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NEW THINKING FOR ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS MOVING FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with new thinking for the achievement of sustainable development goals by moving from theory to practice in Nigerian universities. Nigerian universities serve as the backbone of the country as it contributes greatly to the growth and development of the nation. Sustainable development simply refers to development that stands the test of time. In most Nigerian universities today, it has been observed that students have been taught using theoretical methods of teaching. This serves as a limit to their knowledge as their peers abroad are taught with both theoretical and practical methods. The aim of this paper is to provide new ways to curb this problem so as to achieve sustainable development in the country. The objective of this paper is to identify these problems facing the achievement of sustainable development in the country and also to proffer solutions to these problems. The paper discussed both the theoretical and practical methods of teaching students. The paper further discussed the problems facing the achievement of sustainable development in Nigerian universities to include lack of funds, lack of ICT and e-learning facilities, lack of entrepreneurship education amongst others. Conclusions were made that sustainable development goals can be achieved if Nigerian universities utilize both the theoretical and practical methods of teaching at the same time. Also, ways forward from the problems facing the achievement of sustainable development in Nigerian were provided to include the inculcation of entrepreneurship education in the university's curriculum, workshops, seminars and conferences for the training and development of lecturers, provision of internet and e-learning facilities for students, amongst others.

Keywords: Sustainable, Sustainable Development, Theory, Practice, University Education

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INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is in dire need for sustainable development moving from where we are now, to where we ought to be. Most countries in the world have moved from one level to the next level because of sustainable development. Universities in Nigeria need to have a new thinking of doing things to achieve sustainable development. Sustainable development simply means the development that will care for now and the future to come, without facing any form of compromise. There are fourteen sustainable development goals ascribed by the United Nation. Quality education, which is the fourth sustainable development goal, is the basis for attainment of all universities upon which they base their goals and objectives. University education is education of a pathway or trajectory of which is the next level of education after the secondary school. It is the basis for teaching and learning, research, information, dissemination of store house and community service and the essence of it is to produce well skilled manpower for the labour market, the society and for international competency. It also involves people who can be self-reliant and independent, full of skills to take over the world by storm. For this to be achieved, the university administrators have to give these young, brilliant and vibrant intellectual students a quality education, coupled with well-equipped, state of the art, modern facilities of the 21st century, with novel innovations and ideas with well-designed curriculum to suit the needs of the society now and in the future to come.

CONCEPTUALIZATION

Sustainable

Sustainability includes intergenerational equity, just and peaceful societies, social tolerance, environmental preservation and restoration, poverty alleviation and natural resource conservation (Ogundele & Egunjimi, 2016). Sustainable depicts meeting our needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet and respond to their own needs (Kuhlman & Farrington, 2010). Torutein (2013) defined sustainable in a clearer term, as that development that meets the needs of the present generation without even compromising the ability of future generation to meet their needs.

Development

Adeniran (2013) pointed out that development is a multidimensional process, one that changes the economy, polity, and society of the country in which it occurs. Median (2018) opined that development as a process that creates growth, positive change, or the addition of physical, economic, environmental, social, and demographic components with the purpose of raising standard of living in the society. Chrisman as cited in Lawal and Oluwatoyin (2011) maintained that development is a process of societal advancement, where improvement in the well-being of people are generated through strong partnerships between all sectors, corporate bodies and other groups in the society. Ezoem, Obierika and Nwachokor in Tomori (2013) agreed that development implies the modernization of society entails the conversion of a peasant society into an industrial one and means a change in the whole way of life, in expectations and motivations and even physical environment. Sen (2008) rightly put it that development is a process of expanding the real freedom that people enjoy; that development requires the removal of major sources of unfreedom, poverty, as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as

systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or over activities of repressive states. Okemakinde, Adewuyi and Alabi (2013) opined that for national development to be attained there is need to give priority to investment in human capacity through teacher education. If individual are well educated, they will engage themselves effectively in profitable ventures which in turn enhance the development of the society.

