functional literacy and numeracy for all youths and adults, especially girls and women;
- Strengthen science, technology and innovation;

- More inclusive, responsive and resilient education system to meet the needs of children, youths and adults including internally displaced persons and refugees in the context of violence, natural disaster and pandemics.

A critical analysis of the UN 2030 education agenda in comparison with the education agenda of Nigeria leaves a sweet taste in the mouth. This is because there is no much disparity or difference in the two agendas in terms of content. The areas of emphasis which include inclusiveness, the education of all children especially those of the pre-primary level, the education that leaves no one behind, the education that considers non-formal education run across the two education agendas. There is also agreement in the area of building partnerships and collaborations in funding education. However, slight differences are noticed in the actual implementation and commitment to the vision, the details of actualization and development of frameworks, review strategies, the financial/budgetary allocation and guidelines to education. The good thing about this unified agenda is that both technical and financial support can be leveraged by all because of the partnership and collaborative provisions in the UN 2030 Education Agenda.

Realizing the Education Agenda for Sustainable National Development in Nigeria

The realization of a well-articulated/formulated plan, policy or agenda is the hallmark of an efficient and effective leadership. The purpose of every agenda setting is to achieve or attain specific goals and objectives. It is therefore pertinent that every policy formulation process culminates in the realization of the purpose for formulation (Ololube, 2017) otherwise the entire process is perceived as an act in futility. No wonder, the policy documents of the government of Nigeria and the UN 2030 Education Agenda did not only set the agenda but also clearly developed various implementation strategies, structures and guidelines that will facilitate the realization of the education agenda for sustainable national development. In order to fully realize the goals/ agenda of education in Nigeria and gain from its contribution to national development and invariably the UN 2030 education agenda, the policies stated that the government shall take necessary measures to ensure that:

- Educational activities are learner-centered for maximum self- development and self-fulfillment;
- Teaching is practical, activity-based, and experiential and IT supported;
- All tiers of government promote the establishment and support of Reading Clubs in schools, community libraries and other such resources that will enhance effective learning;
- Special provision and incentives are made for the study of sciences at each level of the education system;
- Continuing education is part and parcel of the education system (NPE, 2013)

Analyzing the policy provision for the realization of the education agenda, one can deduce that all that is required to achieve the goals of education are provided for. The policy makes it clear that government has the sole responsibility of dictating the tune and pace of education in Nigeria. The analysis further shows that the realization of the education agenda or goals of Nigeria requires:

- A good and effective government ready to take leadership and show will-power and commitment to the policy provision of the country;
- A well- developed curriculum designed to develop self- reliant, self-fulfilled and self-developed citizens who in turn become productive and bring about the development of the nation;
- A conducive learning environment that places the citizens at the center of learning;
- Ensuring access to education for all at all levels;
- Adequate provision of educational infrastructure at all levels of education for all including information technology (IT);
- Participatory teaching and learning and involvement of all stakeholders in the realization of the education agenda of the nation;
- Adequate funding of education through partnerships and collaboration;
- A proper monitoring and evaluation mechanism at all levels and types of education;
- Good teacher education programme for effective and efficient knowledge-based teaching of the citizens.

In the same vein, the 2030 Education Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in September 2015, also clearly stated what is required to actualize the education agenda. The requirements/conditions for achieving the agenda are similar to what is stated in the National Policy on Education as well. Critical of the requirements is the involvement of stakeholders. Even though the both agendas placed education as a sole responsibility of government, it is critical to my mind that all stakeholders especially, those involved in the Incheon Declaration should continually participate in ensuring that the goals are realized. The UN 2030 Education Agenda referred to as the Incheon Declaration further stated that realizing the education agenda will also require:

- The establishment of legal and policy framework that promotes accountability and transparency as well as participatory governance and coordinated partnerships at all levels across sectors.
- A strong global and regional collaboration, cooperation, coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the agenda
- All stakeholders and partners to collectively support countries in implementing the 2030 education agenda by providing technical advice, national capacity development and financial support based on their respective mandates and comparative advantages.

The success of the education agenda requires sound policies and planning as well as efficient implementation of the education 2030 Framework for Action. It is of course critical that implementers of the framework are constantly reviewing and evaluating performance on the ten (10) targets developed to achieve the education 2030 agenda. The targets encompass many different aspects of education. They are:

- 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 and adult literacy.
- Education for sustainable development and global citizenship.

