

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE IN SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, EDUCATION, AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

UDOCHUKWU PRECIOUS NWAKODO
ZONAL COORDINATOR

ASUP ZONE D
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION,
ABIA STATE POLYTECHNIC, ABA

| Article Information | ABSTRACT |
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| <p>Received: 10th January, 2024</p> <p>Accepted: 22th January, 2024</p> <p>Published: 10th February, 2024</p> <p>KEYWORDS: Sustainable Development, Practice, Science, Technology, Education, and Social Sciences</p> <p>Publisher: Empirical Studies and Communication - (A Research Center)</p> <p>Website: www.cescd.com.ng</p> | <p><i>This research investigated the intersection of sustainable development within the realms of science, technology, education, and social sciences. The study examines the dynamic interplay between these disciplines and their collective impact on fostering sustainable practices. Through an interdisciplinary lens, the investigation explores innovative approaches and practical strategies that contribute to the advancement of sustainable development goals. Key focal points include harnessing technological advancements to address environmental challenges, enhancing educational systems to instill sustainable values, and leveraging social sciences to understand and shape sustainable behavior. The research highlights successful case studies and transformative initiatives across these disciplines, shedding light on effective models for sustainable development. Furthermore, the findings aim to provide insights for policymakers, educators, researchers, and practitioners, fostering a comprehensive understanding of how sustainable development practices can be integrated into the core fabric of science, technology, education, and social sciences for a more resilient and equitable future.</i></p> |

INTRODUCTION

At over fifty years of statehood, Nigeria is still struggling to attain the status of a developing nation. Successive administration efforts at national development ended up worsening the economic situation of the country irrespective of the claims of otherwise.

The Buhari administration exited office about seven months ago leaving the country in a bankrupt state despite plunging the nation in huge debts. The efforts of the Tinubu government to reengineer the economy have left Nigerians more pauperized. The removal of subsidy on petroleum products and the high exchange rate of the naira have resulted to astronomical increases in the prices of food and other basic items of life.

Just recently the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) lifted the ban on the importation of certain items earlier on banned in 2015. This action goes to show the kind of development practice the country has been experiencing overtime. All the gains of the 2015 ban are now in jeopardy.

The theme of the conference presents us with tasks of providing further insights into the major concepts and over-viewing the state of Science, Technological and Social Science Education with a view to establishing our present realities in terms of the nations' sustainable development practices and proffering realistic solutions. These we shall attempt to address.

Sustainable Development

To appreciate the concept of sustainable development, one must have a good understanding of the term development. Okigbo (1987) in Eboh (2021:5) posits that the process of development involves the application of national resources – human, mineral – agricultural for the enrichment of the lives of the population. Without the enrichment, there is no development. In essence meaningful development must include improvement in the living condition of the population which is reflected on the health, sanitation, nutrition, and education as well as a reduction in economic inequalities. Thus, true development provides answers to the questions posed by Dudley Seers: what has been happening poverty? What has been happening to the inequality? What has been happening to unemployment? If all three of these have reduced from high levels then beyond doubt the country is experiencing development. But if one or two of these basic policies have been on the increase especially if all three, then it would be out of sorts to say the country is developing even if per capita income has doubled.

From the foregoing, Nigeria is not experiencing development. The poverty rate now is 37% with an estimated 84 million Nigerians living below the poverty line making it the World's second largest poor population after India (World Bank, 2023). As at end of 2022, the unemployment rate of the country is 5.30 percent (NBS, 2023). In terms of inequality, Nigeria currently ranks 100th out of 163 countries globally with an income inequality of 1 to 14 for the top 10% to the bottom 50% of the population and 1 to 37 for the top 1% to the bottom 50% (Dataphyte. com)

Sustainable Development refers to the “ability to make development sustainable – to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundtland Report, 1987). The Brundtland Report which was released by the UN sponsored World Commission on Environment and Development also stated seven critical objectives for any sustainable development policy.

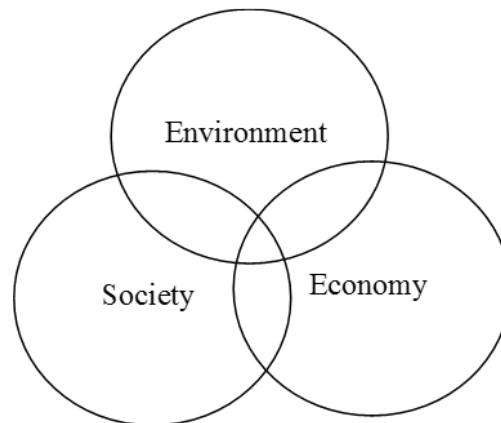
- i. Reviving growth;
- ii. Changing the quality of growth (emphasis on development)
- iii. Meeting essential needs of people for jobs, food, energy, water and sanitation
- iv. Ensuring a sustainable level of population
- v. Conserving and enhancing the resource base
- vi. Reorienting technology and managing risk and
- vii. Merging environment and economics in decision making

To Johnson et al (2023) sustainable development is an organizing principle that aims to meet human development goals while also enabling natural systems to provide necessary natural resources and ecosystem services to humans. The desired end is a community where living conditions and available resources meet human needs without undermining the integrity and stability of the planet's natural system (Iwe, 2023). Sustainable development seeks to strike a

balance between economic development, environmental protection and social development for future generations.