Sustainable Development

Ahenkan and Osei-Kojo (2014) were of the opinion that sustainable development is a development path along which the maximization of human being for today's generation does not decline in the well-being of the future generation. They further emphasized that sustainable development considers the needs of the future and the current generation tandem and it is rooted in the pursuit and well-being and welfare of the people. Sustainable development requires meeting the pressing needs of all people and extending opportunity to satisfy their aspiration for a better life, it ensures a developed world with secured and healthy environment for all; human beings, animals and plants (Ndubuisi-Okolo, Anekwe & Attah, 2016). Idris (2013) mentioned that sustainable development processes are dynamic and can only make impact through actions taken to achieve human centered development. Ugoh (2008) posits that sustainable development as a construct, which envisions development as meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of the future generation. Sustainable development is a development that can be conferred either indefinitely or for a given period. Sustainable development (SD) has become an ubiquitous development paradigm- the catch phrase for international aid agencies, the jargon of development planners, the theme of conferences and academic papers, as well as the slogan of development and environmental activities (Ukaga, Maser & Reichenbach, 2011).

The seventeen (17) Sustainable development goals are:

- No poverty;
- Zero hunger;
- Good health and well-being;
- Quality education;
- Gender education;
- Clean water and sanitation;
- Affordable and clean energy;
- Decent work and economic growth;
- Industry, innovation and infrastructure;
- Reduced inequalities;
- Sustainable cities and communities;
- Responsible consumption and production;
- Climate action;
- Life below the water;
- Life on land;
- Peace and justice strong institutions; and
- Partnerships for the goals.

Education

Olawaiye (2013) mentioned that education is the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes, interests, abilities, competence and cultural norms, of a society by people and to transmit the life to the coming generations so as to enhance perpetual development of the society. Asuka (2014) asserted that education does not only hold the key to modernization or development of society, but it is the king of all the academic disciplines, social institutions of society and the key to human happiness and good society. Asuka continued by stating that the future of Nigeria lies in getting it right in her educational system. Fafunwa in (Enevoh, Okon & Eking, (2012) posits that it deals with mental, physical, psychological and social development of citizens in a given society. Education has been described as entirely all the processes by which a child or young adult develops the abilities, attitudes and other forms of behavioural patterns that are positive value to the changing of the society in which individual lives (Fafunwa in changing of the society in which the individual lives). Victor-Ishikaku (2017) mentioned that education is the training of individuals, equipping them with the right kind of knowledge, skills and competencies to make them useful to themselves and to make them useful to themselves and to the society.

Tuemi (2016) supplied the meaning of education as the transmission of what is worthwhile to those who become committed to it, and must be lived or acted out to qualify the person as having acquired education. The usefulness of indigenous education is that it gives people the possibility to develop values, skills, attitudes and competence other than the ones developed in the framework of formal education. Akpo (2015) sees education as the process of facilitating knowledge through the transfer of skills, values, beliefs and habits under the guidance of educators through, which the learners may also educate themselves in a process called autodidactic training. Akpo views education as the acquisition of knowledge planned or unplanned which enhances the all-round development of human potentials for the good of the individuals and his general society. Unachukwu (2009) submits that through education, the individual citizen is fully equipped to contribute meaningfully to the social and economic development of his nation.

Boyi (2014) saw education as a systematic procedure for the transfer and transformation of culture through formal and informal training of people in a society. It deals with mental, physical, psychological and social development of citizens in a given society. In Ada (2012), education is a tool for self-development and the development of the society. It provides descriptions given to education by these individuals that it would be difficult to separate education and entrepreneurship from one another. So, it will be very crucial to see the relationship that exists between education and entrepreneurship education. Usoro (2016) asserted that education is a vehicle through which the human societies preserve, sustain and transfer their cultural values and ideals for the growth and development of the society; to improve the standard of living of the society. Umaru (2013) maintained that education is the fundamental factor for development and as such, investing in human development through education cannot be overemphasized. Odukoya (2016) stated that the quality of education naturally determines the quality of development.

University Education

University education is education obtained after the secondary school level. It serves as a factory which produces the human resources of the nation's economy. The purpose of the university is to train future leaders that will probably become politicians, educationist, lawyers, engineers, doctors and scientist etc. The purpose of university education is for teaching, learning, research, community and skill development. The lofty goals of university education are to be achieved through teaching, research, dissemination of existing and new information, services to community, skill development and a storehouse of knowledge.

