
University Education for Sustainable Growth and Development in Nigeria: Matters Arising

DR. STELLA C. EZEH

*Department of Educational Management and Policy,
Federal College of Education (Technical), Umuze,
Anambra State.*

DR. A. U. AMAECHINA

*Department of Educational Management and Policy,
Federal College of Education (Technical), Umuze,
Anambra State.*

And

CHINWE ALICE NJOKU

*Department of Educational Foundations,
Federal College of Education (Technical), Umuze,
Anambra State.*

Abstract

Education is as an investment for economic, social, and political development; a tool of empowerment; an effective means for developing the full capacities and potentials of human resources. This paper examined University Education for sustainable growth and development in Nigeria: Matters arising. Firstly, it gave a background of the current situation of education and its direct effect on economic growth. The paper highlighted the aims and objectives of University education which it found to be geared towards sustainable growth and development of the society and nation through quality education and high-level manpower training relevant to the needs of the society and labour market. However, it was noticed that a huge gap existed between the stated aims and objectives of university education and what was being practiced and taught in our universities, which deviated from the kind of education required for sustainable development. This gap was as a result of the several challenges facing University education for sustainable growth and development in Nigeria. Amongst others, it was recommended that sincere and concerted efforts are needed on the part of both the government and universities to provide quality education that will meet the needs of the present and future generations to enable Nigerians compete favourably in the international market as well as the world of work.

Keywords: University Education, Sustainability, Sustainable Development.

Few years after Nigeria's independence, opportunities for employment abound for Nigerian graduates from Technical colleges and universities. In fact, it was the case that each new graduate then had at least three jobs from which to choose. More so, the movement from school to job was virtually automatic and the graduates equally make their choices. It was also a situation where companies and public establishments were hunting for people to give jobs, employers went to colleges and National Youth Service Corp orientation camps to seek for employees. This was so because education which is a process of acquiring knowledge, skills and other capabilities was the fulcrum of national development and international competitiveness (National Board for Technical education, NBTE, 2011). It was a situation of "if you have a degree, you have a job but, if you do not have, then you do not need a job."

Today, it is very pathetic that the story line has changed as there is a disconnection between the world of learning and the world of work. Now, each job that appears in the labour market is now pursued by many old and new unemployed individuals and even highly politicized because of the growing population (Ezeh, 2012). In some cases, the few who get a job are trained to acquire special skills before they can go ahead with the new job for example the bankers. Ajibade (2009) asserted that there is a big gulf between what the school offers and the demand of employers. We now have an exponential growth in the number of universities (about 84 public universities and 68 private universities) and the university graduates, without a corresponding increase in economic growth and development. It has become a situation of 'academic inflation, where degrees worth nothing.' Thus, this is the background with which this paper is set out to examine "University Education for sustainable growth and development in Nigeria: Matters arising.

Concepts of University Education in Nigeria

The word "university" is derived from Latin word, meaning "community of teachers and scholars." It was originally used to describe "associations of students and teachers with collective legal rights usually guaranteed by charters issued by princes, prelates or the towns in which they were located." (Abdulrahman, 2015). Simply put, the University is a community of scholars and students engaged in a complex task to which humanity looks up for overall human progress (Okah&Worlu, 2013). One obvious point from the definition of university is that, it is a community of teachers and students. This definition also tells us that human progress that proffering solution to man's problems is one major preoccupation of the university. On the other hand, the Encarta dictionary defined *University* as an educational institution for higher learning that typically includes an undergraduate college and graduate schools in various disciplines. Also, the National Policy on Education (2008) defined tertiary education to include, universities, colleges of education, polytechnics and monotechnics. Thus, all organized learning activity at the tertiary level is called *Higher Education*. A closer look at the above definitions shows that the university is at the apex of education at the

tertiary level; and it is an institution of higher learning comprising a community of teachers, students, and the facilities to aid learning (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004)

Furthermore, the university plays a major role in the educational life of every citizen as all the previous forms of learning acquired in primary and secondary level are applied to a career that results in societal development. Therefore, the level of development of education at this level is said to determine the level of development of a nation's economy (Obanya, 2004a). To better understand the concept of university education, we will review the objectives of education at the university or tertiary level.

Goals of Tertiary Education

According to the new National Policy of Education (2013), the goals of Tertiary education shall be to:

- Contribute to national development through *high-level relevant manpower training*.
- Provide accessible and affordable *quality learning* opportunities in formal and informal education in response to the needs and interest of all Nigerians.
- Provide quality career counselling and lifelong learning programmes that prepare students with the knowledge and *skills for self-reliance and the world of work*.
- Reduce skill shortages through the *production of skilled manpower relevant to the needs of the labour market*.
- Promote and encourage scholarship, *entrepreneurship* and community services.
- To forge and cement national unity; and
- To promote national and international understanding and interaction.

