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## EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES OF MANAGING EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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### **Abstract**

*This paper discussed the effective strategies of managing education for sustainable development. Human beings are very resentful to change. In other words, people should be encouraged to channel their energy towards contributing more to help alleviate poverty by acquiring relevant education and skills in order to promote developmental efforts that do not pollute good ideas and wasting scarce resources to destroy lives and edifices built over the years. Therefore, the roles education and schooling play in contributing to sustainable development is the focal point of this paper. The paper found that the real problem facing humanity today in terms of achieving sustainable development is how to motivate people to change underlying behaviours and activities that are problematic – in this case unsustainability. Therefore, it is recommended that educational settings should practice values and principles of sustainable development to provide learners to participate in and model solutions to sustainable development issues. This would expand the space for ESD to allow for the development of new behaviour norms in educational settings.*

**Keywords:** Managing, Education and Sustainable development.

### **Introduction**

Perhaps the most important issue in our time is how to sustain our planet's resources, while developing wealth and well-being for a growing population. This monumental task has been defined in the concept of sustainable development (SD). During the last few decades the world communities have agreed upon addressing SD through international treaties. Education and educational processes play a central role in this future-oriented development (Seitz, 2002). At the same time, education plays a key role in the ability of a developing country to absorb modern technology and to develop the capacity

for self-sustaining growth and development (Todaro and Smith, 2009). As a response Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) has been launched as an answer to cope with sustainability. The United Nations announced the 2005 to 2014 as the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. Central to this declaration was the idea that the goal of attaining a sustainable future can never be achieved without education and learning for sustainable development. This idea has been widely accepted and supported by governments worldwide.

### **Concept of Sustainable Development**

The concept of sustainable development (SD) seeks to combine environmental concerns with social and economic development. According to (Sharpley, 2000), development and sustainability could be in the juxtaposition, where both could have possible counterproductive effects. (Sachs, 2010) also suggests how there is no development without sustainability or sustainability without development. (Schultz, 2011) argues that SD is “a goal that can only be achieved by changing behavior”. The action of that behavior can work at different levels of the society from the individual personal life style, to political decision making, or business closures etc. and thus have different powers in making differences for sustainable development. For (Goldstein, 2012), sustainable development represents an ongoing process with systemic approaches that require creativity, flexibility and critical reflection.

### **Concept of Education**

Education can be conceived as the development of the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domain and abilities of an individual for optimal function and performance in the society. The individual has to be helped to maximize his mental, emotional and psychological abilities which will be beneficial to him and the society in which he belongs. Longman Dictionary (2007) of Contemporary English defines education as the process of teaching and learning usually at school, college or university. Implicit in this are the existence of teaching, learning and training activities meant to impact information, knowledge, skills, and competences for individual and societal improvements and development. Hence, Osuji (2004) posits that the essence of education is the harmonious development of the individual’s physical, mental, spiritual and social powers, so that he or she is equipped to offer useful service to God and humanity, suffice it to say that “education is the acquisition of knowledge, the aggregate of all processes through which a person develops ability, skills, attitudes and other forms of behaviour with positive value in the

society in which he lives (Okecha, 2008). Education is a lifelong process which frees a man from ignorance and superstition. Education enhances the quality of an individual and enables him to build up his personality in such a way that he is able to play an effective role in the development of the society he belongs.

### **Education for Sustainable Development**

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is a framework that emerged from United Nations (UN) conferences and summits for the past two decades. It emphasizes the role of education in empowering individuals to create a sustainable society for all (UNESCO, 2018). Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), as comprehensive and transformative education, involves learning content, outcomes, pedagogies, and the learning environment (Laurie, 2016) and advocates lifelong and ubiquitous learning (Appleford, Berry, Brighton, Bruce, Buck & Burbules 2020). The well-developed ESD enables learners to make informed decisions and take responsible action to promote environmental integrity, economic dynamism, and social justice to benefit present and future generations (Rieckmann, 2017).

The UNESCO definition reads: “Education for Sustainable Development means including key sustainable development issues into teaching and learning; for example, climate change, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity, poverty reduction, and sustainable consumption. It also requires participatory teaching and learning methods that motivate and empower learners to change their behavior and take action for sustainable development.

### **Education for Sustainable Development as a Response to Call for Sustainable Development**

By educating citizens, especially young generations within the formal schooling system, the hope has been to effectively address the issue of SD (Bonnet, 2001). This hope led to the launch of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD), overseen by UNESCO. During the Decade, ESD was launched as an approach to teaching and learning that promotes SD. According to (Hopkins, 2012) ESD has grown from an idea into a global movement and the understanding of what it is or should be has evolved during the DESD. As seen in the UNESCO definition, ESD contents cover diverse disciplines: climate change, poverty reduction, consumption etc., and interdisciplinarity are crucial to understand the complexity of SD issues (Venkataraman, 2009; Vare and Scott, 2007).

