

Towards Achieving Sustainable Development Goals: An Appraisal of 10-3-4 System of Education in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study appraised the 10-3-4 system of education in Nigeria in line with the sustainable development goals (SDGs) of UNO and vision 2030. Particular emphasis was placed on the SDG 4 whose focus is on equitable and qualitative education for all irrespective of background, religion, race or disability. The goal of sustainable development education is to raise global citizens that can fit into our multicultural world with appropriate knowledge, skills and competences that could align with the demands of immediate localities and the world as a whole. Nigeria's current national policy on education (FRN, 2013) lays emphasis on compulsory basic education for all. However, findings reveal an abysmal implementation of the scheme, culminating in a high number of out-of-school children. The post basic and tertiary education are also in pathetic conditions as they have failed markedly to address issues of sustainable development, and pave way for unemployment rate to continue to escalate. The study through secondary data, observed poor implementation of the policy, inadequate funding, corruption, unqualified personnel among others as the banes of sustainable education in the country. Nigeria's government should take measures to revive the educational sector in order to meet up with the sustainable development goals. The study recommends an overhaul of the nation's educational system.

Keywords: 10-3-4 system of education; sustainable development goals; global citizens; curriculum; sustainable education

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INTRODUCTION

The world is in dire need of a sustainable education that can translate that can drive an all-round advancement that is capable of making the world a better place. Balanced education must adequately address cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of learning in ways that are relevant to societal needs. Education is “The deliberate and systematic influence extended by a mature person upon the immature through instructions, discipline and harmonious development of the physical, intellectual, aesthetic, social and spiritual powers of the human being according to their essential hierarchy by and for the individual and social uses and directed towards the union of the educated with the creator as the final end” (Redden, 2000; cited in Jelilov, Aleshinloye, & Önder, 2016, p.1862). This definition captures to a large extent the essence of education touching the physical, mental, social and spiritual domains. Thus, sustainable development goals (SDGs) are tied to effective education that can provoke international strategies that can positively affect people. SDGs goals were birthed during the UNO’s 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly’s special summit with the theme: “Transforming World - the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” (ICLEI, n.d.).

The 17 Sustainable development goals (SDGs) of which education is number 4 (SDG 4), are interwoven and indivisible with the aim of balancing three areas of sustainable development, comprising economic, social and environmental dimensions. Sustainable development is meant to promote 5 P’s – people, planet, partnership, peace, and prosperity. The integration of these 5 P’s means ‘people’, within the ‘planet’ earth, need to ‘partner’ for ‘peace’ for them to ‘prosper’ (Olusola, 2020). Education is the sum of all the processes by which individuals can acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes that can help them to be useful in their immediate localities and beyond. Hence, education which is the life wire of every nation must provide an adequate road map to enhance expected sustainable development that is capable of putting in the hands of its beneficiaries’ competences that are viable and in line with the highly popularized vision 2030.

Sustainable development seems to be a concept with multifaceted outlooks and seems to mean many things to different people. However, without dissipating energy on definitional differences, this paper aligns with a simple definition of the term which is self-explanatory based on the meanings of the two words that make up the phrase- “sustainable” and “development.” “Sustainable” means to be maintained or upheld to a certain level; and “development” simply means growth or progress. Thus, sustainable development is modestly and operationally perceived in this paper as any progress or growth that can be maintained or upheld. Taking it further, sustainable development education is therefore operationally delineated here as educational contents, curriculums, enlightenments and processes that can lead to political, economic and environmental growth or progress that can be maintained or upheld for the good of humanity. This definition suggests that sustainable education should be able to stand the test of time and provide an enabling environment that can breed global citizens among learners.

Oxfam (2015) posited that global citizenship education is a framework to engage learners with global interdependent competences aimed at equipping them to face challenges and opportunities in life. Thus, education that can raise global citizens should be universalistic, yet with adequate local contents to serve its immediate environment. In line with the vision 2030 agenda, sustainable development education should be inclusive and have equitable quality that can promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (UNESCO, 2017). Hence, education, being the heart of manpower development, is expected to be designed and implemented in ways that should be able to respond to the needs of

the people. This can be achieved through an inclusive education that can address identified areas of needs by putting in place modalities that can propel an enduring empowerment in line with the tenets SDG 4 in particular.

