



EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: THE EXPECTATION AND REALITY

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Abstract

The study examined the expectation and reality of education funding in Nigeria in relation to education for sustainable development. This study specifically, examined the reality of government expenditure on education as a catalyst for sustainable development, and determined the extent of disparity in expected and observed expenditure on education in Nigeria between years 1990-2022. Descriptive survey research design was adopted in the study. Secondary data was collected from the Central Bank of Nigeria's Statistical Bulletin, World Bank Indicator, and UNESCO. The data were analyzed using frequency and percentage. The results showed that there have been fluctuations in the trends of yearly allocated budgetary expenditure on education since 1990 up till date. Also, the results revealed a wide gap between what was expected from the government in terms of their spending on education as proportion of the yearly total budgeted expenditure and what the government actually spent considering the expected recommendation or benchmark of 26%. The study concluded that given the reality of education sector funding in Nigeria, the education sector in Nigeria may not produce the needed manpower through which sustainable development agenda could be achieved. Based on the findings, it was recommended that the federal government should enact a law that will fix adequate yearly budgetary allocation through the National Assembly.

Keywords: Education, Sustainable Development, Budget, UNESCO Benchmark, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Education has been described as process through which the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domain and abilities of an individual is developed for optimal functioning and performance in the society (Ilechukwu, Njoku & Ugwuozor, 2014). The pragmatic component of education makes its acquisition becomes imperative. In other words, individual member of the society has service to render not only to God but also to humanity and for this to be, there is a need for a harmonious development of the individual's physical, mental, spiritual and social powers so that the requisite for meeting the essence of life is acquired for adequate functioning. This harmonious holistic development of the individual for effectiveness in the society is described as the essence of education (Osuji, 2004). The contributory capacity of every member to the growth and development of the society is a function of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes at his/her disposal. Nevertheless, individuals can only acquire these requisites through quality education. Therefore, a developmental agenda of a nation must put accessibility of quality education for its citizenry on the front burner.

Investment in education is as important as the plan for nation-building. It has the capacity to boost the human capital assets of individuals and fosters economic advancement for increased welfare and livelihood. Education is regarded as the hub which connects all other sectors. It serves as the processing or coordinating unit of the economy, a veritable tool for expanding man's knowledge, and a means for enhancing rapid economic productivity. Through quality education, human capital is built and this in turn contributes to economic growth, decent work and elimination of extreme poverty (Sachs, et al., 2021). Omotor (2017) argued that education contributes immensely to technological development both in terms of the acquisition, adaptation, capital widening and deepening. An educated man is more efficient with a high degree of productive capacity and minimal waste. Offem, Aniah, Agunwa, and Owan (2017) also stated that the quality of human resource available in any nation is dependent on their skills, creative abilities, training, and education. It is further argued that educated population is a major determinant of economic growth. This implies that human skills development is a

function of education (whether formal or informal).

The acknowledgement of the need to develop a global framework capable of leading humanity on the path to sustainable development necessitates the United Nations (UN) General Assembly adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015 (Agbedahin, 2019). Verraki (2021) conceptualised sustainable development as the dynamic and progressive transformation process through which the nations meet their current needs and aspirations in the short run and without compromising their capacity to cater for their long run responsibilities in all ramifications of the society. It can therefore be inferred that effort of a nation in making quality education accessible and affordable to its citizenry is an effort toward developing the nation. However, currently in Nigeria, the quality of education offered can be described as nothing to write home about most especially, when compared to other developed or developing countries. This development can be attributed to poor funding and unacceptable level of commitment from the government that culminates in lack of basic infrastructure such as conducive classrooms, library, laboratories and other resources needed for

intellectual and social development. This poor funding of education has also led to incessant friction between the government and its universities workforce. The attendant and composite effects are poor quality teaching, poor performance of students at the internal and external examinations, labour unrest just to mention but a few. The adverse impact of poor funding of education is mostly felt and resulted into closure of various government owned higher institutions of learning across the country as a result of strike actions usually embarked upon by the labour leaders to press home their demands from the government.