The National Policy of Education (NPE) (FRN, 2014) provided the aims of university education in Nigeria which include:

- To contribute to national development through high level relevant, manpower training;
- To develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society;
- To develop the intellectual capacity of individual to understand and appreciate their level and external environment;
- To acquire both physical and intellectual skills, this enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society;
- To promote and encourage scholarship and community service (FRN, 2014).

UNESCO (2004) opined that university education is provided to do the following:

- Provide highly specialized training courses adapted to the needs of economic and social life;
- Be open to all so as to cater for the many aspects of lifelong education in the wildest scene;
- Prepare the student for research and leadership;
- Promote international co-operation through internalization of research, technology, networking and free movement of persons and ideas.

Benefits of University Education

- It would aid students in pursuing their dreams and also encourage them to be independent and self-sufficient;
- University education will help an individual to succeed in today's workforce and establish an enjoyable career of his/her choice;
- Individuals are required to have degrees for a wide range of careers such as medicine, education, engineering, accounting and law and the university provides for the obtainment of such degrees;
- The job market is extremely competitive and employers require the services of skilled employees to work for them. This skill can be developed in the university.

Methods of Teaching

There are two methods of teaching students:

Theoretical Method: This refers to a teaching method that requires the students to listen and learn.

Practical Method: This refers to a teaching method that requires students to visualize and practice what they are taught in class. This can be carried out in the following forms:

- Demonstration
- Field trips;
- Project works;
- Internship programmes;
- E-learning;
- Practical experiments in the laboratories and workshops

New Thinking

Adequate Funding: Ogbonnaya (2012) asserts that funding involves the provision of physical cash, credit facilities, that is trade credits, bank credits, allowances or discounts received, differed expenses such as differed taxes, rents, rates, bill, undistributed profits in the form of retained earnings, reserves, depreciation provisions, and others. Ochai (2012) rightly said that funds are necessary for the employment and payment of staff salaries and allowances in the universities. Without adequate funding, no form of development can occur in the university. Hence, it is necessary for funds to be adequately provided so as to further provide educational facilities and to ensure quality education in the university. Oralu and Oladele (2015) agreed that adequate funding could defray for and provide basic requirements for the achievement of educational goals for each level of education.

Entrepreneurship Education: Another way through which universities can achieve sustainable development in Nigeria is through entrepreneurship education. This course enables students to practice trade and business, teaches them the importance of business and also equips students with the skills they need to be self-sufficient, independent and self-employed upon graduation from the university. Singh (2015) defined entrepreneurship education as the process of professional application of knowledge, attitude, skills and competences. Eke, Igwesi and Orji (2011) agreed that entrepreneurship education seeks to provide learners with the knowledge, skill and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety of settings. Ray-offor and Onyezere (2013) strongly agreed that the goals of entrepreneurial education will hugely impact on national development of Nigeria as it will greatly reduce the present high rate of unemployment in the country, especially among tertiary institution graduates. Thus, in order to achieve sustainable development in Nigeria, universities have to provide entrepreneurship education in their curriculum.

E-learning: Horton (2011) submits that e-learning as a set of instructions delivered via electronic media such as internet, intranets and extranets. It is an innovative/creative form of

learning that requires the use of modern-day technological devices and the internet to teach students. Aremu, Jacob and Ogedebe (2013) posit that e-learning is an innovative approach for delivering electronically mediated, well designed, learner-centred and interactive learning environments to anyone, at any place and anytime by utilizing the internet and digital technologies. Egbokhare and Iyawe (2013) maintained that e-learning can reduce the hurdles and provide a systematic way forward for Nigerian universities. E-learning would no doubt serve as a new method of achieving sustainable development in Nigerian universities. It would improve learning as learning would become more practical for students.

Motivation: Motivation is the action to spur someone into doing something they normally would not do without persuasion. Akpakwu (2012) sees motivation as the willingness or encouragement to put in extra efforts towards the achievement of organizational objectives by satisfying personnel needs. The lecturers and students in the universities need to be motivated in order for them to put in more effort so that practical method of teaching will be a success.

