JOURNAL OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE
ISSN Print: 2992-2763 – ISSN Online: 2992-4618 | Vol. 3, Issue 1, No. 2 / March 2025
https://www.jopd.com.ng

ATTAINMENT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN NIGERIA BY 2030 THROUGH INCLUSIVE, EQUITABLE AND QUALITATIVE EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT
This paper examines the possibility of attaining Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4 in Nigeria by 2030 through inclusive, equitable and quality education. The main objective of the study is to determine the current state of educational situation in Nigeria and ascertain the gaps that must be bridged before 2030. Methodologically, a qualitative method of data collection through the content analysis of documents obtained from Federal Ministry of Education, Sustainable, Development Goals office, National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), Universal Basic Education, World Bank and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The findings of the paper show that budgetary allocation to the educational sector in Nigeria is averagely below 8% annually as against the recommended 26% by UNESCO. This is largely responsible for lack of adequate facilities such as; constant electricity, portable water, internet and computers in most schools. Also, there is lack of adequate and qualitative teachers at all levels. Above all, the rate of girl child enrolment in schools when compared to their male counterparts is very low. The paper therefore recommends the budgetary allocation to the educational sectors in Nigeria should be increased from the average of 8% to 26%, attitudinal change and the introduction of free/compulsory education public primary and secondary schools in order to ensure the attainment of inclusive, equitable and quality education by 2030.

Keywords: Sustainable development, education, inclusive education, equitable education, qualitative education

Introduction

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) came into existence in September 2000 at the United Nations Millennium Summit held in New York. The 8 goals of MDGs are to eliminate severe penury and starvation, attain global basic learning, encourage gender parity and equip women, decrease infant death rate, enhance motherly wellbeing, fight HIV/AIDS, malaria and other illness, encourage ecological continuity and enhance world collaboration for transformation (UNDP, 2015). However, the implementation of MDGs in Nigeria started late in 2005 after obtaining debt relief/cancellation which enables the government to save US$1bilion annually (Durokifa& Abdul-wasi, 2016). MDGs were not attained by 2015 in Nigerian due to late commencement of the execution process (Emah, 2023).

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was introduced after the expiration of MDGs attainment period in 2015. SDGs aim to attain 17 goals, 169 priorities and 232 key performance metrics. Sustainable development entails the attainment of present transformational stride without jeopardizing the hope of making life better for future generation. In the case of Nigeria, the inability to attain MDGs made it difficult if not impossible to attain the SDGs. This is so because there must be development before the idea

of sustainability can become a reality. For instance, SDGs execution was delayed just like the implementation of MDGs was equally delayed (Emah, 2023).
The first phase (2016-2020) of SDGs in Nigeria was intended to build on the established structure by MDGs, the second phase (2021-2026) was designed for the full execution, monitoring and inspection of projects while the third and last phase (2027-2030) was set aside for general assessment of programme implementation and to bridge identified loopholes (Mcdickson 2016). However, the focus of this study is to assess the possibility of attaining the SDGs 4 in Nigeria by 2030. Specifically, SDGs 4 aims at guarantying inclusive, equitable and qualitative education in Nigeria before the expiration of set period.

Inclusive education is one that provides opportunity for all citizens to be enrolled in school irrespective of gender, colour, race, social status, religion, financial capability and physical disability. Equitable education of the other hand refers to a situation whereby learners are given the chance to compete for the attainment educational height without segregation. This means that the standard for assessment must be objective and competitive in nature. Above all, quality education entails the provision adequate facilities, equipment, conducive environment, qualified tutors and instructors for learners.

A review of existing literature reveal that the attainment of inclusive, equitable of and quality education in Nigeria by 2030 is under serious threat due to inadequate funding, shortage of qualified teachers, lack of infrastructure/equipment, discrimination and societal attitude to learning. According to Ayeni (2018), and Olaniyan (2020), inadequate funding is one of the greatest threats to the attainment of SDG. The opinion of the above was corroborated by Ohaegbulem and Chijioke (2023) who observed that the regular annual percentage of budgetary allocation for Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, Senegal, Kenya and Morocco were 7.81%, 24.37%, 19.49%, 21.32%, 21.70% and 17.61% respectively in deficit of 26% recommended by UNESCO from 1999-2021). The above record shows that Nigeria that was formally referred to as the "giant of Africa" has the lowest allocation to the educational sector from 1999-2021 when compare to other African countries (Ohaegbulem and Chijioke, 2023).