Eboh (2021) avers that sustainable development should encompass economic sustainability – which is a system of production that satisfies present consumers without compromising future needs. Social sustainability – embraces notions of equity, empowerment, accessibility, cultural identity and institutional stability.

Environmental stability – which implies the natural environment being productive and resilient enough to support human life. These are captured in a Sustainability Venn diagram, (fig 1) where sustainability is thought of as the area where the three dimensions overlap.



The UNESCO (2015) submitted that sustainability is the driving force of sustainable development. It describes sustainable development as the many processes and pathways to sustainability – a more sustainable world. The figure below gives us a more comprehensive and broad view of sustainable development.

Figure 1: Definitions of sustainable development

| WHAT IS TO BE SUSTAINED | FOR HOW LONG? 25 years “Now and in the future” Forever | WHAT IS TO BE DEVELOPED |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| NATURE Earth Biodiversity Ecosystems | | PEOPLE Child survival life expectancy Education Equity Equal opportunity |
| LIFE SUPPORT Ecosystem service Resources Environment | LINKED BY Only Mostly But and Or | ECONOMY Wealth Productive Sectors |
| COMMUNITY Cultures Groups Places | | SOCIETY Institutions Social capital States Regions |

Source: U.S. National Research Council, Policy Division, Board on Sustainable Development, our Common Journey: A Transition Toward Sustainability (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1999).

Since 1992 at the United Nations Conference on Environment Development (where more than 178 countries adopted Agenda 21, the idea of sustainable development has continued to spread and accepted as a reliable and safe approach to development. In 2012 in the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro Brazil, the Sustainable Development Goals were born. The objective was to produce a set of universal goals that meet the urgent environmental, political and economic challenges facing our world.

The SDGs replaced the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of 2000 which aimed at dealing with the indignity of poverty. The SDGs are a bold approach to finishing what the MDGs started and take care of more pressing challenges confronting the World today. The SDGs are:

1. No poverty (SDG 1)
2. Zero hunger (SDG 2)
3. Good health and wellbeing (SDG 3)
4. Quality education (SDG 4)
5. Gender equality (SDG 5)
6. Clean water and sanitation (SDG 6)
7. Affordable and clean energy (SDG 7)
8. Decent work and economic growth (SDG 8)
9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure (SDG 9)
10. Reduced inequality (SDG 10)
11. Sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11)
12. Sustainable consumption and production (SDG 12)
13. Climate action (SDG 13)
14. Life below water (SDG 14)
15. Life on land (SDG 15)
16. Peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG 16)
17. Partnerships for goals (SDG 17)

These seventeen (17) goals interconnect with each other, meaning that success in any affects success for others. The SDGs are unique because they cover the issues that affect all of us. They are a reaffirmation of the global community to permanently end poverty everywhere. They involve the participation of all of us in building a more sustainable, safer and prosperous planet for all humanity. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) the SDGs aim to transform our world. They are a call to action to end poverty and inequality, protect the planet, and ensure that all people enjoy health, justice and prosperity. It is critical that no one is left behind”

Education

The definition of education has been attempted by scholars from various fields. Many are in agreement that education is a purposeful exercise designed to transmit knowledge, skills and character traits.

Some scholars describe education as a process that occurs during teaching and learning while others see it as the outcome of the process. Therefore, education is a process of acquiring knowledge through study or imparting the knowledge by way of instructions or some other practical procedure. It is also described as the passage to progress. Education is fundamentally learning of abilities and ideas that can make us increasingly innovative and problem solvers. It is a gradual life long process that brings positive changes in the way we behave.

Education goes beyond what happens in formal settings like schools. Everyone gets education from his experiences in and outside formal educational settings. Comprehensively, education is the act or process of imparting or acquiring general knowledge, developing the powers of reasoning and judgment, and generally of preparing oneself or others intellectually for mature life.

There are three basic forms of education, namely, formal, informal and non-formal.

Formal education takes place in a school setting where basic, academic or trade skills are taught and learned. Formal education is characterized by structural hierarchy, deliberately planned and the use of syllabus which teachers employ in teaching assigned subjects.

Informal Education is when one is not learning in a school setting and do not employ any particular learning technique. At homes, children are informally taught of certain values and chores. Through watching of television or reading of newspaper one gets educated. Informal education does not require conscious efforts.

Non – formal education includes basic literacy, post – literacy, continuing education and vocational education. It is that education that takes place outside the formal schooling system.