Problems Facing New Thinking for the Achievement of Sustainable Development in Nigerian Universities

- **Inadequate Funds:** Odaudu (2016) pointed out that despite the benefits of university education to the socio-economic growth of a nation, it has been observed that the funds, that could have been used to sustain quality of education at this level, appear to be lacking in most universities in Nigeria. Okoro (2014) also mentioned that the Federal Government yearly allocation to the educational sector has for over the years been far below average. Funds are required to ensure productivity within the university, but in a situation where the required funds are insufficient, progress cannot take place.
- **Inadequate E-learning and ICT materials:** E-learning is one of the numerous ways through which Nigerian universities can achieve sustainable development. However, where the necessary materials for e-learning are inadequate, the e-learning processes cannot take place. These materials include computers, laptops, internet facilities, and much more. Most Nigerian universities lack these facilities and even if they have them, they are either inadequate or they are poorly maintained. Nigeria lacks infrastructural facilities which are detrimental to the further development of the teachers and students. Wasitau et al. (2013) is of the opinion that school leaders and teachers consider lack of infrastructure as the major obstacle to ICT use.
- **Inadequate Library and Laboratory facilities:** The achievement of sustainable development in Nigeria cannot occur when there are inadequate library and laboratory facilities in the universities. Libraries are needed for research purposes while laboratories are used for practicals and science experiments. Shortage of learning materials such as the facilities that are supposed to be available in the library and laboratories are lacking in some of public universities. Nwanna (2012) opined that in public schools, there is acute shortage of learning materials for e-learning such as online/ internet connected computers, email facilities, multimedia television and digital libraries.
- **Absence of Infrastructural facilities:** Most courses in the university require the presence of some infrastructure so as to carry out practical lessons. However, these infrastructural facilities are either scarce or absent. Such infrastructural facilities may include internet services, power supply, water supply, etc. Wodi (2009) observed that the

educational sector is a sub-system being influenced by other sectors such as energy, financial institutions, politics and other socio-economic factors that are dysfunctional.

- **Absence of Entrepreneurship Education:** Most Nigerian universities lack an entrepreneurship education system in their curriculum. Where there is poor entrepreneurship education in a university, students would not be able to grasp the concept of self-employment and independence. Thus, a student that is not self-sufficient, dependent and unemployed would result to theft and other devious means to make quick money. This would further endanger the Nigerian society and lead to a decline in the growth and development of the nation.

CONCLUSION

Nigerian universities serve as the backbone of the country as it contributes greatly to the growth and development of the nation. It is the fountain which springs forth the human resources of the Nigerian economy. Thus, it is necessary to provide quality education for these students in order to achieve sustainable development in Nigeria. This paper has shown that in order for there to be university education for sustainable development, there must be a combination of the theoretical method of learning and the practical method of learning. This action will enhance teaching and learning in Nigerian universities and will in turn lead to the growth and development of the nation. It would also enable Nigerian university graduates to compete with their peers abroad. This action can be carried out through the utilization of e-learning, entrepreneurship education, organization of field trips, project works, amongst others. University administrators in Nigeria should work hand in hand with stakeholders to ensure quality in the university. Despite the fact that there are numerous problems facing the achievement of sustainable development through Nigerian universities, the administrators can adopt the following suggestions;

Way Forward

- There should be an adequate provision of funds to cater for the university facilities. These funds can be provided by the government, TETFund, NGO's and other educational financial organizations;
- The university should introduce entrepreneurship education into the curriculum as it would serve as a means by which students will learn trades that would make them self-sufficient and independent upon graduation;
- The use of ICT and E-learning materials should be inculcated into the university system as it would ensure quality educational services and also enable the students to compete with their peers globally;
- The university should move from theoretical methods of teaching students to practical methods so as to enable the students understand better;
- Workshops, seminars and conferences should be held regularly so as to train lecturers on better ways of teaching students;
- Adequate funds should be provided for research purposes and field trips/excursions so as to make lectures more practical;
- The university laboratories should be well equipped with state of the art facilities;
- Institutions should carry out training sessions in e-learning so that the staff and students will have knowledge of e-learning practices;

- Nigerian universities should partner with other universities in Nigeria as well as some foreign universities so as to achieve quality university education and bring about sustainable development in the country;
- Regular field-trips should be organized for students to enable them visualize what they were taught in class.

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