From the above goals of tertiary institution, one will notice from the highlighted texts that from the onset tertiary education was for sustainable growth and development of the society and nation through quality education and high-level manpower training relevant to the needs of the society and labour market.

More so, according to Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN 2013 41-42); university education shall make optimum contribution to national development by:

- a) Intensifying and diversifying its programmes for the development of high level manpower within the context of the needs of the nation;
- b) Making professional course contents reflect our national requirements.
- c) Making all students part of a general programme of all-round improvement in university education to offer general study courses such as history of ideas, philosophy of knowledge, nationalism and information technology (IT); and
- d) Making entrepreneurial skills acquisition a requirement for all Nigeria Universities.

From the forgoing, it is clear that the universities were instituted to be the vanguard of driving the nation's economy, they were to be the life changing and life sustaining rectors of economic growth and development (National Universities Commission, 2004). Still in the process of understanding the meaning of the goals of university education, the next section of this paper will define the concepts of education and sustainable growth and development.

University Education: Education for Sustainable Growth and Development

According to the new National Policy on Education which contains the blueprint, goals, standards and requirement for quality education; Education is defined:

as an investment for economic, social, and political development; a tool of empowerment; an effective means for developing the full capacities and potentials of human resources; as well as the development of a competent workforce; and as a veritable means of developing sound intelligent learning societies (Federal Republic of Nigeria - FRN, 2007).

From the above, Ezeh, (2012) inferred that the ultimate goal of education is for human capital development which translates to societal development, nation building and economic growth. This means that the intention for education was for sustainable growth and development of the country. Now, we will deal with the concepts of sustainability and development before distilling into the meaning of sustainable development and then education for sustainable growth and development.

Sustainability: Sustainability is the ability to sustain, maintain, provide for or nourish something for an indefinite period without damaging or depleting it (Edet&Beyin, 2018). Sustainability consists of three dimensions: the protection of natural environment or resources, the maintenance of economic vitality and observance of specific social considerations about human development. Ajibade

(2009) asserted that like every natural resource, education is to be guarded and preserved as a precious gem, it is to be explored or invested upon and developed for the betterment of all and it should be sustained to meet the ever changing needs of the society and future generation without been depleted in quality and originality. Thus, it should not be said that our parents had better education than that which is available to us.

Development: Development implies change or growth in a people's life style. Though, to some scholars, development is the power of the people to solve their problems with their own wisdom, knowledge, experience and resources with a view to eliminating poverty, pestilence and starvation. Development is also described as *economic growth*. In this sense, development means the ability of society to achieve a rapid and sustained rise in output of all gainful economic ventures. It was used to mean the capacity of a national economy to generate and sustain an annual increase in its gross national production (Edet&Beyin, 2018). To achieve development, the society always turns to education as its tool. This is because development is not a stage to be attained or a goal to aim at. Rather, it is a constant process of improvement in which education, research, and service play prominent roles in creating positive change in the self, the people, and the institutions and structures (Abdulrahman, 2015).

Sustainable Development

According to World Commission on Environmental and Development (WCED), Sustainable development is defined as development which meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet

their own needs (Chukwu, Agada&Eze, 2017). It is a systematic concept relating to the continuity of economic, social, institutional and environmental aspects of human society as well as non-human environment. The concept of sustainable development was originally introduced at the first earth summit held in Stockholm, Sweden in 1972. There in Stockholm, representatives of government and non-governmental organizations identified education especially university education as fundamental to the successful achievement of sustainable development.

The organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2001) as quoted by Ahenkan and Osei-Kojo (2014) who also defined sustainable development as the development path along which maximization of human well-being for today's generation does not lead to the decline in the well-being of the future generation. These definitions suggest that sustainable development considers the needs of the future and current generations in tandem, and it is rooted in the pursuit of the well-being and welfare of the people (Edet&Beyin, 2018).

Education for Sustainable Development

Edet and Beyin (2018) defined Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) as an approach to teaching and learning based on the ideals and principles that underlie sustainability. The role of education for sustainable development is to help people develop the attitudes, values, skills and knowledge to make informed decisions for the benefits of themselves and others, now and for the future, as well as to act upon those decisions (United Nation Education and Scientific Organization, 2006).