Our focus will be on formal and non formal education. Education in its totality is aimed inculcating the right values, knowledge and skills in the citizens (particularly the youth) of any country to enable them fit in and responsibly contribute to the development of their communities and the nation at large (Adolphus, 2023).

The Nigerian National Policy on Education sees education as

- i. An instrument for national development and social change
- ii. Vital for the promotion of a progressive and united Nigeria
- iii. Maximizing the creative potentials and skills of the individual for self fulfillment and general development of the society.

The National Policy sees education as an indispensable tool for national economic development, free and democratic society as well as national progress and security.

Science Education

Science is an organized body of knowledge about the world; a set of logical and empirical methods for the investigation and understanding of natural phenomena and an enterprise for the application of scientific knowledge. Simply put, science refers to activities embarked by man in life and planet earth (Babajide: 2015).

Therefore, knowledge of science is important and applicable in all spheres of human endeavours. Without science, man's survival on planet earth will remain difficult. Science education involves the processes of acquiring scientific knowledge for practical application. This is in tandem with Okeke's (2007) view of science education as an integrated field of study that considers both the subject matter of science as a discipline (Biology, Physics, Chemistry and Agriculture) as well as the processes involved in learning and teaching of sciences. Science Education also involves the enlightenment of the general populace on the usefulness of science and its applications to the every life of individual. This is sometimes referred to Science Literacy, which the organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OCED, 2009) defined as an individual's scientific knowledge and use of that knowledge to identify questions, to acquire new knowledge, to explain scientific phenomena, and to draw evidence based conclusions about science related issues, understanding of the

characteristic features of science as a form of knowledge and enquiry, awareness of how science and technology shape our material, intellectual and cultural environment and willingness to engage in science –related issues and with the idea of service as a reflective citizen. The knowledge of science whether acquired in school or through experience helps the human society to better cope with many of its problems and make intelligent and informed decisions that will affect the quality of life of present and future generations. Hence, the goals and philosophy of science education in Nigeria is focused on the development of the individuals into a morally sound patriotic and effective citizen and ... social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society (FRN 2013). The overall goal of science education and science literacy is to equip the individual with sufficient knowledge about the natural world and skills how home best to exploit it for his own survival. Viewed from the perspective of Physics or Chemistry or Biology or even Agriculture, scientific knowledge is to help humanity leave better life.

According to the National Policy on Education (NPE) the goals of Science Education include:

1. Cultivate inquiring, knowing and rational mind for the conduct of a good life and democracy
2. Produce scientist for national development
3. Services studies in technology and the cause of technological development and
4. Provide knowledge and understanding of the complexity of the physical world, the forms and the conduct of life

Lofting as these goals are the question remains, is Nigeria pursuing these goals as part of its sustainable development practice.

Technological Education

Technology is said to be the application of scientific knowledge to the practical aims of human life. It is that branch of knowledge that deals with the creation and use of technical means and their interaction with life, society and the environment, drawing upon such subjects as arts, engineering, applied science and pure science (Dictionary.com).

The study of technology is technological education. It is an integrated experience based instructional program designed to prepare students to be knowledgeable about technology-its evolution, systems, technologies, utilization and social and cultural significance (Technology Education Lab). It involves the learning of the processes and knowledge related to Technology. As a field of study, it covers the human's ability to shape and change the physical world to meet needs by manipulating materials and tools with techniques(Wikipedia 10:o8-23). From the definitions above, one can see that today's world is driven by science and technology. The degree of success of both states and individual in contemporary society is largely a reflection of their knowledge and application of technology. In today's highly globalised and competitive world a country that desires to make progress must embrace and integrate technological education as major components of its national strategy. The Nigerian National Policy on Science and Technology Education was developed in recognition of the fact that science and technological education is an effective tool of empowering the citizenry to overcome poverty and limits the incidence of social vices due to joblessness arising from lack of skills among its productive work force. This perhaps is in realization of the vast benefits of technology in National development. Anaeto etal (2016:38) stated that technology

plays a fundamental role in wealth creation, improvement of the quality of life and real economic growth and transformation in any society Mokobia and Ogonwa (2021:310) reported that the goals of technology education are to:

- ❖ Gain an understanding of the fundamental concepts underlying technological education
- ❖ Achieve the level of technological competence needed to succeed in life
- ❖ Develop a creative and flexible approach to problem solving that will enable the individual to adapt to various areas of life
- ❖ Develop skills including critical thinking skills, and the knowledge of strategies required to do research and enquires and communicate findings accurately, ethically and effectively
- ❖ Develop lifelong learning habits that will help him adapt to technological advances in the changing workplace and world

The benefits of technological education are too obvious and empirical by manifest.

Social Science Education

Social science is the scientific study of human society and social relationships. The Academy of Social Science defines Social Science as the study of people: as individuals, communities and societies their behaviors and interactions with each other and with their built, technological and natural environment. Social Science seeks to understand the evolving human systems across our increasing complex world and how our planet can be more sustainably managed. Social Science is all about how people live and organize themselves in society. Social Science embraces both art and science. This is because its content is social but the way of its study is scientific.