Developing countries like Nigeria have the arduous tasks of stepping up educational plans and implementations that can enhance development in order to meet up with developed countries which are miles ahead in terms of technological feats. Hence, it is reasonable or perhaps mandatory to state that advanced countries reached the pinnacle of success, achievement and great fulfilment through the instrumentality of education. Therefore, in line with the goals for sustainable development, every developing country should create an enabling environment to grow the type of education that can stir up sustainable development to raise global citizens that are prepared to meet the political, economic and psychosocial needs of their immediate environment and the world in general. UNESCO (2015) saw Global citizenship as feelings of belonging to a particular community with shared interest of humanity as reflected in political, economic, sociocultural interdependence and interconnectivity running through local, national, and global spaces. Education that can provoke developmental sustainability should be able to create cutting-edge knowledge, promote values, and impart skills that are productive and transformative in content and context.

Nigeria as a country has implemented a number of curricular approaches to address its educational needs as spelt in her policy on education which has 6 editions (1977, 1981, 1998, 2004, 2007 and 2013). Nigeria has adopted various systems of education with the intention of achieving sustainable development and advancing its citizens to cope in an ever changing or dynamic world. However, achieving success through sustainable education still remains a topic of discussion among scholars and the general public. The 10-3-4 system of education which is being practiced in Nigeria at the moment, and which by implication, forms the main thrust of this paper deserves scholarship scrutiny and appraisal in order to see whether the system is on the path of victory. Before the 10-3-4 system of education was birthed through the 2013 policy on education, there were other educational systems like the 6-3-3-4 systems of education, as well as the 9-3-4 system which preceded the current 10-3-4 system. The Federal Government of Nigeria introduced the Universal Primary Education (UPE) project in 1976, and the Universal Basic Education (UBE), in 1999. The aim of these basic education systems is to enhance fundamental literacy through equipping citizens with the basic education that can propel sustainable development.

The impacts of these systems in driving sustainable development goals in Nigeria in the past (UPE) and currently (UBE) are viewed with mixed feelings among educational analysts as many people feel that much is yet to be seen as products of these educational and curricular systems. Hence, Scholarship has consistently berated the Nigerian educational system which is perceived to be grappling with myriads of challenges. Is this perceived unsatisfactory output in the educational system an indication of poor curriculum plan, policy or implementation? Are other factors like economic or sociopolitical variables playing roles in this perceived worsening educational system in the country? These are pursued vigorously in this paper as we go through a panoramic appraisal of the 10-3-4 system of education in Nigeria, a country adjudged as the most populous black nation in the world and enjoys the pet name, “the giant of Africa.”

It is worth mentioning that this contribution is response to perceived gaps attempting a holistic appraisal of all levels of education under the 10-3-4 system of education as delineated in National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013). Thus, this effort critically scrutinizes the policy in line with the

present state of the Nigerian education; and examines some of the curricular objectives that underpin the 10-3-4 system of education in relation to some perceived challenges confronting implementations of set objectives as clearly explained in the policy statement.

METHOD

This paper is conceptual piece which relied on secondary data. The researcher sourced for relevant information from reliable online resources and sites. Google search engine was used to search for materials. The researcher sourced for suitable materials by searching with key expressions like: “Sustainable Development Goals,” “Education sustainable Development,” “Global Citizenship Education,” “Curriculum Planning,” “9-3-4 system of Education,” “Nigeria’s Education Policy,” “Nigeria’s History of Education,” and so on. Materials sourced from online platforms were carefully synthesized and applied to the study. The synthesis of UNO’s targets for SDG 4 and the Nigeria’s policy on education produces guidelines for educational processes and provides direction for this study. The study also adopts a narrative review approach to present findings gleaned from researches, positional papers and similar means of secondary data.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

The Nigeria’s System of Education at a Glance

The 10-3-4 system of education was birthed by the National Policy on Education (FRN 2013), which is 6th revised edition of the policy document. One of the major curricular change brought about by this policy is the inclusion of pre-primary education as part of the compulsory basic education to replace the 9-3-4 system of education that was introduced in 1999. The new policy stipulates the educational and curricular system of the nation.

The basic education is designed for children from 0-15. It comprises the Early Child Care and Development Education (ECCDE) for children aged 0-4. The ECCDE is to be run by individuals in the private sector and social development services. Children from age 5-15 fall within the formal basic education age. At the end of the basic education, learners are expected to sit for the Basic Education Certificate examination (BECE) or Junior Arabic and Islamic Studies Certificate examination (JAISCE). Learners are equally free to write both examinations if they wish to do so. The basic education has three components comprising 1-year preprimary education, 6-year primary education and 3-year junior secondary education. The preprimary education is the foundational class for primary education. The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) stipulates that the objectives of basic education are to:

1. Provide the child with diverse basic knowledge and skills for entrepreneurship, wealth generation and educational advancement;
2. Develop patriotic young people equipped to contribute to social development and the performance of their civic responsibilities;
3. Inculcate values and raise morally upright individuals capable of independent thinking and appreciate the dignity of labour;
4. Inspire national consciousness and harmonious co-existence, irrespective of differences in endowment, religion, colour, ethnic, and socioeconomic background;

5. Provide opportunities for the child to develop manipulative skills that will enable the child to function effectively in the society within the limits of the child's capability.

