

Educational Management and Sustainable Development in Nigeria: An Analytical Perspectives

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Abstract

Since the existence of man, the desire to conquer and subdue the earth has been a major goal. This is evident in the trajectory of man's development from the Stone Age to the present Information Age, man has continuously strived to overcome the challenges posed by the environment in which he lives. However, studies have shown that man's action is leading to the earth's degradation, issues with biodiversity, global food scarcity, and desertification abounds. Sustainable development is a clarion call from the United Nations for states to speed up their human and economic development and meet the needs of the people without compromising the earth. Education is a veritable tool in sustainable development because of its ability to inculcate values, skills, and capabilities in the individual which will accelerate the rate of sustainable development and impact on the well-being of man in Nigeria and the world at large. Education management teams have major roles to play; they are to create a conducive school environment that is filled with green surroundings, ensure equality, fairness, and justice for all. A place where meaningful learning that will lead to growth and peaceful co-existence among people can take place. This paper addresses the concept of sustainable development, education in sustainable development and the role of education management in sustainable development. Finally, the study recommended some practices that will enhance sustainable development in Nigeria educational system such as adopting the policy of Green School and the practice of garbage classification in schools.

Keywords: Sustainable development, Management, Biodiversity, Green school

Introduction

Sustainable development is a clarion call from the United Nations (UN) for states to speed up their human and economic development and meet the needs of the people without compromising the earth. The earth has been severely damaged and brought to great ruins by the indiscriminate activities of man. Moreover, research has shown that humans are overusing productive land, the oceans are under threat because of pollution; humans are destroying nature, accelerating climate change, endangering biodiversity, and depleting natural resources as a result of the more highly industrialized livestock-based food systems (McNeill, 2022). Natural occurring resources such as sand, water, fossil fuel, trees, and soil have been overused and depleted at almost double the rate at which they can regenerate (McNeill, 2022). The United Nations (UN) report reminds the world that the present generation has the responsibility to bequeath to future generations a planet that is not irreversibly damaged by human activities (United Nations Report, 2019). Environmental, economic, and social indicators show that the world's current method of progress is unsustainable and looming great danger if not checked. Sustainable development is seen by Dernbach and Cheever (2015) as a decision-making framework that responds to the deteriorating environmental conditions around the world and strives to ensure that development is just,

balance and environmental protective and restorative with the slogan “humans are to live in harmony with nature rather than at its expense” (Dernbach & Cheever, 2015). Education is a key to unlocking sustainable development, it is a veritable tool in inculcating values, skills, critical thinking and capabilities in the individual. It will help to accelerate the rate of sustainable development and impact the well-being of man. Hence, education needs to be properly managed and reoriented to build a better future for all (Hargreaves, 2010). The crux of this paper is to examine the concept of sustainable development and critically analyze the transformative roles of educational management in helping to conserve, restore, and used nature sustainably in Nigeria schools.

Sustainable development

The Brundtland Report in 1987 defined Sustainable development as development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Similarly, Ahenkan and Osei-Kojo (2014) define it as a development path along which the maximization of human well-being for today’s generation does not lead to the decline in the well-being of future generations. The point being made in both definitions is that the process of development in the world today needs to be enhanced, conserved, and managed so that the future generation has something to live on and the cycle of life continues without an abrupt halt. The objectives of sustainable development is to create a vibrant economy that is sustainable and growing in the right direction; secondly to protect and enhance the natural environment by minimizing pollution and waste; thirdly, to give all quality education and finally, ensuring equal social opportunity to all which aims at supporting and creating healthy global communities (UNESCO, 2017). Many researchers believed that the environmental dimension of sustainable development is the most important, and sustainability is often focused on countering major environmental problems such as climate change, loss of biodiversity, loss of ecosystem services, land degradation, and air and water pollution (Purvis, Mao & Robinson, 2019). According to the Intergovernmental Science-policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services global report (IPBES, 2019), nature is declining globally at unprecedented rates, species extinction is accelerating, with grave impacts on people around the world. Without biodiversity, life would not sustain. This is because a healthy ecosystem provides man with oxygen and food.

The United Nations sustainable development report recommends the following actions in order to reduce human-caused damages to the earth and its ecosystem: countries should protect and restore the world’s wetlands; reduce food waste; move away from reliance on natural resources, fight ocean acidification; reduce the falling of trees, fight species extinction and increase protections identified as key for global biodiversity (McNeil, 2022). For sustainable development to run a clean cause, education has to be the priority of every country.