Social Science Education aims at providing learners with an awareness of possible roles in shaping the future, inculcating social values, personal values democratic values, and constitutional values, makes responsible citizenship and develop awareness of national integration and international understanding (ELRabih 2021) had outlined the following as the objectives or goals of social science

1. It gives knowledge about civilization and culture
2. It provides knowledge of social development
3. It develops civil qualities
4. It develops social behavior
5. It develops the power of thinking and reasoning
6. It develops modernization
7. It develops suitable proficiency and good habits
8. It develops the moral and social values
9. It develops the all-road personality

From the foregoing, we can conclude that social science helps people to know their duties towards human society and how they can fulfill their needs. It also provides knowledge of the social environment and nature. The study of social science also develops the human qualities and desirable attitudes in people. In addition to helping people know the importance of democracy, freedom, rights, and how to live in a society, it makes the people responsible active and reflective towards the society. Nigeria, country desires of comprehensive national development requires a socially aware and committed citizenry to achieve that.

TODAY'S REALITIES: WHERE WE ARE AND WHY

The level of any country's development is determined largely by the quality of its educational sector. The state of Nigerian economy today is a reflection of the state of education in the country. Education focuses on wholistic development by nurturing critical thinking, problem solving and creativity. It also promotes the development of social, emotional and ethnical capabilities, enabling individuals to be responsible citizens who can contribute positively to the society (Emofonwan,2023). A country without a functional education system deliberately designed with its indigenous uniqueness and quest for national progress cannot effectively compete in today's highly competitive global community. Education is essential for the growth and development of any country, Nigeria inclusive.

The reality in Nigeria today is that education irrespective of the dimension one looks at it leaves much to be desired. The practice overtime has been anything but sustainable. The impact on the country's development drive has been less than it should have been. All the socio-economic as well as political and security challenges the country is facing today are derivatives from the state of education in the country. The level of poverty, insecurity, poor leadership, bad governance and social dislocation are symptoms of the state of education in Nigeria. The reality today is that Nigeria is sick: economically, socially and politically. This is the hard truth that we must accept. To move forward we must stop pretending about this reality and consciously as a nation address the issues that are pulling back our progress, chief of which is our educational sector.

Poverty is in the Land - with over 71 million Nigerians living in extreme poverty today (World Poverty (Clock, 2023) and a total of 133 million people classed as multidimensional poor (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023) the country has become the poverty capital of the world (Punch, 19th June, 2023). The T200 Foundation had earlier in the year reported that Nigeria has a serious hunger problem with a Global Hunger Index of 27.9 as 12 percent of the global population of persons living in extreme hunger lives in Nigeria. With an inflation rate of 27 percent as at September this year, more Nigerians will surely slip down into poverty net (The Cable 16/10/23).

Unabating Rise in Insecurity

The level of insecurity in the country has been on a steady rise for sometime now. The activities of armed non state actors are now a daily occurrence. Despite the humongous budgetary provision for security coupled with the ubiquity of security operatives in the country, insecurity continuous to rise. Cases of banditry in the form of cattle rustling, insecurity, rape, drug abuse, hired assassination, killing of private and military personnel, oil theft, violent agitations, vandalization of public and personal property, brazen murder of entire or some members of a country, displacement, armed robbery, ritual killings etc have become so common. Today Nigeria is ranked the World's 15th Most Fragile State in the 2023 Fragile States Index due to the activities of armed gangs and groups. In it's 2022 review, the Cable Index reported that 4545' Nigerians were killed by armed non state actors while 4611 others were kidnapped. The Rights Global reported recently that a total of 555 and 267

Nigerians were killed and kidnapped within five (5) weeks of Tinubu's presidency (Nwakodo et al., 2023).

The continuous rise in domestic insecurity as seen in the frequency and spread of banditry has exposed the ineffectiveness of the Nigerian security architecture. Today, private citizens, communities, organizations have (3) resorted to private to.

Security arrangements to secure life and property. States and geo – political zones are already setting up security outfits to help them combat crimes (Punch, 29th January, 2020; Vanguard 11 April, 2021, Vanguard, 19th September, 2022; Leadership 3rd Dec, 2023).

Few days, ago a foreign government advised her citizens thus: reconsider your need to travel to Nigeria due to the volatile security situation and threat of terrorism, kidnapping, violent crime and the risk of civil unrest" (<https://www.smartraveller.gov.au...3.december.2023>).

Continuous Reduction in the Availability of Critical Infrastructure

Basic economic and social infrastructure are becoming scarce. Health facilities like public hospital are becoming mere physical buildings with most parts of their premises overtaken by grasses and reptiles. The roads keep deteriorating as the quality of work done were very low. Rail transports is still trying to come alive again. Energy and power facilities are being vandalized and out rightly stolen. In most parts of the country today, electricity remains a mirage. The situation is so bad that it will take the country about 300 years to bridge the infrastructural gap with the current rate of funding by the government (Punch, 18th September, 2023).