Through ESD research and policy development, teachers have an important task in organizing and conducting their teaching in such a way that students gain the knowledge, skills, and competences required to cope with sustainability issues (Rieckmann 2017). This means that the goal of ESD is not a ‘mere’ behavioral change among students, but rather a teaching and learning process where students’ sustainability knowledge, skills, and competences are strengthened (Mogensen and Schnack 2010; Wals 2011). This kind of education, education for sustainable development, is described as a teaching approach where action competence for sustainability is at the very core of education (Hadjichambis, Reis & Paraskeva 2020; Mogensen and Schnack 2010; Rieckmann 2017; Sinakou, Donche, Boeve & Van, 2019).

To guide development of more practical efforts, however, (UNESCO, 2006) has posited that curricula should be developed across three dimensions: the economic, the environmental, and the social. As a baseline, ESD presupposes a greater level of both access and quality of education globally. In this regard, ESD may be seen as an agent of broader development goals (e.g., UN Sustainable Development Goal no.4), recognizing the role of education in standards of living and bringing about measures to increase opportunities to those who lack them.

Sustainable development depends not only on an awareness of technological and ecological advancements but also on “rediscovery of our ways of being with the earth that nourishes us physically, spiritually, and mentally” (Cock, 2002). This awareness takes many forms but includes both the notion that humans occupy a space within a much broader ecological system and that a key component of sustainable living within the human race includes spiritual fulfillment and psychosocial well-being. With regard to the former, ESD offers a solution by way of a curriculum that emphasizes a “psychology of sustainable development” (Cock, 2002), i.e., an approach to conceiving of the world not in purely anthropomorphic terms but one in which humans are interconnected with and dependent upon non-human species. As a social process, ESD can aid in engendering a culture respectful to the principles of sustainable development. ESD includes a large number of concepts, theories, policy prescripts and practical methods/tools aimed at reshaping education systems to address the socio-economic and ecological dimensions of sustainable development (Lenglet, Fadeeva & Mochizuki, 2010). Educating those currently at school about climate change will help shape and sustain future policy making, and a broad public and international debate will support today’s policy-makers in taking strong action now (Enakshi, Patrick & Tasir, 2020). As noted

(Muttarak&Lutz, 2014) explained that “public investment through education can have a positive externality in reducing vulnerability and strengthening adaptive capacity amidst the challenges of a changing climate.”

### **Skill Development: Vocational Education and Training**

As we seek to achieve sustainable development, attention should be paid to strengthening the bridge between education and schooling and preparation for the world of work, with attention paid to improving vocational education and training. In Nigeria, vocational education and training have thus far been unsuccessful in preparing graduates to meet market needs, particularly because of lack of interaction with the industries (Nnabuo and Asodike, 2012). To align the systems with market needs, it require private participation in the management of institutions, curriculum development, system financing; upgrading infrastructure and instructor capabilities. There is also the need to allow training institutions have greater autonomy to change course offerings, charge and retain fees. Curricular should be updated to reflect modern technologies and improve flexibility by mapping and supplying of demand for skills and by ensuring private sector participation in curriculum design (Asodike, 2007).

Work based learning, coupled with related academic training, in formal education sector can provide young people with knowledge and skills they need to make effective transition from school to a first career job. This can be done through incorporating skills acquisition in the formal school programme (Mbagwu and Nwakaire,2005). For instance, students in secondary schools could be made to engage in apprenticeships in local industries. They should learn about environmental regulations that insure high standard during product design and manufacture. They should also acquire technical and social skills necessary to join the already existing workforce. Asodike (2007) advocates that students in secondary schools who incidentally form the bulk of the unemployed and easily lured into activities that impede developments such as youth restiveness should be made to acquire income generating skill while at school.

Confirming this view, Maclean (2008) opined that “Effective skills development for employability and sustainable livelihoods is essential if sustainable development is to be achieved, and this also provides a foundation for peace building through contributing to poverty alleviation and rising levels of income”. The reason is that work is a major feature in most people’s lives. Not only does it provide them with means of survival in terms of food, clothing, and shelter, but also the type of work undertaken by individuals and groups has

a major impact on their self-identity, social status, and standard of living. For every community achieving development and sustaining it is a huge task, formal education cannot carry this responsibility alone. McKeown (2002) is of the view that non-formal and informal sectors of the educational communities must work co-operatively with the formal sector. This brings us to the roles of non-formal and informal education in sustainable development.