In spite of damages that poor funding can have on developmental evolution of a nation, poor resources allocation to education sector remains unchanged even in recent times and justifies one of the reasons why the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) specified that, for educational systems of developing nations to witness stability, at least 26 percent of such nations' budget must be channelled to the education sector (Ekaette, Owan, & Agbo, 2019). Nevertheless, the yearly allocation of the Nigerian government towards financing its education seems to have fallen below this global benchmark.

Oweh (2013) affirms that education sector in Nigeria still faces the problem of inadequate funding with regard to the benchmark advocated by UNESCO that all member countries ought to channel at least 26% of their annual budget to education alone. Annual budget has been the key government tool for the implementation of social, political and economic policies and priorities (Ifionu & Nteegah, 2013). Despite its importance, the budgeting process in Nigeria has been characterized by policymakers rather than a participatory approach to goal design and priority setting (Amakom & Obi, 2007). Consequently, this kind of budgeting system operating in Nigeria might fail to achieve the sustainable development goal of education which is targeting at increasing access and improving quality. In a study carried out by Odigwe and Owan (2019) to examine the trend of the federal government budgetary allocations to the education sector in Nigeria between the period of 2009 and 2019, the outcome showed generally low allocations that were far below the UNESCO recommended benchmark. This suggests that the Nigeria federal government has failed to appropriate adequate funding needed for the

development of educational sector within the period under the study.

Also, the 2020 technical assistance report of the International Monetary Fund (2020) noted that the relatively low resources Nigeria committed to education are grossly insufficient to deliver quality education for all (Soto, Moszoro & Pico, 2020). Also, in the outcome of the Voluntary National Review 2020 on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, it was noted that only 1.6% of GDP devoted to education is far below the expectation and if the country is serious about achieve the goal of quality education, there is a need to increase the resources in this direction. The report further identified out-of school-children as a key challenge confronting the country achievement of education sustainable goal. It is important to emphasize that other components of sustainable development may not be achieved without the needed manpower which is a derivate of quality education. For instance, the Nigeria Economic Recovery and Growth plan, 2017-2020 puts in place to restore growth through investing in people and building a competitive economy is anchored on provision of quality education.

Statement of the problem

Nigeria as a nation has not been able to meet up with the expectation on sustainable development goal. Attainment of sustainable level of socio-economic development for citizens has been considered as an important goal that government of any nation should strive to achieve (Verraki, 2021). Despite the country population and natural resources capacity for development, the nation is still lagging behind in terms of development. However, human capital development is described as sine qua non to growth and development and efficient human capital development cannot be achieved without provision of quality education. Quality education is also a function of adequate and proper allocation of financial resources. This study therefore intends to examine the reality in government funding of education in relation to the possibility of achieving sustainable development agenda.

Objectives of the Study

The study examined the expectation and reality of education funding in Nigeria in relation to education for sustainable development. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. examine the reality of government expenditure on education as a catalyst for sustainable development, and
2. determine the extent of disparity in expected and observed expenditure on education in Nigeria

Research Questions

The two research questions raised to achieve the objectives are:

- a) What is the reality of government expenditure on education as a catalyst for sustainable development?
- b) What is the extent of disparity in the expected and observed expenditure on education in Nigeria using the UNESCO benchmark of 26%?

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. Secondary data collected from the Central Bank of Nigeria's Statistical Bulletin, World Bank Indicator and UNESCO were used for this study. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistic such as frequency and percentage.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the reality of government expenditure on education as a catalyst for sustainable development?

Table 1: Government Annual Budget and Expenditures on Education from Years 1990-2022

S/N	Year	Total budget	Allocation on Education	% of Total Budget
1	1990	39,763,988,960	1,126,664,140	2.83
2	1991	38,665,978,779	419,906,180	1.09
3	1992	52,036,021,610	2,008,340,430	3.86
4	1993	114,600,529,300	6,436,080,750	5.62
5	1994	110,500,000,000	7,878,084,920	7.13
6	1995	155,500,000,000	12,728,676,390	8.19
7	1996	188,221,068,083	12,135,951,790	6.45
8	1997	4004,000,000,000	16,440,162,819	4.97
9	1998	260,000,000,000	26,721,320,906	10.28
10	1999	419,500,000,000	27,712,000,000	6.61
11	2000	677,511,714,733	56,668,169,766	8.36
12	2001	894,214,805,186	62,567,055,443	7.00
13	2002	1,064,801,253,520	73,435,499,300	6.90
14	2003	765,100,000,000	13,900,000,000	1.82
15	2004	1,849,400,000,000	93,770,000,000	5.07
16	2005	1,846,000,000,000	92,000,000,000	4.98
17	2006	1,900,000,000,000	92,000,000,000	4.84
18	2007	2,300,000,000,000	186,000,000,000	8.09
19	2008	1,980,000,000,000	210,000,000,000	10.60
20	2009	3,049,000,000,000	221,019,000,000	7.25
21	2010	5,160,000,000,000	249,009,000,000	4.83
22	2011	4,972,000,000,000	306,003,000,000	6.16
23	2012	4,877,000,000,000	400,015,000,000	8.20