Consequently, poor budgetary allocation will lead to lack of infrastructure, equipment, quality teachers and facilities needed to guarantee quality education, inclusive and equitable education. For instance, Okebukola (2017) and Ajayi (2019) outlined insufficient infrastructure, defective structure and lack of access to basic facilities as challenges confronting education in Nigeria. Similarly, Fafunwa (2017) and Babalola (2020) opine that shortage of qualified teachers due to lack of proper training to improve their effectiveness is a huge challenge to the attainment of SDGs 4. In the same vein, Afolabi (2020 and Oyadiran (2020) asserted that lack of digital infrastructure to support online learning have hindered access to quality education in Nigeria.

On issue regarding the attainment of inclusive and equitable education, Okoro (2018) & Mohammed (2020) identified wide gaps in access to education by girl child, physically challenged and children with disabilities when compared to boy child and physically normal individuals in Nigeria. Cultural practices and societal belief that girl child are supposed to be house wives and supportive to their husbands are largely responsible for low enrolment of girl child in school. Also, people with disability or physically challenged individuals are not provided with necessary equipment and gargets that will enable them compete favourably with the normal people in the society. In a nutshell, corruption, mismanagement, security challenges and poor upbringing are threat to the attainment of SDGs 4 in Nigeria by 2030 (Aluede, 2017 and Ojo, 2020). The inability of scholars to proffer amicable solution to the

challenges of attaining inclusive, equitable and quality education by 2030 made it imperative for this study to be conducted.

Objective of the Paper

The major objective of this paper is to examine the possibility of attaining Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria by 2030 through inclusive, equitable and quality education. The specific objectives are to:

1. Determine the current state of educational situation on issues regarding the attainment of inclusive, equitable and quality education in Nigeria
2. Ascertain the gaps that must be bridged in the educational system before 2030.

Methodology

This paper adopted a documentary and analytical methods in examining existing facts and data on issue regarding the possibility of attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) in 2030 through inclusive, equitable and quality education. Subsequently, content analysis was employed in the interpretation of official records, policy pronouncements, circulars and empirical literatures obtained from; Federal Ministry of Education, Sustainable Development Goals Office, National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and Universal Basic Education among others. Quality education was determined based on the availability of facilities, qualified teachers and instructors. Similarly, the level of competitiveness and scholarship were used as the yardstick for determining educational equitability while the level of disparity between the girl-child/boy-child and physically challenged in school enrolment were used as criteria for measuring the level of educational inclusiveness.

Conceptual Framework

This aspect of the paper gave insight into the opinions of scholars on some concept considered relevant to study. This became necessary in order to ensure full grasp of the issues under discussion and shed more light on view points of various writers in the field of development administration.

a) Education

In literary term "education" refers to the acquisition of general knowledge in a particular field of study for the purpose of skill development and the ability to offer solutions for societal problems. According to UNESCO (2000), education refers to the total process of developing human ability and behaviour. This means that the goal of education is to build capacity of individuals for the purpose of acquiring skills and character development. In other words, education is a tool that can be used for the purpose of improving the ability of individuals in order to make the world a better place to live. It is the process of acquiring both formal and informal training in order to development ability of individuals to deal with physical, mental, psychological and emotional problems. In the opinions of Holborn and Haralambos (2004), education is an institution that enables individual to think freely and rationally which makes social progress and innovation possible. By implications, education enhances the ability of individuals to think outside the box or introduce innovative and creative way of doing things for the purpose of societal development

In a more brother perspective, Fafunwa (2004) conceived education as an important curriculum which is used in developing a child's physical skill, character, intellectual skill as well as vocational skill. This means that education performs the role of personality development and acquisition of technical and expert knowledge for the purpose of becoming professional in a chosen career. In-fact some scholars are of the view that education will not only make an individual useful to themselves alone but it will go a long way in promoting societal growth and development. For instance, Ochoyi and Donald (2008) argued that

education is a veritable tool for the development of both the individuals and the state. Similarly, Etuk, Ering, and Ajake (2012) defined education as a basic tool for achieving development at all levels. In other words, they posit that education is the process of acquiring new values and skills for the purpose of effective functioning in the society. For the purpose of this paper, education refers to general acquisition of knowledge and skills at all levels (primary, secondary and tertiary) for the purpose of developing the character and ability of individuals toward proffering innovative and creative ideas aimed at solving societal problems.