To achieve the objectives, stakeholder must ensure that scholarships are available across the globe and teachers and educator are trained and available. It is one thing to have a well-formulated policy guide that can facilitate the achievement of set goals/agendas, it is another thing to have it implemented. If the provisions in the policy are diligently pursued, the educational goals and agenda of Nigeria shall be realized and achieved.

Impediments to Realizing the Education Agenda for Sustainable National Development in Nigeria

Any country that succeeds in realizing the education agenda formulated for implementation is invariably on the part to achieving sustainable national development. Sustainable national development is achievable through applying multi-sectoral and multidimensional approaches. Although, there are proven successes achieved over the years, there are still numerous gaps to be filled and challenges to overcome in realizing the education agenda for sustainable development. The gaps to be filled are in the areas of early childhood education, access to education, equitable distribution of educational materials, adequate budgetary provision for education, creating conducive teaching and learning environment, teachers etc. A review of the education agenda of Nigeria shows that there is a lot more to be done to realize the set agenda. One major challenge to sustainable national development is the inability to ensure the attainment of the education agenda as such achievement will automatically result in sustainable national development.

In 2016, UNESCO convened the first meeting of the SDG education 2030 Steering Committee at Paris. The committee deliberated substantively on the challenges and opportunities for financing the new agenda (UNESCO 2016). This means that the international organisations that formulated the UN 2030 Education agenda have also realized that achieving the agenda is not an easy task. Some of the impediments/challenges are stated below.

Inadequate Funding:

UNESCO (2009) stated that countries should at least spend 26% of their national budgets on education in order to achieve quality education for all. Funding education becomes necessary because the educational system requires huge funds for construction of classrooms and administrative blocks, purchase of educational equipment and infrastructure, payment of staff salaries and allowances, provision of library services and laboratories, maintaining the physical facilities and keeping the other school services functional. However, over the years the sector continues to suffer from reduction of budgetary allocation. Below is an analysis of the budget of the nation and the education sector for the past eight (8) years.

Table 1: Budget of the nation and the education sector

YEAR	NATIONAL BUDGET (IN TRILLION) APPROX.	STATUTORY 15% (APPROX.)	EDUCATION BUDGET	PERCENTAGE (%)	GAP
2010	4,400,000,000,000	660,000,000,000	293,427,655,563	7.19	366,572,344,437
2011	4,700,000,000,000	705,000,000,000	393,810,171,775	9.32	311,189,828,225
2012	4,900,000,000,000	735,000,000,000	468,385,037,983	9.86	266,614,962,017
2013	4,990,000,000,000	748,500,000,000	499,761,707,838	10.15	248,738,292,162
2014	4,960,000,000,000	744,000,000,000	494,783,130,261	10.54	249,216,869,739
2015	4,400,000,000,000	660,000,000,000	484,263,784,654	10.78	175,736,215,346
2016	6,060,000,000,000	909,000,000,000	480,278,214,639	7.92	428,721,785,361
2017	7,400,000,000,000	1,100,000,000,000	550,597,184,148	7.4	549,402,815,852
2018	8,600,000,000,000	1,290,000,000,000	605,800,080,038	7.04	584,199,919,962

Source: Remmy Alex (2018) Nigeria budget from 1999 – 2018 – Business News

An analysis of the data above indicates that the budgetary performance of the nation has continued to reduce in percentages in the past three (3) years even though there is a tremendous leap in the total national budget. In no year has the nation adhered to the 15% budgetary provision for education. It was only in 2013, 2014 and 2015 that the allocation got to 10%. This data is graphically presented below showing a steady rise in the percentage of allocation and a gradual but steady fall as seen in the figures below:

