REVAMPING UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA TOWARDS THE REALISATION OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDG)

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Abstract
This paper aims to discuss the concept of sustainable development goals, highlight the sustainable development goals, Nigeria status as regards sustainable development goals, the role of university education in sustainable development goals. The paper discusses the state of university education in Nigeria and revamping universities in Nigeria for sustainable development goals. This paper concluded that for university education to play its role in the actualization of the sustainable development goals there is the need for revamping of the universities in Nigeria. This paper concluded that adequate funding, improved quality, addressed admission crisis, provision of adequate infrastructural facilities, employment of more lecturers, and planning for the proper functioning of the universities should be implemented.

Keywords: Sustainable Development Goal, University Education, Revamping

Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are the new universal set of goals, targets, and indicators that United Nations member states are expected to use to frame their agendas and political policies over the next 15 years. These goals follow and expand on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which expired by the end of 2015. The Sustainable Development Goals were officially adopted at the United Nations summit in New York, in September 2015 and are applicable from January 2016. Unlike the MDGs that focused on developing countries, the SDGs had an inclusive approach to development involving both developing and developed countries.

A quick look at the SDGs shows that they cover a wide range of specific areas such as agriculture, health, gender equality, water and sanitation, energy, industry and innovation,

infrastructure, and so on, and under almost all of them, higher education becomes a force to be reckoned with in making a positive contribution, whether in teaching, research, community engagement or advisory services (Mohamedbhai, 2016). It is widely agreed that education is the most effective means that society possesses for confronting the challenges of the future. Indeed, education will shape the world of tomorrow. Progress increasingly depends upon the products of educated minds, upon research innovation, invention, and adaptation. Education in general and higher education, in particular, serves society in a variety of ways. The goal of education is to make people wiser, more knowledgeable, better informed, ethical, responsible, critical, and capable of continuing to learn. Higher education is recognized as a major contributor to the solution of major problems facing the world today at the global, regional, and local levels, such as removing inequalities, alleviating poverty and environmental degradation, improving health, arresting large-scale pandemics such as AIDS, and so on. (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2004).

It is therefore instructive that achieving these laudable sustainable development goals would not be feasible without the involvement of higher education. Complimenting this, Atanda and Jaiyeoba (2008)   reiterated that higher education in Nigeria is faced with the problem of declining quality attributed to crises of enrolment, infrastructure, finances , ethics, shortage of staff, brain drain, accreditation, poor quality of research, and quality   of graduates. It is imperative therefore that for Nigeria to record a high level of success as regards the SDGs, there is a need for the revamping of higher education while planning takes its proper place in the scheme of things.

Concept of Sustainable Development

Sustainable development, according to the 1987 World Commission on Environment and Development (also known as the Brundtland Commission) report, is defined as "a development which meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs". This definition introduces both a time dimension (present and future) and a space dimension. The latter is linked with "meeting the needs of the present generation". These needs will not be met if the benefits and burdens (rights, responsibilities, risks, capabilities, access to goods, services, and opportunities) are unfairly allocated among members of a given generation. In the Commission's view, sustainable development contains two key concepts: the concept of needs', in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be

given; and the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs.

Indeed, the Commission contends that sustainable development needs to be elevated to a global ethic. The Commission does not regard sustainable development as a fixed state but rather a process of change. The concept and pursuit of sustainable development require a political system that secures effective citizen participation in decision making, an economic system that can generate surpluses and technical knowledge on a self-reliant and sustained basis, a social system that provides solutions to the tensions arising from disharmonious development, a production system that respects the obligation to preserve the ecological base for development, a technological system that can search continuously for new solutions, an international system that fosters sustainable patterns of trade and finance, and an administrative system that is flexible and has the capacity for self-correction.

Highlights of the Sustainable Development

Seventeen goals were identified, along with one hundred and sixty-nine targets (United Nations, 2015). The goals were enumerated as follows: elimination of poverty in all its forms everywhere; elimination of hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture; Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages; Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all; achieve inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all; gain gender equality and empower all women and girls; availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all; give access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all; promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all; create resilient infrastructure, industrialization, and innovation; encourage equality within and among countries; cities and human settlement should be inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable; encouragement of sustainable consumption and production patterns; urgent control of climate change and its impacts; conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for development; promotion sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss; promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable, and

inclusive institutions at all levels; and strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

Nigeria's Status as Regards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

How Nigeria is implementing the sustainable development goals within the thirty-six states and its Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja is important. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) consist of seventeen global goals designed as a "blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all". Each of the 17 goals is expected to be achieved by 2030 in every country around the world. Table 1 shows Nigeria's status as regards the SDGs.