b) Inclusive Education

The concept of "inclusive education" presupposes that every child has right to education irrespective of his social status, gender, financial capability, race, age, language, marital status, creed, ability, capability, colour, culture or physical disability. For instance, that somebody is blind, deaf, deformed, poor or aged cannot deny him/her from have access to education. In the opinions of Florian and Black-Hawkins (2020), inclusive education is not just about physical assimilation but also creating a conducive atmosphere that cherishes and encourages diversity. In other words, every child has rights to acquire education no matter his place of origin, race, ethnicity, language or creed. However, the concept of inclusive education is practicable in developed countries of the world such as United State of America, United Kingdom, Germany, France, Australia and Japan due to conducive environment and stable economy.

In developing nations of the world such as Africa, some part of Asia and Latin America, the idea of inclusive education is elusive to them due to cultural practices, traditional belief, mindset and the level of economic development. For instance, (Booth and Ainscow (2022) opine that inclusive education is one that promotes high intellectual output, facilitate social skills, boost confidence for students with disabilities, encourage a culture of acceptance, compassion and understanding among learners . For the purpose of this study, inclusive education refers to a situation whereby education is made accessible to every child in a given society without any discrimination or prejudice.

c) Equitable Education

Equitable education refers to a situation whereby learners are give equal opportunities or a level plain ground to compete favourably with another. In other words, education is considered equitable when there is equal treatment for learners in the style of teaching, provision of facilities, mode of examination and assessment criteria. Equity in education may refer to equality of treatment, equality of achievement or academic success. The first is more an input measure while the second two are more output oriented (Demeuse et al.2003). Nevertheless due to data limitations and/or theoretical considerations, most studies equate equality of opportunity with equity. An additional issue of policy concern is that perfect equality of opportunity (i.e. no effect of social background on attainment), or perfect intergenerational mobility (i.e. disassociation of the class of children from that of their parents) does not exist; this "would require a degree of intervention into the lives of the children and families that most societies might find untenable." (Corak 2006, 14)

Furthermore, some argue that inequalities in opportunity can be separated into "ethically offensive" and "ethically acceptable" parts (Checchi and Peragine 2005), meaning that differences in educational achievement can be attributed to factors within and beyond one's personal responsibility. By implications, it is difficult if not impossible to completely eliminate inequality in education. However, efforts can be made to minimize and not to

completely overcome inequalities since individuals have preferences for what they considered important no matter how invaluable such matter may look like

d) Quality Education

Quality education in literary meaning refers to situation whereby learners have access to adequate facilities, equipment, conducive environment, qualified tutors and instructors. It is a kind of education that gives room for personal self development instead making learners dependent only on what is being taught in school. However, scholars are in dilemma on what constitute quality education since the standard or yardstick for measurement differ from one environment to another. For instance, quality education is one that enhances life time learning, acquisition of latest skills and knowledge due to rapidly changing world (World Bank, 2022). Similarly, Sachs, 2020) asserted that quality education aims at fostering logical reasoning, ingenuity, originality, surmounting challenges and enabling individuals to contribute to sustainable development. This implies that quality education require thinking outside the box in order to turn problems to opportunities. Conversely (Ainscow, 2020) was of the opinion that quality education enhances equal rights and privileges to learners without discrimination on the bases of place of birth, capability or socio-economic status. This means that everybody is given free access to education without any form of discrimination. According to the paper, quality education is one that enables learning acquire skills for expanding the frontal of knowledge and providing solutions to identified problems.

e) Sustainable Development

Development is a situation whereby there is improvement in the quality of life of the people in a given environment of a given period of time. Therefore, development can only become sustainable when the transformation in the quality of life of average citizen is sustained and maintained without mortgaging the hop of future generation. For instance, Bruntland Commission, (1987) defined sustainable development as "the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs." By implication, sustainable development cannot be attained based on current situation alone but such transformation must meet future demands and expectations

In opinion of Munasinghe (2004), sustainable national development is a process of improving the range of opportunities that will enable individual humans and communities to achieve their aspirations and full potential over a sustained period of time while maintaining the resilience of economic, social and environmental systems. Age (2005), identified some objectives which sustainable national development is expected to realize: increase capital income and employment, promoting human welfare satisfying basic needs; protecting the environment. Considering the path of future generation, achieving equity between rich and poor and participation on a broad basis in development and decision making is important. For the purpose of this paper, sustainable development refers to a situation whereby there is sustained improvement in the standard of living people in a given society due to the provision all necessities of life such as; food, shelter, clothes, shoes, electricity, pipe born water, quality education, qualitative health care services and social insurance scheme.