### **Strategies for Managing ESD**

Quality education is predicated on being able to meet the unique needs of a given community. ESD is no exception to this logic, and it is thus vital that its management has the full support of a community's political leadership in order to be effective (Pablo, 2020). This nuance goes beyond the unique needs of a labor market or student body, however, and includes higher-order relationships, such as the coordination of ministries and allocation of funding, as well. In fact, political leadership will need to assume responsibility throughout the implementation of ESD (Dweck, 2009).

Though the needs of a local community must be defined and targeted with any policy for sustainable development, resourcing and accountability for their execution is crucial to ensure that they translate from presentations to people's actions. This requires that relevant administrative bodies are coordinated and held accountable for the development and implementation of an ESD framework while also creating networks of organizations in which to test initial learning and measurement. This notion of human capability is predicated on the idea that humans will be free if they have the capacity (in the form of skills, rights, knowledge, etc.) to fulfill the ends that meet their needs (Sen, 2013).

Other strategies include reviewing the existing national educational policies, increase in budgetary allocation to education, provision of adequate learning resources, promoting capacity building for teachers, modernizing instructional supervision, promoting quality assurance in schools, encouraging public/private partnership in education (Florence & Oyewole, 2016). Another strategy of managing an ESD involves determining how it will be evaluated. Given the role of the initiative within a larger sustainability framework and its status as a cross administration project, understanding the success of the program and its need for resources is so that it may be adjusted as necessary and not become the subject of political in fighting rather it should balance the interests of different groups of people (Soubotina, 2004).

### **Challenges of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)**

In spite of multiple efforts to strengthen ESD, many challenges remain. In particular, there is a need (UNEP, 2011):

- i. To ingenerate sustainable science and education.
- ii. To strengthen co-ordination and collaboration between different levels of Education for Sustainable Development; (Leonard, Collins & Felix, 2014) and
- iii. To mitigate information and knowledge gaps between different parts of the world.

### **Conclusion**

Sustainable development is a critical undertaking that requires the support and commitment of everyone in making it a reality. The role of schools in sustainable development is significant. Being places of teaching and learning, they are eminently suited to help students understand the impact they have on earth. Schools can promote good practices and serve as centres in which young people as well as the local communities learn to appreciate sustainable living and working. Education is one of the essential leading factors influencing the sustainable economic growth and development programs in first class countries; this is because they give it the needed priority and required attention. No country is said to be ready for economic growth, progress, development and sustainability without focusing on substantial investment in human capital. There is no ‘correct’ pedagogy for sustainability education, but there is a broad consensus that it requires a shift towards active, participative, and experiential learning methods that engage the learner and make a real difference to their understanding, thinking and ability to act.

Sustainability education is not only meant for students but also for the faculty. Capacity building programs should be in place so that the teachers are aware of the subject and have adequate knowledge to teach students. Teaching and learning strategies have undergone several changes in the past from nature and non-human environment to that of human welfare and health environment. The approach needs to be holistic in nature and not confined to undergraduate students but can even start from a basic education level.

### **Recommendations**

Accordingly, the following recommendations need to be taken on board, if education for sustainable development is to serve its true purpose:

1. Update educational practice with recent knowledge derived from research on sustainable development, while catalyzing changes in educational paradigms to enable knowledge of sustainability to be naturally incorporated into the system and curriculum.
2. In order to strengthen ESD, professional development must include teacher education, professional education for educational leaders, and community educators. Education of extension officers, business trainers, journalists and others involved in education in its widest sense are equally important.
3. Educational settings should practice values and principles of sustainable development to provide learners to participate in and model solutions to sustainable development issues. This would expand the space for ESD to allow for the development of new behaviour norms in educational settings.
4. It is imperative that Early Childhood Education (ECE) is recognized as the starting point for lifelong learning within education for sustainability. It is within these early years that children present the greatest ability to learn and develop.
5. Mainstreaming Development, Environment and Sustainability into all educational levels, especially Nigerian Universities. This will be in consonance with United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) driven Mainstreaming Environment and Sustainability into Africa Universities (MESA) partnership (UNEP, 2010). This will offer students, staff and university management a broad orientation to Sustainable Development and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) so that future business and corporate managers, scientists and political leaders will incorporate values and principles of sustainable development in their decision making, raise awareness and spread a new way of thinking about development, economy environment and society beyond institution boundaries inside the overall urban and rural communities, create opportunities for collaboration projects between universities, civil society, communities and the private sector, enhance quality and policy relevance of university education in Nigeria in the context of sustainable development and the achievement of the MDGs, and contribute to the revitalization of Nigeria's higher education system.



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