24	2013	4,987,000,000,000	426,053,000,000	8.54
25	2014	4,962,000,000,000	493,000,000,000	9.94
26	2015	5,068,000,000,000	392,002,000,000	7.74
27	2016	6,061,000,000,000	396,006,000,000	6.53
28	2017	7,444,000,000,000	550,000,000,000	7.39
29	2018	8,612,000,000,000	605,008,000,000	7.03
30	2019	8,830,000,000,000,000	620,500,000,000	7.03
31	2020	10,59,000,000,000,000	691,0700,000,000	6.70
32	2021	13,59,000,000,000,000	742,5200,000,000	5.60
33	2022	17,13,000,000,000,0000	923,7900,000,000	5.40

Results in Table 1 show the analysis of the Nigeria government yearly budget allocation vis-a-vis the allocated amount for expenditures on education from year 1990 till date. There is an observed fluctuation in the trends of yearly allocated budget of expenditure on education in the years under consideration in the study. For instance, in the year 1990, the total government budget expenditure was ₦39,763,988,960 out of which ₦1,126,664,140 was allocated for education. This allocated amount represents 2.83 percent of the total budget for that year. However, there was a drastically decrease in the subsequent year as only 1.09 percent of the total budget was allocated to education. Similarly, in the year 2003, out of the total budget expenditure of ₦765,100,000,000, only ₦13,900,000,000 was allocated for education and it represents 1.82 percent of the total estimated budget.

In the years 1998 and 2008, the total percent allocated for spending on education reached the highest with 10.28 and 10.60 percent respectively. In the year 1998 for instance, out of the estimated sum of ₦260,000,000,000 of the total budget, the amount allocated for education spending was ₦26,721,320,906. Similarly, in the year 2008, out of the estimated sum of 1,980,000,000,000 of the total budget, the amount allocated for education spending was ₦210,000,000,000. From the years 2015 to date, the largest percentage ever allocated to spending on education was 7.74 percent of the total budget and that was in the year 2015 while the least percentage allocated to education between 2015 till date was 5.40 percent in the current year of 2022. In the current year (2022), out of the total budget expenditures of ₦

17,13,000,000,000,0000, education was able to receive the sum of ₦ 923,7900,000,000.

Research Question 2: What is the extent of disparity in expected and observed expenditure on education in Nigeria using the UNESCO benchmark of 26%?

Table 2: The Extent of Disparity in Expected and Observed Expenditure on Education in Nigeria from Years 1990-2022

S/N	Year	% of Total Budget	UNESCO	
			Benchmark (%)	Deficit in Allocation
1	1990	2.83	26	23.17
2	1991	1.09	26	24.91
3	1992	3.86	26	22.14
4	1993	5.62	26	20.38
5	1994	7.13	26	18.87
6	1995	8.19	26	17.81
7	1996	6.45	26	19.55
8	1997	4.97	26	21.03
9	1998	10.28	26	15.72
10	1999	6.61	26	19.39
11	2000	8.36	26	17.64
12	2001	7.00	26	19.00
13	2002	6.90	26	19.10
14	2003	1.82	26	24.18
15	2004	5.07	26	20.93
16	2005	4.98	26	21.02
17	2006	4.84	26	21.16
18	2007	8.09	26	17.91
19	2008	10.60	26	15.40
20	2009	7.25	26	18.75
21	2010	4.83	26	21.17