Japa has Become an Exodus

Citizens are scrambling out of the country in what is now known as Japa syndrome. The reasons for the rush out of the country are well known to us. Some of us here now will not allow any opportunity to Japa pass us. A recent survey indicated that 7 out of 10 Nigerians want to leave Nigeria (Punch, 7th February, 2023).

In January this year, the National Association of Resident Doctors (NARD) reported that more than 2000 of its members left the country in 2022. Between May and now 1,197 doctors have migrated to the United Kingdom (Punch, 4th December, 2023).

The health sector is most hit with the Japa syndrome. All public medical facilities in Nigeria are losing their personnel in droves while foreign states are welcoming them. As at 1st December, 2023 12, 198 Nigeria trained doctors are practicing in UK, alone. Just on Sunday, the Charge d'Affairs of the US Embassy in Nigeria, Mr. David Greene disclosed that the embassy has interviewed over 180, 000 Nigerians for US visas of which about 30,000 are student visa applicants (Punch, 4th December, 2023). Japa is now an exodus for survival in foreign lands. The colossal consequences for Nigeria now and in the future can never be correctly quantified.

Weak Economy

With worsening unemployment and continuous rise in inflation, Nigerian economy remains weak. Today, the Naira Black Market exchange rate is 1162 naira. As at October, 2023, the per capita income of the country is 2140 US Dollars (<https://www.statista.com7statistics>). Growth in the economy has continued to decline despite efforts to rebound it (Punch, 11th October, 2023). The economic reality of today is that Nigeria is bankrupt (Punch 1st October 2023) heavily indebted (Punch 15th October, 2023) and is still borrowing (Vanguard 2nd

November, 2023). Prices of food items, petroleum products and transportation costs have been on a steady rise since the removal of subsidy and further devaluation of Naira.

Dysfunctional Education Sector

The state of education in the country now is what none of us is proud of Interest in school based education by young ones is dropping heavily and this can be seen in continuous decline in applications and admissions. To an average young person in Nigeria today “school is scam”. While some may not agree with them on this, an honest and objective evaluation of education (schooling system) in contemporary Nigeria may not reveal otherwise. Are Nigeria graduates now employable? (Peoples Gazette, 16th February 2022). Do you really need a certificate to become President or Governor in Nigeria (Punch 15/4/19, Sahara Reporters 21/9/23 & the Whistler 24/1/2023). Are some of the things we are teaching within the four walls of our schools these day relevant and essential for success and survival in today’s world? As academics, are we researching and writing for societal impact or for career advancement and pecuniary purposes? Is the gown (tertiary institutions) influencing the town (society) or the reverse is the case (Vanguard 1st August, 2022).

Rising Unemployment

With more businesses (MSMEs) scaling down and closing up due to prohibitive cost of doing business / Guardian, 12th July, 2023) coupled with 4-5 million job seekers entering the Nigerian job market yearly, the unemployment rate which is now 41% will continue to get worse. The Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG, 2023) in a recent report revealed that unemployment was more pervasive among youths – persons between the ages of 15 – 34 years. It further reported that unemployment was highest among those who attended tertiary institutions. The report equally showed that the country has one of the highest misery indexes (the sum of unemployment and inflation) in the world.

Thriving Corruption

No one in Nigeria today will pretend about the high level and damaging effects of corruption in all facets of our national life. The country still ranks 150 at least corrupt out of 180 countries as indicated in the 2022 Corruption Perceptions Index of Transparency International. Corruption is the major reason why state institutions continue to underperform. It is the reason why bad governance pervades our political system. It is still the same factor responsible for the collapse and near absence of socio- economic infrastructure in the country. The continuous slide in the quality and standard of education in Nigeria is substantially due to corruption. Corruption thrives in any society that cheating and injustice is not condemned and punished. Interestingly these are celebrated in the Nigerian society. In the country today the following forms of corruption are evident to even the blind:

- ✓ Bribery
- ✓ Embezzlement, theft and fraud.
- ✓ Graft
- ✓ Extortion and blackmail
- ✓ Influence peddling
- ✓ Networking
- ✓ Abuse of discretion
- ✓ Favouritism, nepotism and clentelism (Wikipedia).

The failure of democracy to thrive in Nigeria is due to the high level of corruption in the country (ICIR, 21/11/23 & Punch 20/9/23). Corruption manifests in every sphere of our

national life, the judiciary, government agency procurement, contracts, payroll and extortion by security agents. Corruption remains the single greatest impediment to Nigeria's greatness. As former President Buhari once said "if we do not kill corruption, corruption will kill Nigeria (Vanguard 21 November & 2nd December 2023)."