Therefore, Edet and Beyin (2018) summarized the role of education in sustainable development as follows:

1. Education is here regarded as an instrument of social change which could transform the society in significant ways. Education is paramount when trying to enable a change in values and attitudes towards sustainability. The report of United Nations's World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) recognized that "sustainable development requires changes in values and attitudes towards the environment and its development" and *education plays a central role* in achieving those changes in values and attitudes.
2. Contemporary sustainable development education must be oriented on future development, ensuring *proper quality* of present and future life.
3. Education for sustainable development involves learning how to make decisions that consider the long term future of the economy, ecology and equity of all communities. UNESCO argues that education has a special responsibility to generate the knowledge needed as well as communicate this knowledge to decision makers and the public at large.
4. Education for sustainable development empowers people for their roles in society.
5. Education for sustainable development functions to educate, train and undertake research that contributes to the sustainable development of the society.
6. In addition, education should provide learners with skills, perspectives, values and knowledge to live sustainably in their communities.

7. To enhance learning about sustainable development different teaching methodologies should be adopted throughout all levels of the educational strata.
8. Educational institutions play a leading role in building more sustainable societies and creating new paradigms as they have the mission to promote development through both teaching and research that should build the beneficiaries to compete favourably in the world of work.

Quality Education: A Means to Sustainable Growth and Development

As earlier stated in the aims and objectives of tertiary Education, that from the onset tertiary education was for sustainable growth and development of the society and nation through quality education and high-level manpower training relevant to the needs of the society and labour market.

According to Oladipo (2009), Obanya (2004) and National Universities Commission NUC (2004), quality of education is measured by the extent to which the training received from an institution enables the recipient to think clearly, independently and analytically to solve relevant societal problems in any given environment. Quality education is the combination of quality inputs and quality processes which produces quality outcomes or outputs (Obanya, 2004).

To ensure quality of output, the following measures are necessary:

- i. Admission into tertiary institution should be based on merit and not on quota.
- ii. Course content should meet labour market demands.
- iii. Minimum academic standard should be met before admission and entry.
- iv. Institutions should invest in information and communication technology as a means of providing learning resources to teachers and students using web based technologies.

Also, the issue of quality education in sustainable development programme entails providing adequate learning experience for the young people. UNESCO (2012) declared in chapter 36 of Agenda 21 four goals of education to be provided as cited by Akinjide and Olusegun (2018):

1. To promote and improve the quality of education to refocus lifelong education on knowledge, skills and values which the citizens need to improve the quality of their life.
2. To reorient the existing education programmes from primary to university- to serve as a vehicle of knowledge, thought patterns and values needed to build a sustainable world.
3. To raise public awareness and understanding of the concept of sustainable Development - to develop enlighten, active and responsible citizenship locally, nationally and internationally.
4. To train the work force – that is making the technical and vocational education to involve directors and workers and to enable them to adopt sustainable modes of production and consumption.

In order to promote the goals, Nigeria may have to adopt a policy reform option. The basic policy reform option may be to make teacher education rigorous enough to emphasize adequate knowledge of the content area and mastery of the teaching methods. The emphasis should be to prepare students adequately for the contemporary

challenges in the global community, and to make the teaching of fundamental skills and competencies as well as the teacher's teaching/learning paradigm (NUC, 2004).

Challenges of University Education in Attaining Sustainable Growth and Development

It could be said that Nigeria universities cannot afford more than the paltry amount of contributions they offer in the area of sustainable development when compared to universities in the first world countries. NUC (2004) added that this is because most universities in the first world have the enabling environment for research and advanced technology; and through research, these institutions make valuable breakthroughs, discoveries and contributions in varied areas of human endeavor such as: space science, astronomy, robotics, biotechnology, Medical sciences and so on.

Whereas, Nigerian universities continuously struggle to revive and looking for money to pay staff salaries. Strike actions and work stoppages are continuously adopted as tools for fighting for workers' rights and thus, the academic calendar is incessantly disrupted and little time is utilized for research, teaching and learning. Students of Nigerian tertiary institutions, especially the university have been more out of school than in school since 1986 (Jones, 2013). Also many of these institutions are rather hotbeds of cultism (with its insecurity concerns), examination malpractice, sexual harassment, high level corruption and other social ills (Chukwu, Agada&Eze, 2017). Other challenges impeding university education for sustainable growth and development include:

- i. Inadequate teaching staff /poor quality of teaching staff
- ii. Poor access to quality education by Nigerian children
- iii. Inadequate funding
- iv. Frequent labour disputes and closures of Universities
- v. Lack of Information Communication Technology Facilities and other advanced technologies needed in various fields of learning
- vi. Poor leadership and political interference in University Education
- vii. Poor policy implementation etc.