22	2011	6.16	26	19.84
23	2012	8.20	26	17.80
24	2013	8.54	26	17.46
25	2014	9.94	26	16.06
26	2015	7.74	26	18.26
27	2016	6.53	26	19.47
28	2017	7.39	26	18.61
29	2018	7.03	26	18.97
30	2019	7.03	26	18.97
31	2020	6.70	26	19.30
32	2021	5.60	26	20.40
33	2022	5.40	26	20.60

Results in Table 2 show the extent of disparity in expected and observed expenditure on education in Nigeria. In this analysis, UNESCO recommended benchmark of 26 percent was used as a yardstick for comparison. The expected is the 26 percent recommendation by UNESCO while the observed is the actual percentage allocated to education in each year. Deficit in allocation was calculated by subtracting the actual amount budgeted in education each year and the 26 percent.

From the results as presented in Table 2, the highest deficits in education allocation were recorded in the years 1991 (24.91%), 2003 (24.18%), 1990 (23.17), 1992(22.14%), 2010(21.17%), 2006(21.16%),

1997(21.03%), 2005(21.02%), 2004(20.93%), 2022(20.60%), 2021(20.40%), and 1993(20.38%). These deficits represent the percentage of shortfall in government allocations to education in the respective years. In the years under consideration, the lowest percentage of shortfall was experienced in the years 2008(15.40%), 1998 (15.72%) and 2014 (16.06%). As shown in the analysis, there is a wide gap between what was expected from the government in terms of their spending on education as proportion of the yearly total budgeted expenditure and what the government actually spent considering the expected recommendation or benchmark.

Discussion

The finding of the study showed that there have been fluctuations in the trends of yearly allocated budgetary expenditure on education since 1990 up till date. In fact, it was in the year 1998 and 2008 that 10.3 percent and 10.6 percent of the total budget was allocated to education and that has been the highest ever. Looking at this reality of government expenditure on education in Nigeria, it becomes practically impossible for such education with meagre amount to provide the necessary stimulations needed to meet the manpower development needs of a developing nation like Nigeria. The finding of the study corroborates findings of Odigwe and Owan (2019) and findings of Soto, Moszoro and Pico (2020) that yearly budgetary allocations to education in Nigeria were generally low. This outcome suggests that for more than three decades, education sector in Nigeria has been underfunded. Though, the adverse impacts of this underfunding of education sector have been pervasive not only in terms of educational development in itself but also on the expected contribution of its output to the national development.

Finding of the study also revealed a wide gap between what was expected from the

government in terms of their spending on education as proportion of the yearly total budgeted expenditure and what the government actually spent considering the expected recommendation or benchmark of 26%. In fact, in the year 1991 and 2003, the deficit in budgetary allocations to education was as high as 24.9 and 24.2 percent respectively. The least in terms of deficit was observed in the year 2008 with 15.4 percent and 15.7 percent in the year 1998. There has been a 2-digit percent of budgetary allocations of the federal government of Nigeria to its educational development for the past three decades. The finding is consistent with findings of Odigwe and Owan (2019) that the federal government budgetary allocations to the education sector in Nigeria were generally low and far below the UNESCO recommended benchmark of 26 percent. Also, the finding further buttress the outcome of the Voluntary National Review 2020 on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals that only 1.6 percent was devoted to education in Nigeria. Considering this trend of financial commitment, the available evidence suggests that if manpower development is what is required for the achievement of sustainable development agenda via education, it therefore shows that achievement of sustainable development

agenda might be a mirage in the Nigeria context.

Conclusion

The study concludes that given the reality of education sector funding in Nigeria, the education sector in Nigeria may not produce the needed manpower through which sustainable development agenda could be achieved. This implies that in Nigeria, education may fail to perform its role as catalyst for development. It is important to note that sustainable development agenda spans through all the economic sectors of a nation and every member of the society has a role to play in its achievement. Lack of quality education occasioned by underfunding is a cog in the wheel of attainment of sustainable development agenda.

Recommendations

The study recommends that the federal government should enact a law that will fix adequate yearly budgetary allocation through the National Assembly. This will therefore go a long way to curb policy somersault and inadequate allocation to the development of education sector in the country. Also, the various federating units

should be mandated to commit at least 26 percent of their yearly budgetary allocation to education for holistic commitment and development of education sector in Nigeria.

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