Education and Sustainable Development

There is interconnectivity between education and sustainable development. This is so because; no country can grow above the standard of its learning capacity. As a matter of fact, education is the bedrock of any national developmental initiative. For instance, development is geared towards producing or creating something new or more advanced for the society and its members. On the other hand, education is a tool for initiating social change, value re-orientation, injective of new ideas and innovation. In view of the above, Umoh (2005) opines that learning is synonymous to uninterrupted transformation. Education provides

consciousness, awareness and enlightenment to individuals in order to properly pursue their aspirations and yearnings while development focuses on making life better for members of a given society through provision of life's safety net. Olubadewo (2006) opined that it is only educated population that can command skills necessary for sustainable economic growth and a better quality of life. Sustainable national development therefore refers to a situation whereby members of a given society have access to basic necessities of life for a long period of time while education is the engine which drives the vehicle of development to the required destination.

Theoretical Framework

This paper adopted the human capital approach as a theoretical underpinning since investment on the development of human capital through quality, equitable and inclusive education has the potential of enhancing sustainable development at the long run. The exponents of this theory are Adam Smith, Gary Becker and Harry Becker. The thesis of human capital theory rests on the assumption that formal education is highly instrumental and necessary to improve the productive capacity of a population.

The human capital theory is applicable to this paper since education and sustainable development are interwoven, interconnected, interconnected and interrelated. In attempt to draw a line between the concepts of education and sustainable development would be an exercise in futility because one of them must lead to another. Therefore, any resources committed to the development human capital through qualitative education should not be seen as expenses but as a worthwhile investment that would eventually commutate into sustainable development at the long run. This is the more reasons why increase in budgetary allocation to the educational sector is inevitable for any government that aim to attain sustainable development by 2030.

Attainment of Inclusive, Equitable and Quality Education in Nigeria by 2030

The attainment of Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs) 4 in Nigeria by 2030 appears difficult if not impossible owing to several challenges confronting the effective execution of the programme in Nigeria. They include shortage of qualified teachers, overcrowding, inadequate infrastructure, poor funding, low enrolment of girl child and examination malpractice. Detailed analyses of the possibility of attaining, inclusive, equitable and quality education in Nigeria by 2030 are discussed below:

1. Attainment of Inclusive Education

The goal of inclusive education is to ensure that all girls and boys have access to free primary and secondary education through effective learning outcomes by 2030. It equally aims at eliminating gender inequalities at all level of education including vocational training for destitute by 2030. In the case of Nigeria there is great disparity in the rate of boy-girl child enrolment in school due to religious /cultural practices and endemic poverty that places more priority on the education of boy child at the expense of their female counterparts. The table below demonstrates the poverty head count rate and gender ratio in Nigeria within the urban and rural areas.

Table 1: Poverty Head count Rate by Household Head's Education Level and Sex

State	Education/Less than Primary Education		Primary Education		Secondary Education		Post-Secondary Education	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Nigeria	66.17	34.72	41.25	26.93	25.00	14.08	18.13	5.66
Urban	43.14	24.66	19.16	19.35	12.97	11.20	8.86	3.42
Rural	70.82	39.17	50.33	jki32.74	35.87	18.96	31.20	10.15

Source: National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2019), Poverty and inequality in Nigeria: Executive Summary

The results in table 1 above reveal that the male child has 66.17 score as against their female counterparts in the enrolment for preprimary education. In the case of primary education, 41.25 are male while 26. 93 are female. At the secondary level, 25.00 are male while 14.00 are female. Similarly, 18.13 are male while 5.66 are female in the case of post-secondary education. On the whole, the result exhibited that the rate of male child enrolment in school is higher than their female counterparts in 2019. According to UNICEF, 2020, the primary school completion rate between boys and girls was 59% (boys) and 51% (girls). However, the secondary school completion is lower with boys at 42% and girls at 36%. At the tertiary level, it was 14% for men and 10% for women (UNESCO, 2024).

