

## EDUCATION AS A MAJOR TOOL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE NEW NORMAL WORLD

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**Abstract:** *This paper discusses Education as a major tool for sustainable development in the new normal of the present dispensation. It looks at the functions of education as defined by scholars as a veritable tool for any form of sustainable development of a nation. This paper therefore elaborates modalities from which education as a tool can be utilized for sustainable development especially in the new normal which involves the use of modern technologies. To this end, the paper focuses on the importance of education as spelt out in the National Policy on Education (2014) as a major tool for sustainable development in the new normal. The views of other scholars on education as a major tool for sustainable development especially in the new normal have been reviewed to make further suggestions as the way forward to make Nigeria be amongst the comity of the progressive nations. One of which is that, teachers should be properly trained in the modern technologies at every level of their programmes. The practical aspect of this should be well emphasized so that Nigeria will not remain in the doldrums of yesteryears.*

**Keywords:** Tool, Education, Sustainable, Development, New Normal World

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### INTRODUCTION

It is an unquestionable and universal fact that education is the cornerstone of the development of any nation. Where a good system of education is put in place, there is tendency for evidence of great achievement and development in every sector of that nation because education is the propelling force that can make a nation and her citizens achieve desired goals.

Education is meant to develop the potential of every individual to the fullest that will enable him or her participate actively and freely in the society to which he or she belongs, so that his or her participation will contribute to the nation's growth and development of the society.

The new normal educational system is expected to provide for every individual to learn at his or her own pace in preparation for future endeavours. It gives room for flexibility which enables individuals to choose freely what he or she thinks will be of benefit in the future.

In the new normal, there are demands or obligations on the part of individual involves, some of which are – individuals should create enough time for learning, adjust to the new normal, be available for discussion, encourage collaboration, be flexible; interactive platforms must be encouraged. Individual should train themselves on how to manage time, have a study plan, create a space for study where distraction will not have any influence on the study, do away with social media during study time, be focused and fully engaged. A healthy

environment should be created for sustainable development where everybody will work without intimidation or coercion.

The main objectives of sustainable development are protection of the environment, promotion of the equity and progress of the society, preservation and conservation of the natural resources, growth and stability of the national economy which everybody will have access to a healthy clean and safe environment. It involves taking care of the present, making solid arrangement and provision with the mind that the future generation will take care of themselves.

### **TYPES OF EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Education is always viewed to be the bedrock of any sustainable development. It is always the key to the success of any form of development, which could be in the health, economy, politics, energy, environment and other sectors. As such, the country needs to focus more on the education of individuals to enable them develop the zeal to learning and being innovative in sustainable development of this new normal world. Emphasize have been laid on the various types of education and their functions in the lives of individuals. Ogundipe (2021) identifies these four types of education as:

- i. **Casual education**, which involves learning picked up unintentionally because it is not intended. It is also indeterminant, since it has no content and method but there is always a teacher and learner who do not know they are just that.

This casual education will be very much germane in character modification of every individual

when the elders in the society do not look away in a different direction while abnormalities are being perpetrated by especially the youths in their environment. This has always been the practice in the yester-years when an erring child is always called to order by others in the community. This has always led to sustainable development of the society. This should also be part of the new normal of the present world.

- ii. **Informal Education** is another type identified in which there is a method, intention/purpose as in the traditional setting where men and women learn to dress and do things according to their customs. It is not so organized because people learn through correction and observation. In this type of education, every individual must be made to know the value system of the society. The behaviour and attitude of a growing child must be monitored and guided as it used to be in the past years. The culture and norms of the society the youths belong should not be discarded for foreign ones that they are imbibing now. They have not brought any sustainable development but rather, backwardness to the society. For instance, some youths now wear rags, which to them, is fashionable. All hands must therefore be on deck to checkmate these behaviours for sustainable development.
- iii. **Non-formal education** on the other hand, is a relatively organized learning which is carried out,

outside the formal school and usually on a part-time basis, since it is usually for workers or those already contributing their quota to national development and is usually on voluntary basis. Under this, youths because they constitute the larger part of the society must be duly engaged and encouraged to participate in any form of entrepreneurship if they are or not inclined to the formal type of education. This type of education will allow them, acquire skills which inspite of the formal education will provide a mean of self-sustenance for development. Any unmeaningful programme should not be encouraged by the government at all levels (Local, State or Federal) to be showcasing activities that will not bring development to the country. For example, programmes where both male and female youths are brought together under the same roof and were shown on television sets perpetrating immoral acts and being awarded huge amounts for such activities is rather appalling. While youths who engage in educational debates and quiz competitions are merely given stipends is not encouraging and will never bring any meaningful sustainable development.