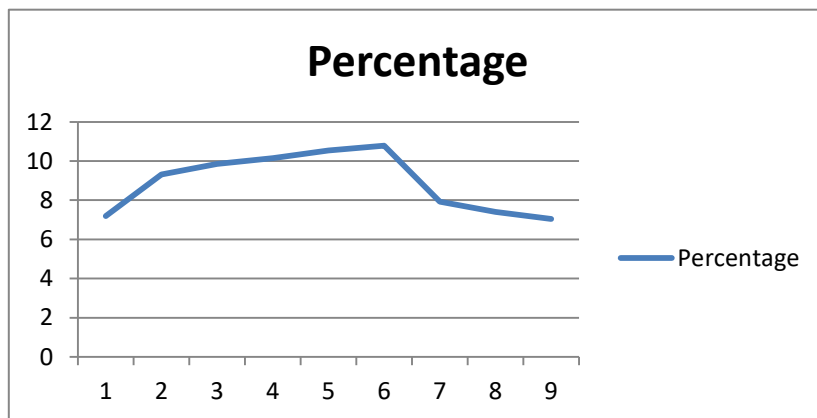


Figure 1: Percentage of allocation and a gradual but steady fall

Political Will

This is a major impediment to realizing the education agenda for sustainable national development. The UN 2030 education agenda, to which Nigeria is a part, is a very robust programme. Looking through the indicators or measures of achievement, it is obvious that the leaders of the nation may not have the will power and patriotism desired to run to the end with the vision especially with so many other competing issues. The political will is not necessarily financing but creating all the necessary democratic conditions for including and engaging citizens equitably in the programme and in the debates.

Population Growth

The population of Nigeria is rising exponentially. As it currently stands, even the exact population figure is in question. This will clearly lead to poor/inadequate planning and demand the provision of more teachers, more schools, improving on existing facilities etc.

Social, Religious and Cultural Barriers

The diversities of the people of Nigeria in culture, religion and social strata negate the common education agenda drawn to be achieved. While some religious beliefs do not agree with Western education, others do. It becomes impossible to achieve the target of 100% access to education and equitable distribution of resources to all. In the same vein, cultural differences and social diversities automatically reduce the chances of achieving education for all.

Absence of a Strong Public System

Systems are the driving wheels of governance and goal attainment. Not having a strong public system and serious value for teachers and students in Nigeria, negate the education agenda. It is important for the teachers to have good working conditions and autonomy. There is need to also respect the identities of students as individuals and not just as numbers. What is currently prevalent in the educational system depicts a sector without systems, processes and procedures. The rules of operations are changed at will for different reasons without reasonable explanations.

Inability to understand and maintain the vision

The leadership of Nigeria especially the political class emerges as leaders with sometimes no roadmap/plan for the nation. Where they have a plan or not, they fail to study to know how their plans synchronize with the national goals as enshrined in the constitution of the nation. Governments just run their agenda without holistic consideration of the vision/agenda of the nation. This explains the lack of continuity in the nation's policies and programmes. So, the lack of understanding of the vision of the education agenda and the concept of inclusiveness, quality and equity by the government, education practitioners and students impede its realization. It is easy to get inundated with numerical data without considering the details beyond the numbers, the expected values and qualities that are being achieved (Aniebonam, n.d).

CONCLUSION

The content of the education agenda of Nigeria is practically the same with the UN 2030 Education Agenda and therefore realizable. This means that there is no major problem with the policy formulation of the educational agenda of Nigeria. Perhaps, the difference is in policy implementation and budgetary allocation to education. While the UN 2030 Education Agenda advocates 26% of the budgetary allocation to education, Nigeria still operates less than 10% of its total budget for education. Sustainable national development is also realizable if the government adheres to the provisions of the National Policy on education, partners with all critical stakeholders in the education sector and mitigate against all identified impediments to the realization of the education goals.

Also, the education agenda of Nigeria and the UN 2030 Education Agenda lay credence to early childhood education and advocates a one year free education for this level of education. This policy should be vigorously pursued by government.

Suggestions

Education is the key to better life for every child, society and nation. Knowledge is power and education empowers. Every nation that desires to develop in a sustainable manner must invest adequately in education. The following suggestions are hereby given:

- Government should improve the budgetary allocation to education. The current budgetary allocation cannot address the mirage of challenges facing the educational system.
- The policy on the early child education should be vigorously pursued by government.
- The school curriculum should be reviewed to incorporate Education for Sustainable Development. This will enable the students imbibe the values that will enhance sustainable national development.
- Government should have the political will to implement every aspect of the policy on education and build strong public systems and institutions that can facilitate the realization of educational goals. :
- Every government should carefully study and understand the vision of the educational policy of the country and endeavor to implement it accordingly.
- There is need to control the population growth of the nation. The country currently has a population figure that is not accurate and is growing exponentially.

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