Similarly, most physically challenged children in Nigeria lack access to education due to lack of awareness, discrimination, alienation, stigmatization, inadequate sensitization, negative attitude, poor health care delivery, violence and inferiority complex. According to Ayub & Abubakar (2022), 25 million (15%) people are physically challenged, disable, invalid or incapacitated in Nigeria. Accordingly, only 5% of physically challenged people are literate while 98% of children with disabilities did not have access to pre-primary or elementary schools (Ayub & Abubakar, 2022). The above statistics reveal that a lot still needs to be done for Nigeria to attain the level of inclusive education by 2030.

2. Attainment of Equitable Education

The goal of ensuring equitable education is to eliminate all forms of disparity in access to education and make education competitive at all levels at by 2030. In the case of Nigeria, the high level of insecurity experiences in North East (Borno, Yobe, Adamawa and Taraba States), North West (Kaduna, Katsina, Zamfara) and North Central (Benue, Niger and Plateau States) has led to the displacement of large number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). These displaced children are often denied access to education due the destruction of school properties by insurgents and bandits (World Bank, 2019). The above scenario has made it difficult if not impossible for children from less educationally disadvantaged states to compete fovaourably with those of other states who have access to all necessary facilities.

3. Attainment of Quality Education

The goal of attaining quality education by 2030 is to ensure higher learning output including learning and literacy skills for all categories of pupils and students. This goal can only be achieved through the availability of adequate facilities, equipment, qualified teachers and conducive learning environment. In the case of Nigeria, the in-take of pupils and students at

the primary, secondary and tertiary level is above the carrying capacity of educational institutions. This has led to congestion and overcrowding of pupils and students in school. According to UNESCO (2000) and FG (2013) recommended that the number of students in a single classroom should not go beyond 1:30 or at an average of 35 (teacher-student ratio, 1:35). However, the teacher-student ration in most public schools in Nigeria is at the average of 1; 200. This situation has contributed to the falling standard of education in Nigeria. Secondly, most schools in Nigeria lack basic facilities such as; whit board, projector, public address system, computer set, laboratory, tables, chair among others.

The structure in most schools is dilapidated while others are in bad shape. In some public schools, pupils usually sit on bear ground to during lessons while others hang around to receive lectures. The lack of access to basic facilities and inadequate quality teachers is due to low budgetary allocation to the educational sector by successive governments in Nigeria. For instance, the UNESCO recommended 26 percent allocation to the educational sector but the allocation to the educational sector in Nigeria has been below 8 percent (Ohaegbulem and Chijioke, 2023).

Similarly, the rampant and pervasive cases of examination malpractices at the primary, secondary and tertiary level in Nigeria constitutes a warning signal is due to low quality or standard of education. According to Ogwo C. (2022), the research report indicates that in 2018, out of 1,572,396 candidates that sat for the WAEC examination, 102,058 results were withheld over exam malpractice, while in 2019, out of 1,590,173 candidates, 180, 205 results were seized; in 2020, 215,149 results out of 1,538,445 candidates that sat for examination were withheld. The above statistics reveals that there is a major threat to the attainment of quality education in Nigeria by 2030 if urgent steps are not taking towards the speedy implementation of SDGs programmes.

Conclusion

The outcome of this study reveals that the possibility of attaining the SDGs (4) by 2030 is quite slim owing to the slow pace in the implementation of policies and programmes by successive administrations. For instance, the government is yet to fully commence the second phase of the implementation of let alone transiting to the third stage. The challenges of lack of adequate and qualified teachers, overcrowding, poor funding, dilapidated structure, poor enrolment of girl child/people with disabilities and examination malpractices are yet to be addressed. The inability to address the above issues has made it difficult if not impossible to attain the height of equitable, qualitative and inclusive education in Nigeria by 2030.

Recommendations

In the light of issues discussed, observations made and findings established, the following recommendations are considered fundamental towards ensuring the attainment of SDGs by 2030:

1. The issue of attaining the height of qualitative education requires increased budgetary allocation the educational sector in line with the recommendation of 26% by UNESCO. This will boost the welfare of teachers, strengthening the capacity of laboratories and enhance the provision of adequate infrastructure.

2. The attainment of inclusive education can be achieved through public enlightenment programmes on the benefits of education to the girl child and physically challenged individuals in the society through the print and mass media. This will encourage increase enrolment of girl child and disabled in school.

3. The goal of equitable education can be attained through the introduction free/compulsory education at all levels (primary, secondary and tertiary) in public schools. This will encourage both the children of the rich and poor to have equal access to quality education. Similarly, government should provide tax holidays and enabling environment for private school owners to enable them reduce tuition fees for pupils and students at all levels.

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