After a successful completion of the basic education and passing of the Basic Education Certificate examination (BECE) or Junior Arabic and Islamic Studies Certificate examination (JAISCE), a learner can proceed to any of post basic education and Career Development (PBECD) institutions in the country. PBECD includes senior secondary education, higher school education and continuing education. The objectives of PBECD as stipulated by The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) are to:

1. Provide holders of Basic Education Certificate and Junior Arabic and Islamic Studies with the opportunity for education of a higher level, irrespective of gender, social status, religious or ethnic background;
2. Offer diversified curriculum to cater for the differences in talents, disposition, opportunities, and future roles;
3. Provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and commerce and Sub-professional grades;
4. Provide entrepreneurial, technical and vocational job-specific skills for self-reliance, and for agricultural, industrial, commercial, and economic development;
5. Develop and promote Nigerian languages, art and culture in the context of world's cultural heritage;
6. Inspire students with a desire for self-improvement and achievement of excellence;
7. Foster patriotism, national unity and security education with emphasis on the common ties in spite of our diversity; and
8. Raise morally upright and well-adjusted individuals who can think independently and rationally, respect the views and feelings of others and appreciate the dignity of labour.

The tertiary education is to be received by those who have successfully completed post basic education. The general goals of tertiary education as stipulate the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) are to:

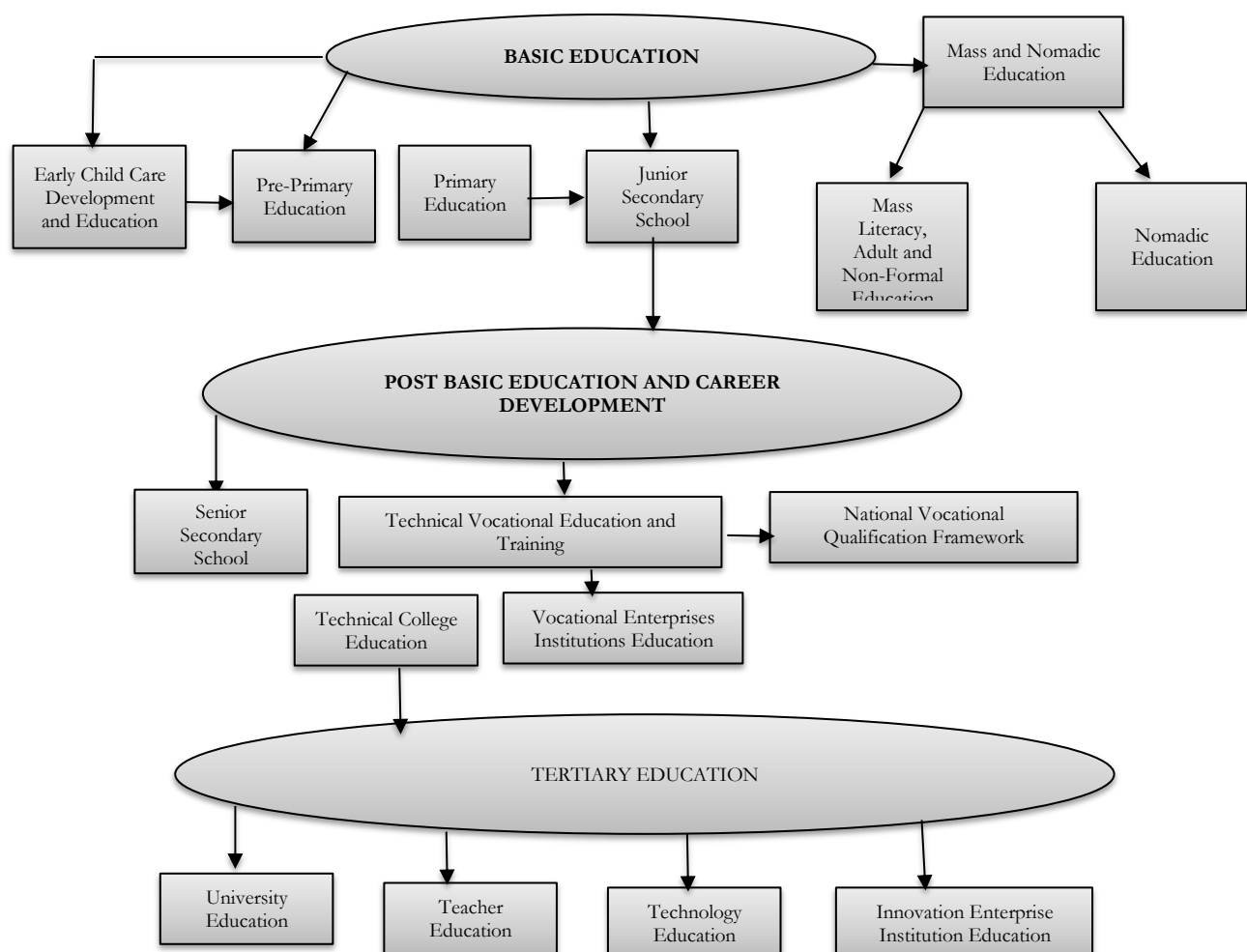
1. Contribute to national development through high level manpower training;
2. Provide accessible and affordable quality learning opportunities in formal and informal education in response to the needs and needs and interest of all Nigerians;
3. Provide high quality career counseling and lifelong learning programmes that prepare students the knowledge and skills for self-reliance and world of work;
4. Reduce skill shortage through the production of skilled manpower relevant to needs of the labour market;
5. Promote and encourage scholarship, entrepreneurship and community service;
6. Forge and cement national unity; and
7. Promote national and international understanding and interaction.