- iv. The last of these which is not the list types of education is the **formal one**. It is highly organized, rigid and uses some criteria for admission into the system. It is also certificated and examination oriented. However, in whatever

package any of these types of education comes, it is a basic objective of development that can lead to sustainability of the country especially if it is geared towards the new normal world of the present time. These education types similarly have to be utilized in the new normal world for sustainability to perform their functions as speculated by Fafunwa (1974) in Oyelade (2017) definition of education as the aggregate of all processes by which a child or young adult develops the abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviours which are of positive values to the society in which he lives.

Under this **Formal education**, the government of the country has to be very much proactive in its policy formulation and implementation since they determine all activities carried out in any level of the school system. Emphases should be placed on all the policies that will lead to sustainable development and should be duly monitored by personnels given the assignment.

## **EDUCATION AND ITS FUNCTIONS**

In considering the functions of education and by extension in the new normal world it is essential to see it as an all-round development which corroborates the fact that it is very vital in all human endeavours. Be it in health sector, economic sector, social sector, agricultural just to mention but a few. Education is very essential as none of the human endeavour can function optimally without it. No wonder Adedokun and Olanipekun (2021) opine that it is vital to the development of individuals and societies because social economic and health of

citizens will depend to a large extent on the quality of citizens' it. They stated further that it is essential for the development of any nation and this is based on the quality of the education of citizens.

- Education also functions as weapon to improve human life and no doubt a most potent tool irrespective of the person's gender. It brings into bare the very good things or qualities in man's life.
- Education functions from cradle to grave and even continues in there as said in the words of Prof. Michael Omolewa. Education places an individual at a better chance of getting a good job. It also makes an individual efficient and competent in his/her dutiful and diligent too. Education gives Man opportunity to utilize technology.
- Education broadens man's outlook and makes one sophisticated, confident and also humbles the recipient.
- Education gives one access to information since an educated individual is no doubt a literate person who is able to read and write and most information are got through reading.
- Education promotes all round expected development such as skills, knowledge, understanding, values and actions needed to promote sustainable world, which in turn ensures environmental stability, protection and conservation or preservation it gives room for social equity and motivates economic stability.

## **RELEVANCE OF EDUCATION TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

According to UNESCO (2021) relevance of education to sustainable development is that it empowers the recipients to take informed decisions as well as responsible actions for environmental integrity, economic viability likewise a just society for present and future generations while respecting cultural diversity.

Buckler and Creech (2014) opine that education may be referred to as the major tool that can be used to shape the future we desire. It is the conveyance of knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and so on; which means that education for sustainability is a way to make the world a healthier and more livable place for present and upcoming generations. This assertion by Buckler and Creech (2014) is in line with the fact that education is an essential tool for any sustainable development to thrive in any country, more importantly in the new normal. The whole world has now reached a stage where education must be embraced and also given its pride of place if development must be sustained in any country and the entire universe at large.

Furthermore, education is relevant to sustainable development because knowledge is dynamic, it grows and as such will enable countries grow in ways that adapt to the challenges posed by climate change, which will in turn help to protect important natural resources for ours and future generations to come.

Meanwhile this world population would have reached 9 billion by the year 2050 as estimated preparation to educate this enormous human increase

## **EDUCATION AND E-LEARNING**

It is no longer news that since year 2020 the pandemic known as Covid-19 or Coronavirus has promoted both teachers and learners at all levels of education to gradually shift from or better still learn to embrace the electronic teaching and learning methods which is devoid of physical contacts of learners with the teacher/lecturer so as to avert or curb the spread of the pandemic or better still embrace the blended learning method. In fact, at the very beginning of the pandemic, when people were dying in multiples from its infection, the World Health Organization had declared the Covid-19 a pandemic and as such the education system across the globe changed to online mode of teaching and learning. In fact, the rapid development in technology have made distance education easy. McBrien, Cheng, and Phyllis (2009). Mark and Semaan (2008) corroborate the fact that technology provides innovative and resilient solutions at times of crisis to combat disruption and helps people to communicate and even work virtually without the need of face to interaction.

The E-learning can be in form of zoom, which allows conducting live online classes web-conference, webinars, Video charts and life meetings. This application gave a lot people a sigh of relief.

### **SCHOLARS' VIEWS ON EDUCATION AS A MAJOR TOOL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.**

Scholars in the field of education have expressed their views on education being a major tool for sustainable development. Scholars have emphasised the need for quality education, which must be seen to be relevant at the country level because of its importance. Also, there was a group of researchers in Southern Africa, who realised that issues bordering on sustainability

are essential to quality education in African context. On that premise, Nickel and Lowe (2010) propose seven dimensions of quality education which are:

- (1) Effectiveness: which has to do with how aims are met
- (2) Efficiency: This has to do with maximizing resources
- (3) Equity: this has to do with equal access to education regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability etc.
- (4) Responsiveness: This has to do with meeting immediate needs of individual learners with consideration to uniqueness of learner's abilities.
- (5) Relevance; This has to do with the usefulness of education to the learner immediate needs, later in life and even in distant future.
- (6) Reflexibility: This has to do with ability to adjust to changes which is important with an uncertain future.
- (7) Sustainability: This has to do with behavioural change and acceptance of responsibilities when goals are set, decisions are made and evaluation taken.