Education for sustainable development (ESD)

Education is a veritable tool for development and in Nigeria, it is highly rated in the national development plans because it is the most important instrument for change (Federal Republic of

Nigeria, 2004). Education for sustainable development can be described as education that consists of activities that aim to develop alternative values and transformative actions that lead to problem-solving and to realize a sustainable society (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2020)). Education for sustainable development is explained by Poeck & Loones (2011) as the process of “learning to think about and work towards a livable world, and in the future, for ourselves and others, here and elsewhere on the planet”. The definition tells us that the education given should equip and prepare learners to be creative thinkers who are conscious of making the world a safe place to live in now and in the future. Warwick, (2020) suggested that the process starts with including major sustainable development issues and practices in the curriculum and using teaching methods that motivate and empower learners to change their behaviors and take action. This may include teachings on climate change and its impact on life; instructions on poverty reduction; ways to reduce biodiversity loss; ways to reduce deforestation and desertification as well as instructions on effective pollution management.

Furthermore, ESD is a global education that teaches people about the environment, its interconnectedness, and how to care for it (Hargreaves, 2010). From Hargreaves’s viewpoint, ESD should encompass the three objectives of sustainable development; the economic, the environmental, and the social. Students are to be taught the interconnection and their importance to existence. ESD has produced initiatives such as the Green School which encourages teachers to bring to the classroom activities that shows love for the natural world (Hargreaves, 2010). The concept of the green school or eco-schools was formulated at the world summit on sustainable development held in Johannesburg in 2002. The green school is visualized as a school guided by the principles of environmental sustainability, clean, healthy, and protective, with green surroundings (Chandhary, 2019). It also seeks to sensitize teachers and students on environmental sustainability and encourage the active involvement of the community. In green schools, students learning extends outside the classroom and this help students to consolidate and apply knowledge gained as well as understand environmental processes (Chaudhary, 2019). If the world wants a greener planet, and a sustainable future for everyone, she must ask for more from her educational systems than just a transfer of mere knowledge. Schools need to focus on developing economically, environmentally and socially (Global Education Monitoring Report, 2016).

Moreover, the assertion made by the Director-General of UNESCO Bokova, gave credence to the importance of education to sustainable development. He noted that education has the ability to impact on the well-being of individuals and the future of our planets by increasing the rate at which we develop the world and the pace at which we sustain it. As a result, a fundamental change is needed in the way people perceive education in global development. It should be in gear with 21st Century challenges and aspirations and foster the right types of values and skills that will lead to sustainable inclusive growth, and peaceful co-existence (Bokovia, cited in UNESCO, 2017). It can therefore be said that ESD demands a holistic approach to the way

schools teach and learn. Emphasis should be placed on creating a conducive learning environment, promoting cooperation and collaboration among students, and developing students' ability to think critically, especially on issues concerning sustainable development.

The role of educational Management in Sustainable development

To achieve sustainable development around the globe, the United Nations listed in Agenda 2030 seventeen sustainable development goals. These goals addressed issues of poverty, hunger, climate change, biodiversity, and education. Injustice, peace, gender equality, clean water, energy good health, economic health, sustainable cities, responsible consumption, and many more. These goals specified measures for tackling the challenges faced by all communities in the world and education was identified as having a connection to all these goals (Muller, Hancock, Wang, Sticker, Cui & Lambert, 2021). Through education, awareness of the current state of the world is created in people; also, the possible ways of tackling them are exposed and the skills and capabilities needed to tackle them are also developed in learners. Furthermore, education has the ability to build in students responsible and sustainable educational practices that can change society. Hence quality education is the key to a sustainable future and it starts with school management revamping their roles to accommodate sustainability.

Education management is a construct that has to do with the planning, organizing, coordinating, directing, and monitoring of the activities of schools and effectively utilizing human and material resources available to them to successfully accomplish the objectives of institutions of learning. It involves the alignment of physical, financial, and human potentials in the school with the aim of optimally achieving the school goals (Curic, Lazarevin & Brzakovic, 2018). The roles of school management on SD has been discussed in details in a study carried out by Curic et al (2018). They noted that educational management should therefore:

1. Include sustainable development in educational programs at all levels.
2. Integrate SD goals and objectives into the school's overall goals
3. Should incorporate the basic principles of SD into the curriculum
4. Should create teamwork among staff and a positive work environment
5. Encourage innovative practices that are needed for sustainability
6. Develop positive ideas of well-being, while minimizing ideas that negatively impact on the environment. (Curic et al, 2018)

Equally, management should encourage teachers and students on the need to replace existing social habits with those that are more sustainable and finally they should help students to develop critical ways of thinking and reacting which is needed to engage in analytical dialogue and problem-solving mechanism, for the transformation of individuals, communities and institution (Minott, Ferguson & Minott, 2019). Educational managers can contribute to sustainable learning by enriching the curricula with information and skills that reinforce sustainability (UNESCO, 2013). Study has identified funding as a major problem to achieving sustainable development in Nigerian educational system (United Nations, 2019). Adequate funding is needed to provide a

conducive learning environment and all the materials required for effective planning and implementation of sustainability. Educational managers are therefore, encouraged to develop strategies for overcoming barriers they will encounter as a result of the implementation of ESD. They are to provide adequate support and necessary resources for school teachers who participate in the transformation process toward sustainability. Davis (2018) argued that those in charge of educational management in schools have lagged behind in comparison to other organizations in the world which are changing at great speed to meet the 21st Century's demands on sustainability. To keep pace Davis suggests that the system should be overhauled and be guided by United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