Table 1: Nigeria's status as regards the SDGs.

Goal	Nigeria's Status
Goal 1	Nigerians live on less than $1.25 per day for 62% of the population.
Goal 2	In Nigeria, 55 percent of the population is malnourished. On the Global Hunger Index, Nigeria is ranked 14.8th (GHI). Nigeria is ranked 91st out of 109 countries in terms of food security.
Goal 3	Infectious diseases that may be prevented or treated, such as malaria, pneumonia, diarrhea, measles, and HIV/AIDS, account for more than 70% of the estimated one million deaths.
Goal 4	The Northeast and Northwest zones have the lowest school attendance rates. Strikes and a lack of financing have wreaked havoc on the educational system.
Goal 5	On the Gender Inequality Index, Nigeria is ranked 86th out of 102 countries. Nigeria still maintains major gender gaps in education, economic development, and political engagement.
Goal 6	In 1990, half of the population (50 percent) drank water from better sources, however in 2006, slightly less than half (47 percent) did.
Goal 7	Nigeria has the world's second-largest energy access gap, with 82.4 million Nigerians without adequate electricity.
Goal 8	After averaging more than 6% for more than three years, the Gross Domestic Product growth rate has dropped below 4%. In 2011, 2012, and 2013, the labour output per hour was N471.94, N551.70, and N594.34 respectively.
Goal 9	Manufacturing employs 12% of the working population in the formal economy. Manufacturing accounts for around 10% of Nigeria's GDP. Only around a quarter of the population has access to the internet. Nigeria is ranked 133rd in the world in terms of ICT development.
Goal 10	According to estimates, the poorest half of the world's population owns only 1% of global wealth, while the richest 10% of adults control 86 percent of all wealth, and the top 1% own 46 percent.
Goal 11	Environmental sustainability continues to be a problem.
Goal 12	Nigeria has a post-harvest loss rate of about 40%. Milled rice demand is 5.2 million tonnes per year, while average national production is 3.3 million tonnes. Estimates for waste management at the national level are not available in Nigeria.
Goal 13	In Nigeria, flood prevention and emergency response services continue to be a big concern.
Goal 14	Nigeria is one of the top two countries in the world when it comes to ocean and marine conservation. Nigeria's marine protected areas (as a percentage of territorial seas) were 0.21 percent in 2012.
Goal 15	Agriculture and habitat damage, uncontrolled animal hunting for food, cultural customs, poor law enforcement, and weak regulations are all issues that Nigeria is dealing with.
Goal 16	Nigeria is ranked 136th out of 176 nations on the 2014 Corruption Perception Index, with a score of 27 out of 100 and a score of 95 on the Rule of Law index.

Source: Centre for Public Policy Alternatives brief on SDGs (2015).

The SDGs are a global call to put an end to poverty, secure the planet and ensure that everyone enjoys peace and prosperity by 2030. It was adopted by 193 countries with Nigeria inclusive. The SDG is a set of seventeen interconnected goals which have a target with at least 1 or 2 indicators for each target. In 2020, Nigeria was ranked 160 on the 2020 world's SDG index.

The Roles of University Education in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Universities are established to carry out the tripartite roles of teaching, research, and community service thereby contributing meaningfully to the social and economic development of the nation. They are supposed to impart high-level skills to a reasonable proportion of the workforce, developing the intellectual capability of individuals and engaging in the training of competent and responsible professionals needed virtually in all aspects of human endeavour. University education thus offers the most crucial platform to accumulate human capital in the form of relevant manpower training, abilities, attitudes, skills, and knowledge (Babalola, 2007).

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2007) suggested that institutions of higher learning can contribute to sustainable development in the following ways; generating human capital in the region through their learning and further education programs in areas of sustainable development, acting as a source of expertise through research, consultancy, and demonstration, playing a brokerage role in bringing together diverse regional actors and elements of capacity to the sustainability process, demonstrating good practice through on-campus management and development activities, strategic planning, building design, waste minimization, water and energy efficiency practice, responsible purchasing programmes, and pursuing good citizen type initiatives like the "green campus" concept and offering recognition and reward incentives for staff to be involved in sustainable development leadership groups in the regional community.