Poor Leadership and Bad Governance

The absence of efficient political leadership and good governance have been significant impediments to Nigeria's development and stability. The quality of leadership in the country since independence has not impacted very positively to national development. Recently the Edo state Governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki openly blamed the current socio economic problems of the country on poor leadership. He said "I know as a governor that we are all going through suffering in the land. I understand how the economy works and saw this ahead of time. I have been shouting since I became governor that the way we are going and the kind of decision many of us politicians were making will bring about hardship. God in His mercy endowed Nigeria like no other country in the World. God gave us all and the problem we are facing as a nation is the one created by us particularly our leaders. If you are not ready to sacrifice yourself then you are not ready for leadership. Leadership is not how much you can get for yourself. Nigerians are suffering due to bad leadership (Leadership 3rd October, 2023).

The absence of political will of leadership and patriotism has continued to be a drawback to national development Dibal (2022) while describing the trajectory of poor leadership in the country observed that at the functional level because of the vain and ideological empty political norm we have, but money and godfather politics we play, we see the empty glorification of experience as the highest good for leadership. However the country has grossly declined despite the "experience" we see the concentration of enormous power in the hands of so many men/women with no vision, purpose, a sense of responsibility, understanding and patriotism to put society on path of transformation.

Bad governance refers to how decisions are made in government. It is the polar opposite of good leadership. Bad governance entails systemic corruption and a lack of openness and accountability, arbitrary policymaking and the deception of those who are ruled.

Bad governance occurs when those in governing positions refuse to listen to the voices of the ruled and are not willing to take responsibility for their conduct. Bad governance and corruption go hand in hand. Bad governance results to poor economic growth and even in a failed state.

We can go and on and on in highlighting the realities of Nigeria as at now but let us conclude by ruminating over some of the responses of the young man who recently burnt his certificates in an interview with the Punch newspaper:

What is your academic background and what do you do for a living?

My name is Alvin Ilenre. I studied History and International Studies at Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo, Oyo State. I've been out of jobs since February 2022. So, I just hustle basically. Before then, I had done several things here and there but that's it for me. Those were things I did before. Right now, I'm unemployed. That's it for who I am for now.

You were seen recently in a viral video burning some documents, which you described as your certificates. Did you truly burn the certificates?

Yes, of course. I burnt my certificates. I burnt them because I was going through some things and I needed to give myself closure. That was why I burnt them.

What were the certificates you burnt?

I didn't know where I dropped my secondary school certificate amid all these, but the certificates I burnt were my university, primary school leaving, and National Youth Service Corps certificates. Also, there were certificates I didn't burn. I need to state that I'm a minister of God, a trained minister even though I won't mention my ministry. I didn't burn the certificates from the ministry, because I was impacted by the grace of God over there so, I never burnt those. But I burnt the educational certificates that are useless in the country.

What were the things you were going through that made you destroy your academic certificates?

The reason why I burnt the certificates is not far-fetched from the kind of society we are in and a lot of people in the country can relate to these things that we're talking about here. It is frustrating being in a country where your certificate is not regarded. We're in a country where a certificate has been bastardised. You know, we behave like we don't know what's happening whereas the country is decaying. I have a lot of points but I'll mention a few.

First of all, I graduated from school and I wanted to get a job, but someone was telling me to go and bring N2.5m. Where will I get that from? Where should I get it from? Where will I get N2.5m to get a job? If I had that money with me wouldn't I start a business, or maybe go outside the country, to one African country where electricity is steady, and start a business? You can't start a business in this country and your millions will not go down the drain.

Two, I've had issues with people, friends, especially female friends, who told me that they were offered jobs on the condition that they would have sexual relationships with the employers or whoever wanted to make it happen. Jobs are not got with credibility, credence, and authenticity again. It is now who can sleep their way to employment. These are things that are happening.

Are you not bothered that you may need the certificates you destroyed one day?

At least, I went to school and it was only my certificates that I burnt. If I approach an employer for a job and they doubt my qualifications, they can go to the university. The university will prove that I graduated from the school. At least, I am better than some persons whose studentships cannot be authenticated by the universities they claim to have attended. So, those are the things we're talking about. It is sickening; I'm a person who likes doing things the right way, but when you want to do things the right way in this country, you are seen as a fool and are neglected. These are decays in society that we're not talking about. Military jobs are by slots; then, what are we talking about?.

Private businesses are running out of the country. Even when you want to do business, you're not even sure because there is no light, no road, no basic infrastructure. So that's the thing. And I'm not the only one on this table, we have a lot of young people on this table who can attest to what I'm talking about. So, that's part of the reason. I will tell you my mind; let's shake all the tables and speak truth to power. How many of them (politicians) in power truly have (academic) results? You'll go to school for years in Nigeria – five years, six years, without graduation. However, their children are taken abroad for studies. When they go

abroad and finish in time at the same age when you're still languishing in school, they'll get jobs in the civil service and get level 12. When you finally graduate after many years, you'll now struggle to get a government job and when you do, what you'd get is level eight. Let's look at our educational system and talk to ourselves.