Nikel and Lowe in their study have been able to expatiate on the need for quality education to bring about sustainable development in the above seven dimension which quality education must adopt.

### **MODALITIES FOR EDUCATION AS A TOOL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Therefore for education to remain a major tool for sustainable development, it is imperative that all the right modalities have to be put in place. Different countries have adopted various techniques in order to key into the new normal world. For instance before the

Covid-19 pandemic, there have been blended learning or the integration of face to face and online instruction which is widely adopted across higher education with some scholars referring to it as the “new traditional model or the new normal” in course delivery in the United States (Dziuban, Graham & Sicilia, 2018). These scholars explain further, that generally research has found that Blended learning (BL) results in improvement in students success and satisfaction. Though, these same scholars are quick to point out that those who have been most successful at blended learning initiatives stress the importance of institutional support for course redesign and planning. Other scholars like Hew, Jia & Bai (2020) from a large public Asian University, describe a promising strategy for promoting online active learning as the fully online flipped classroom pedagogical approach. According to these scholars, an online flipped classroom is a variant of the conventional flipped classroom model. To these scholars a conventional flipped classroom model consists of online learning of basic concepts before class, followed by face to face learning activities. However, according to these scholars, the outbreak of Covid-19 inspired them to transform their conventional flipped classes into fully online flipped ones through the zoom video conferencing application. This zoom Web to them, allows users to communicate online with individuals in real time via computer, tablet, or mobile device.

In order to meet up with other progressive nations, all the stakeholders of the educational system in Nigeria have to be proactive in studying the modalities adopted by others and integrating them, for teaching and learning to be meaningful especially in the use of modern technologies like the virtual, zoom, e-learning, e-library and so on. In line with this, teachers who are very much pivot to education have to always be trained and retrained in these

modern technologies to carry out their duties efficiently and effectively well in this new normal world.

### **FOCUS ON THE NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION (NPE, 2014)**

As a result of the importance attached to education being a major tool for sustainable development even in the normal world, the Nigerian government had already formulated a philosophy which is based on the following set of beliefs that:

- (a) Education is an instrument for national development and social change;
- (b) Education is vital for the promotion of a progressive and united Nigeria;
- (c) Education maximizes the creative potentials and skills of the individual for self-fulfillment and general development of the society;
- (d) Education is compulsory and a right of every Nigerian irrespective of gender, social status, religion, colour, ethnic background and any peculiar individual challenges; and
- (e) Education is to be qualitative, comprehensive, functional and relevant to the needs of the society.

From this Nigeria’s philosophy, it is obvious that every citizen has to be well integrated in any of the types of education available in order to fulfill the set of beliefs which will bring about the desired progress to the country. To this end, no child should be allowed to drop out from schools, but rather be given the opportunity of learning at his or her pace as earlier speculated, to be a useful citizen to this country. In consonance with this, is Nwosu (2016) quoting Benjamin Franklin, one

of the founding fathers of the United States that “An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest”. This is found to be true as Nwosu (2016) asserts that education still remains the most powerful weapon that can be used to change the world of this new normal for sustainable development.

## CONCLUSION

The National Policy on Education (2014), in Nigeria allows reforms and re-strategizing. This dynamic part of the national policy gives room for flexibility of the curriculum to accommodate changes from time to time. If this important part of the national policy on education is absent, there would be no development in educational sector. To meet up with advanced countries and to have a sustainable educational development, the stake holders of the system should adjust and reshape policies to meet present demands, current technological trends and expectations for development in the country.

### *Suggestions*

- Nigeria should try to produce students that will become change agents. That is, those that will be able to act for themselves, not passive observers of what is going on around them. This requires different learning outcomes that exist around what education for sustainable development aspires to achieve.
- The learners should be encouraged to learn about team-work, partnerships, leadership, democracy.
- Educational institutions should incorporate the ideas of education for sustainable development in the school programmes.
- Learner centred approach should be encouraged.

- Teachers should be sponsored to attend seminars, conferences and workshops.
- Schools should take their services beyond the four wall of their institutions.
- Government should empower/finance the school projects and run workshops on sustainability
- Stable power supply-solar energy/inverter should be provided where electricity is not available.
- The practical aspect of teacher education programme should be well emphasized.

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