UNESCO (2004) identifies two unique opportunities for universities to engage in sustainable development: First, universities form a link between knowledge generation and transfer of knowledge to society for their entry into the labour market. Such preparation includes the education of teachers, who play the most important role in providing education at both primary and secondary levels. Second, they actively contribute to the societal development through outreach and service to the society.

Cortese (2003) agreed that universities bear a profound, moral responsibility to increase the awareness, knowledge, skills, and values needed to create a just and sustainable future. They play a critical but often overlooked role in making this vision a reality. They prepare most of the professionals who develop, lead, manage, teach, work in, and influence society'sinstitutions. Thus, universities have a critical and tangible role in developing the principles, qualities, and awareness not only needed to perpetuate the sustainable development philosophy but to improve upon its delivery. Universities cannot play the second fiddle if sustainable development is to be realised by any nation. Perhaps this truism gave birth to the Arusha Declaration in Tanzania in April 2015, where it was argued that the role and resources of higher education can and must be integrated much more explicitly and deliberately throughout the SDGs if the goals are to realise their potentials by 2030. A glance at the SDGs shows that their implementation will require substantial inputs from university education. This must be recognised by the relevant agencies, the governments, and, as importantly, by higher education institutions themselves. Institutions now have the responsibility, more than ever before, to integrate sustainable development into all their teaching, research, community engagement, and campus operations.

State of Higher Education in Nigeria

As laudable as the SDGs goals are, the potential of higher education systems in general and university education in Nigeria to fulfil this responsibility is frequently thwarted by long-standing problems of relevance, identity, and direction, finance, efficiency, equity, quality, and governance (Hartnett, Saint & Strassner, 2013). Akubuilo and Okorie (2013), posited that recent changes in education policies which led to the establishment of more public and private universities have not helped matters as the increase in the number of educational institutions only addresses the issue of access, while other factors such as shortage of teaching staff, research grants, infrastructure, corruption, weak technology, and other related issues are still facing the Nigerian education system.

The crisis of declining quality is one of the numerous problem facing Nigerian universities. According to Akinpelu (2000), education without quality can even be more dangerous than no education, hence without quality, education has no value. It is pertinent to note that quality education is that which produces a complete person, morally, intellectually, physically and socially. It enables the recipient to compete favourably with his/her counterparts all over the world. Much of university

education teaching in Nigeria is based on traditional pedagogy and conventional curricula and does not meet the challenges of the modern world. Hartnett, Saint, &Strassner (2003, pg 276) posited that "the content and method of Nigerian university teaching is often outdated, not responsive to employers' requirements, and disconnected from the labour market. Likewise, its research output is extremely low and unable to prompt innovation-based productivity gains.

Crisis of admission whereby demand is at variance with supply year after year is another problem for those seeking admission into universities. However, universities are constrained and the majority of these applicants are not able to gain admission. Various reasons have been given for this development. According to Akpotu (2005), the barriers are the policy reforms of the quota system, catchment areas, admission policy, poor and inadequate facilities, and the limited absorption capacity of Nigerian universities.

Another problem is the shortage of qualified lecturers. This is a big challenge that could hinder the nation fromrealising the SDGs because the human capital of a nation determines its capacity for development. According to Ogunode (2020),Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) strike is a problem in Nigerian universities.

Inadequate funding is one of the major problems facing university education in Nigeria. Public universities in Nigeria are not adequately funded by the government. This shortage of funds affects the growth and development of the universities. Nigerian universities need funds to cater to both their capital and recurrent needs. The budget has been cut back from year to year by the federal government for some few years past. This reduction has affected both capital and recurrent expenditures.

lack of adequate facilities due to the large number seeking admission into universities, enrolment has soared over the years without a corresponding increase in the resources, both human and material, to take care of this teeming population. The facilities needed for the teaching and learning process in institutions of higher learning are classrooms, laboratories, workshops, staff offices, libraries, hostels, staff quarters, student and staff recreation centres, sports and games facilities, roads, electricity, and water supply.