Why do you not think you can still get a job?

Get which job? Impossible! I'm done! If I can't create a job myself, so be it. I'm telling you that for 13 years, I've not used a certificate for anything. If you look at the video that went viral, I didn't look hungry. Yes, it's not too rosy because I left my job just about a year ago. If I have a problem in my life right now, maybe a problem with paying rent, I have to squat with whoever I can squat with. But I know myself, I can hustle and within a short period, be back on my feet. Is it a job that you have to bribe your way through to get? Don't you see what's going on in the country? We are setting up this country for doom and that's courtesy of our leaders.

Don't you consider setting your academic certificates ablaze too extreme?

I don't consider burning my certificates to be extreme. We need to make a statement; we need to be heard; we need to be hard; we need to let the people know. I'm not speaking for myself alone. Some people have burnt themselves because of how tough this country is. Some people have swallowed poison, and many people have died of depression. I'm not speaking for myself alone; I did that for millions of Nigerian youths who are jobless. I don't think it is extreme; if anyone feels that it is extreme, they should not burn theirs, but I've burnt mine.

Did you do what you did out of frustration and anger?

Well, it's a mixture of both but that is done already.

Are you not bothered that you may regret your action?

I'll never regret it. I'll never regret it because I didn't burn the knowledge I have, but I only burnt the certificates. Also, I think it is high time we let the generation behind us know that unnecessary attachment of importance to certificates without knowledge should end. We have people who just want to have certificates without having anything in their heads; that should stop. Let us burn all the certificates and get real education.

If I ever need the certificates again, I'll print others from a third party and you have to collect them. I'll just have to contact a friend, who has a certificate to show me his, go ahead to print, then give it to whoever I want to give it to. After giving them (employer) and they think I didn't go to school, they should go and check the records; they're there. At least, my academic records are going to be seen, unlike some people whose records are missing.

Does burning your academic certificates not mean that the energy, effort, and money spent to obtain them was a waste?

No, they're not a waste from my point of view. Waste can be put in different perspectives but this particular subject and action cannot be described as a waste. It is also not a waste of money. We must emphasize knowledge; we must give relevance to what is in someone's head over what they have on paper. We must emphasize and preach that gospel.

What was the reaction of your parents and close friends when you decided to burn the certificates?

Fortunately, I happen to be the son of an activist, Alfred Ilenre, and I guess that the blood runs deep and we cannot just sit and watch corruption, irrelevance, and injustice thrive in Nigeria. My father is deceased now, but from what he passed on to me and what I have learned while growing up, we speak the truth about what we're going through and we're not cowards. If my father were alive, the Alfred Ilenre that I know, who was a journalist and an activist, would be proud of me. He would sit me down and congratulate me. My mum, on the other hand, who's alive, feels a little bit sad that I burnt my certificates, but I've sent people to speak to her. However, she has always known who I am and that is the same way with those who have always known me. They know that it is not something that I cannot do. I should have burnt them a long time ago and I feel this is even late.

Do you think burning your certificates will prompt the government to make better decisions in the interest of the youth?

Burning the certificates, I believe, will sensitize the people and make the government aware of certain things that are not being done rightly. See, I know that our government is stone-hearted, but at the same time, they have a conscience. As I earlier mentioned, this is beyond me. We're making consultations; I have sacrificed my certificates and I've spoken to other people. We want to sensitize Nigerian youths to certain important things, call for better knowledge and make them see it better. This issue of certificates and education in Nigeria to me is like weaponising illiteracy in the life of the poor man, whereas, the children of the rich are sent abroad to be well educated and get the right knowledge, while the children of the poor in Nigeria get certificates that their children will come back to lord over. The government may not do anything now because it is their handiwork, but with consistency in advocacy and showing our dissatisfaction, they'll be forced to do it in the future or the people will force them to do it.

What can the government do better?

*Nigeria's educational sector has to be better; it is the foundation. The curriculum used in Nigeria is a mess. We have to trash it and adopt a new one. We have to sensitize our teachers to avoid strike actions like a plague. All the strikes they embark on are just greedy actions; they don't affect the students positively. We need to have people who are truly capable as ministers of education. Ministerial positions, especially for a sector as critical as education and every other sector should not be assigned because of bias. Let our minister be someone who has risen through the ranks in the ministry, someone with good antecedents to fix the educational system. That is the way to make things right in Nigeria. We should not have someone who's blockheaded as minister of education or someone who doesn't understand how the ministry works. Things can't get better that way. (Punch, 3rd December, 2023). ***Emphasis mine****

Our today's realities as a nation are outcomes of several factors known to us of which unsustainable development practice in education is a key factor. Education is yet to become an effective instrument for national development and social change as envisioned in the Nigerian National Policy on Education. The education system is yet to produce enough knowledgeable and skilled manpower to drive industrialization, economic diversification and national development. Every year, the system churn out millions of graduates, majority of whom lacks enough knowledge and skill for personal advancement.