School management should institutionalize the concept of sustainability and promote its best practices (Berchin, Dos Santos, Marcon, Corseuit, De Andrades, 2017). They are to include courses that promote sustainable development into their curriculum. Awareness should be created by school management among students, parents, and teachers on issues that bother on the environment while promoting concepts that deal with protecting and preserving society from potential risks (Reed, Godmaire, Abernethy, Guertin & 2014). School management are to involve community members and encourage them to change their attitudes, behaviors, and actions that inhibit sustainable development and help them through organizing programs that will empower them to meet their requirement for sustainability (McKewon as cited in Alarifi, 2022). This will require a lot of efforts and funds for effective implementation to occur.

For effective integration of Sustainable development into the mainstream of education by school management, Segovia (2010) suggested four possible ways:

1. Updating educational practices with recent knowledge obtained from research on sustainable development and incorporating that knowledge into the educational system.
2. Conducting school-based longitudinal studies using students' work samples to determine the impact of the ESD curriculum on student learning outcomes.
3. Conducting studies to establish and strengthen key areas of ESD practice in teaching and learning.
4. Conducting research to strengthen a vibrant community of practice in education involving ESD (Segovia, 2010).

However, effective integration starts with the government making educational policies that are friendly to the environment and that align with sustainability. For instance, China government initiated policies that promoted ESD. Policies such as developing green school projects, promoting ESD in communities, and conducting research on ESD in tertiary institutions (Lee as cited in Muller, Hancock, Stricker & Wang, 2021). In addition to the above, is the policy on garbage classification which came as a result of the threat posed to Chinese city sustainability by increasing municipal garbage in China (Kuang & Lin, 2021). The government added a regulation that requires all schools to integrate the concept of garbage classification and green ecological development into school education (Muller, Hancock, Stricker & Wang, 2021). Besides, other

countries have also tried to adapt sustainable development goals into their school curriculum, for instance, the Finnish government included sustainable development in some topics of the curriculum; environmental issues are addressed in lessons. Elective courses are devoted to sustainable development, and students are allowed to participate in projects and join environmental networks to know more about taking care of nature (Loukola, 2011 as cited in Alarifi, Bukhari, AlHagbani & Aldosari, 2022).

In Nigeria, perhaps in response to the SDGs Nigerian University Commission (NUC), 2022 developed the new Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) to replace the old Benchmark Minimum Academic Standard for its inadequacy (Okebukola, 2023). This was done to unify the curricula used in universities and align their contents to achieve social, environmental, cultural, and economic sustainability in the country. The CCMAS provides 70% of the curriculum content while the universities provide 30% based on their individual peculiarities and characteristics. Okebukola noted that the new curriculum was developed to stimulate greater learning; produce future-fit graduates, provide an essential foundation for long-life learning, and nurture critical thinking and problem-solving skills in students. The importance of this initiative is to develop students' skills, knowledge, and competencies needed to revamp and restore our damaged world. This new curriculum focuses more on environmental protection, entrepreneurship, economic stability, cultural heritage, and peaceful coexistence. The school management is positioned to handle the implementation of ESD in institutions. It should be incorporated into the teaching plan, communicated among staff, collaborated with the local community and school community, and also reflected on learning outcomes (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2020).

Davis (2018) noted some guidelines for reforming educational management to meet the SDGs;

1. School management is to serve the needs of students and society and sustainable development is one of those needs. Educational managers should unleash a force for human progress through innovative practices that will be gentle on the environment.
2. School managers should be trained to use tools of collaboration in service of sustainable development goals
3. Management should harmonize pedagogical practices with sustainability processes (Davis, 2018).

Conclusion

Sustainable development is the only way out of the dangers and challenges posed by earth degradation, climate changes, biodiversity, pollution, poverty, gender inequality, and many more. Education has been identified as the key to unlocking sustainability. Through education, man develops competence, abilities, skills, and critical thinking which is needed to equip learners to analyze and solve problems for the transformation of the individual, communities, and the world in general. Educational management is required to lead this course through effective

planning, coordination, organizing, directing, and monitoring of all activities related to earth sustainability and aligning them to fit into educational coursework and activities.

Recommendations

- i. School management should be trained by the ministry of education on sustainable development best practices
- ii. School management in Nigeria should adopt the policy of Green School and garbage classification in schools and convert them into routine practices.
- iii. Conscious efforts should be made by school management to integrate sustainability into the mainstream of teaching and learning in schools.

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