Suggestions for Revamping University Education in Nigeria to actualize the SDGs

Given the challenges the world is faced with currently, there is an urgent need to revamp higher education according to the new needs of the community and the individuals economically, socially, and culturally. The success of any nation's agenda is dependent on several variables among which higher education is critical, if not the most critical of them. No country ever transformed nor will ever transform without a sound higher education system (Okemakinde, 2014).

To ensure quality education in the face of declining quality, it has become imperative that the curriculum of university education be looked into. The contents of the curriculum should emphasis sustainability. There is a need for new courses to be injected into university education and these courses must be those that meet the challenges of the present world. It is also important that universities collaborate with other institutions on research and training and innovations to enhance quality. Also, entrepreneurship education should be incorporated in the curriculum to make the recipients self-reliant and to address the issue of hunger and poverty as addressed by the SDGs. To increase the relevance and effectiveness of teaching and research, classroom dynamics may need to focus more on student learning performance, academic programmes could seek stronger linkages with employers, and universities might pursue knowledge coalitions with other institutions that possess a comparative advantage in aspects of teaching and research. There is also a need for enhanced research facilities through increased pressure for investment in information and communication technology.

Adequate funding for revamping university educational system is important, government should increase the funding of higher education in the country. This will enable the higher institutions to meet other pressing needs like developing their research programmes.

Since it is a known fact that no country can develop above the level of education of its citizens, it has become increasingly important that urgent measures be taken to address the admission crisis in Nigerian universities. The identified reasons stated above should be addressed so that more people are given access to university education. There is a need to emphasized merit above every other consideration for admission.

Employment of more lecturers is needed. It is assumed that lecturers in Nigerian universities carry heavier workloads than their counterparts in other parts of the world. The ratios of some countries are as follows: Brazil, 1:10; Nigeria, 1:19, Mexico, 1:8; Kenya, 1:8; Zimbabwe, 1:7;

United Kingdom, 1:9, while the UNESCO norm is 1:10 (UNESCO, 2004). To increase the admission rate, universities need to employ more academic professionals; staff strength should be seriously considered to increase admission capacity for qualified and competent applicants (Imhanlahimi & Maduewesi, 2006).

Provision of adequate infrastructural facilities is needed for a complete overhaul of existing facilities in the universities. Obsolete books and material should not be found in libraries, laboratories, and workshops. Classrooms, laboratories, workshops, staff offices, libraries, hostels, staff quarters, student and staff recreation centers, sports and games facilities should be provided in the right quantity and quality. This is to make the university environment conducive to allow all its members to perform optimally which is necessary to achieve the SDGs. However, it is a known fact that most facilities in the universities deteriorate due to a lack of maintenance. It is therefore pertinent that a maintenance culture is imbibed by all stakeholders in the university.

In all the aforementioned, the role of planning cannot be over emphasised. There must be concerted efforts by educational planners to carefully study the SGDs and translate such into programmes and projects while projecting and forecasting physical, human, and material resources needed to actualize these goals. Universities should also look into their mission statements and curricula to see if they align with the targets underpinning the SDGs.

Adequate funding, improved quality, addressed admission crisis, provision of adequate infrastructural facilities, employment of more lecturers, and planning for the proper functioning of the universities should be implemented, Educational planners and managers should work in synergy with curriculum planners with a view to revamping the university education curriculum. The review should be directed towards collaborations on research and teaching and most importantly, improving innovations and entrepreneurship education. This can be done through well supported, coordinated academic network that incorporate public and private partners. Total revamping of facilities such as laboratories, workshops, classrooms, hostels, staff quarters and most importantly libraries. Since the quality of an institution could be defined by the quality of its library. This rehabilitation of physical facilities is very necessary to enhance teaching and learning. Federal Government admission policy for admission into universities based on 45% merit, 35% catchment/locality and 20% educational less developed state should be reconsidered by government. Emphasis should be placed on merit.

Conclusion

It is generally believed that failure to plan is planning to fail. Therefore, this paper has discussed the need to revamp university education as a means of achieving the new SDGs. This is premised on the fact that higher education especially universities, with its tripartite role of teaching, research, and community service has a lot to do if the SDGs are to be achieved. The goals of university education, as well as the present state of university education in Nigeria, were discussed alongside various areas of university education that need to be revamped.

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