Education in the sciences and technology have not produced the quality and quantity of scientists, technologists and engineers that would drive the scientific and technological development of the country in this ICT propelled competitive world. We are yet to have experts in engineering technology that have the requisite skills and knowledge to take over the constitution of our roads from Arab nationals, the constitution of our rail & system from the Chinese our refineries from the Germans. Yet tertiary institution abound in the country. The impact of the bulk of graduates of social science disciplines on the society is yet to be translated into responsible leadership and followership in the country.

Can we truly expect otherwise from an educational system that has been bedeviled with a myriad of challenges since independence. These include inadequate funding, inadequate professional teachers, inadequate infrastructural facilities, poor supervision, corruption, weak administrators, poor quality education, overcrowding, brain drain and insecurity (Jacob and Josiah, 2021). Others are poor research, strike actions (Okolo & Gregory 2021) low teacher quality, outdated curriculum (Friday, 2023), poor implementation of good educational policies (Daniladi, 2015) and policy reversals (Oluwalola, Ayokunle & Ojo, 2022). From the foregoing, education in the Sciences, Technology and Social Sciences of Nigeria could not have served the country the purpose for which it was introduced. The unsustainable development practice overtime could not have resulted to a robust educational system that is significantly playing its part in national economic development.

Conclusion

The place of education in the life and progress of any nation cannot be overemphasized. The ability of nations to rise from the pit of Hobbesian kind of living to prosperity is largely a function of their quality of education. Education in Nigeria predates her statehood, yet like the Nigerian state, the level of education in the country is still at a unenviable level. The unsustainable development practices in the education sector continues to have adverse consequences on the overall development efforts of the country. To return the country to the path of national progress and development education in the Sciences Technology and Social Sciences must be seen, adopted and pursued as a major ingredient of overall national development strategy. To this end the following options becomes inevitable for Nigeria.

□ Adequate Funding:

Government must as a matter of urgency improved the funding of education. The UNESCO recommended 26% total budgetary allocation should be taken as a bench mark if education must take its place in sustainable development of the country. With only 1.6% of GDP devoted to education, the country need to increase the resources to provide quality education. In addition, measures should be put in place to ensure that funds made available are not misappropriated or diverted.

□ Development of Relevant Curricula.

The curriculum of all disciples and subjects in the education sector should be reviewed with a view to fashioning out study and learning items that are both relevant for personal development of the individuals and national development. The truth is that the curriculum of some disciplines in our tertiary institutions are so obsolete and irrelevant in this ICT driven age. The curriculum for each subject and discipline in our schools must integrate indigenous knowledge in the Science and Technology as well as our values and norms.

□ **Application of Merit in Recruitment and Promotion**

To solve the problem of low quality teachers and administrators in our educational system, merit should not be compromised in recruitment and promotion. Competence should not be compromised when recruiting personnel into our educational system. The reward system should recognize hard work and integrity (Channels Television 18th January 2023).

□ **Policy Stability**

One of the major problems of Nigeria is policy instability. In the education sector, policy instability is common and is caused by capital intensive system, poor consultation, political instability, poor coordination and cooperation of policy formulation, appointment of non-professionals as heads of educational Institutes and Agencies, dynamics in educational system and practices and poor formulation of educational policies (Ogunode, Akinyode & Ayoko 2023). The stability of educational policy will ensure sustainability. Government at both federal and state levels should desist from the irrational and arbitrary conversion of Polytechnics and Colleges of Education to Universities.

□ **Making Educational Attainments Meaningful and Useful**

The Japa syndrome both for survival and education purposes is one ugly trend the political leadership must halt. This can be done by improving the quality and relevance of education in Nigeria. Some of the laws of the country coupled with corrupt practices have made the quest for education look like a waste of time and resources.

□ **Skills Based Education**

As a country desirous of sustainable development the focus of our education whether in the Sciences or Technology should be more on acquiring skills and not on certificates. According to the Executive Secretary of the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) Professor Idris Bugaje. "if you have a skill without even a degree, you can find a very good job. But you can have a Bachelor of Science or any other type of degree without skills, you will go nowhere. Nobody will employ you (Punch, 25th August. 2023).

□ **Good Governance**

Any government that pays is attention to the education sector of its country is a bad government. A good government will ensure that the sector thrives by investing in it and removing any form of threats to its growth and survival. Most of the problems of education in Nigeria stem from bad governance.

□ **Environmental Stability**

Government must bring to an end the instability in the school system as a result of industrial unrests and insecurity. The damage to functional education by unions and armed bandits must stop Functional education is a desideratum for sustainable development. Nigeria must stop all unsustainable practices bedeviling acquisition of knowledge via Science, Technology and Social Science Studies.

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