Conclusion

Quality education is an indispensable instrument for socioeconomic empowerment, no wonder students, parents, guardians, individuals, voluntary agencies, and Governments all over the world have invested and have continued to invest in university education, because it is a tool for sustainable growth and development. But if education in a developing country like Nigeria fails to align with the demands of the 21st century education, to meet the challenges in the workforce and to ensure the well-being of the workers, how do we use such education to promote sustainable development? It is therefore good for nothing. This is to say, that for University education in Nigeria to be used to attain the needed sustainable growth and development, it must rise above its current challenges and setbacks. To achieve the feat of providing quality education to meet the needs of the present and future generation, the government and the universities must sincerely work hard at implementing egalitarian educational reforms which is

geared towards sustainable growth and development. This is key, because, the level of development of education is said to determine the level of development of a nation's economy (Obanya, 2004a).

Recommendations

From the challenges impeding University education for sustainable growth and development in Nigeria, the recommendations made are as follow:

1. Universities and the government should promote and improve the quality of education so as to refocus lifelong education on knowledge, skills and values which the citizens need to improve the quality of their life.
2. There should be adequate budgetary provision (funding of educational sector).
3. Emphasis on research development – Government, non-governmental organizations and individuals should as a matter of due responsibility encourage and finance research programmes, inventions and mass production of invented products.
4. Proper governance of schools. Governing councils should be composed of technocrats who know and understand how a university system operates. Better still retired Professors and Vice Chancellors should be made chairmen of councils and not politicians.
5. Regular employment of qualified teaching staff.
6. Regular training of the University work force - continuing technical and vocational education to enable them to adopt sustainable modes of production and Consumption.
7. Quality assurance of university education in terms of class size, number of teachers and instructional materials or facilities.

References

- Abdulrahman B. D. (2015). Education, Security and National Development: The Case of Nigeria. In Adeyinka A. A., Oyeduntan, A. & Aderemi, I. A. (Eds). *Higher Education and National Development*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press. 1-37.
- Ahenkan, A. & Osei – Kojo A (2014) Achieving sustainable development in Africa: progress, challenges and prospects *International Journal of Development and Sustainability*, 3(1), 162 - 174.
- Ajibade, A, (2009). *More Graduates, Less Skills*. Retrieved from <http://www.skill.com> dated 30/11/2009.
- Akinjide, A. & Olusegun, O. O. (2018). Repositioning Education to Achieve Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria. *International Journal of Advanced Research in Public Policy, Social Development and Enterprise Studies (IJARPPSDES)*, 3 (1), 68-77.

- Chukwu, L. C., Agada, F. C. & Eze, S.G.N. (2017).Financing university education for sustainable development in Nigeria: Issues and challenges.*Journal of Education and Practice*, 8(1), 61-65.
- Edet, I. P. & Beyin, U. T. (2018).Education for Sustainable Development in Nigeria and other Developing Nations. *British Journal of Education*, 6 (5), 41-51.
- Ezeh, S.C. (2012). Education as a tool for sustainable economic growth and development.*Journal of social engineering* (JOSEN) 2(1) 174-18.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria FRN (2004). National economic development strategy (NEEDS). Abuja: National Planning Commission.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013).*National Policy on Education 2013* (6th ed.). Yaba, Lagos: NERDC Press.
- Jones M. J. (2015). Higher Education in Nigeria: Its Gain, its Burden. *Global Journal of Human Social Science Linguistics & Education*, 13(14), 21-29.
- National Universities Commission NUC (2004). Labour market expectations of Nigeria Graduates: *Report of national needs assessment surveys Abuja: NUC*.
- Obanya, P. (2004a). *Educating for the Knowledge Economy*.Ibadan: Mosuro Publishers.
- Obanya, P. (2004). *The dilemma of education in Africa*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books (Nigeria) Plc.
- Odia, L. O. & Omofonmwan, S. I. (2007).Educational System in Nigeria Problems and Prospects. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 14(1), 81-86.
- Okah, R. & Worlu W.I. (2013). Deregulation of university education in Nigeria: Assessment of challenges and the way forward. In E.Kpangban, P.E. Eya& P.C. Igbojinwaekwu (Eds) *Reforms and innovation in Nigerian education*. Onitsha: West and Solomon Publishing Company Ltd.
- Oladipo. A., Adeosun. O. & Oni.A. (2009).Quality assurance and sustainable university education in Nigeria.Retrieved 25/3/18 from www.adcice.hiroshima.u/research/paper-109/pdf.National Board for Technical Education (2011).*Technical Manpower Supply in Nigeria*. Kaduna: NBTE Press. 144-147.
- UNESCO, (2006). Decentralization of education in Nigeria: Country's reports – UNESCO Seminar. “*EFA Implementation: Teacher and resources management*” UNESCO educational policies, Paris 64-67.