The policy also stipulates provision for mass and nomadic education. Mass literacy, adult and non-formal education is to provide basic education for adults and youths who do not have basic education. The objective is to provide education to those who dropped out of school or did not have the opportunity of going to school earlier. Closely connected to mass literacy, adult and non-formal education is the nomadic education which is designed to cater for the basic education of the children

of the disadvantaged nomadic population in the country. The nomadic population is classified into the nomadic pastoralists, immigrant fisher folks and the migrant farmers. According to the policy, nomadic education is the first six years of basic education (primary education). Nomadic education is meant to provide functional basic education and to help improve survival skills of the target population through appropriate knowledge and skills.

The policy is equally conscious of open and distance education which is to provide more access quality education, foster educational internationalization, meet needs of employers and employees and to reduce brain drain in tertiary institutions by engaging Nigerian experts as teachers in teaching processes irrespective of their locations. The policy further stipulates that the government of Nigeria shall ensure that the programmes run by open and distance education institutions are equivalent in status to those run in conventional tertiary institutions. In addition, the policy shows commitment to special education which is designed to meet the special needs of individuals who cannot benefit maximally from the general educational programme. Cases classified under special needs by the policy include: visual impairment, hearing impairment, physical and health impairment, intellectual disability, emotional and behavioural disorders, speech and language impairment, learning disabilities, multiple disabilities, gifted and talented, and albinism.

The Nigerian 10-3-4 System of Education



An Appraisal of the 10-3-4 System of Education in Nigeria

The Nigeria's 10-3-4 system of education could be appraised from three perspectives. The Universal Basic Education is first layer of the educational system, followed by the Post Basic Education and Career Development and the Tertiary system. Each of these layers are critically appraised based on available findings extracted from research studies.

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme is pivotal to meeting national development in all ramifications to improve the quality of life of citizens and lead to the realization of sustainable development goals. Since education by every standard is an asset (Abubakar, 2014), it plays a major role in determining the development of all other areas of life. It is therefore important to x-ray the impacts of UBE since its inception in 1999 in Nigeria. Studies on the scheme have consistently confirmed a pathetic picture of it based on findings. One of the major objectives of the scheme is to make basic education compulsory for all. This is also in line with the target of SDG 4 which stipulates that all citizens should have access to equitable and quality education. The targets of SDG 4 and the objectives of UBE do not align with the report of Omole and Ozoji (2014) which state that the 2012 economic section of the United States embassy in Nigeria postulated that the literacy rate in Nigeria was 61% and that out of the 30 million children of school going age in the country, only 10 million children enrolled in primary schools, confirming a large number of out of school children and young adults with limited literacy and numeracy competences.

In addition, Adeniran, Onyekwena, Onubedo, Ishaku, and Ekeruche (2020) in a study, examined the basic education scheme in Nigeria using a measure of quality education instrument constructed in line with Pritchett and Sandefur's model (2017) and found that only 24% of Nigerians aged 15–24 with primary education have competent literacy skills. The study also confirmed that only 19% of females were able to read a complete sentence as against 32% for males. Regionally, only 27% of the participants from southern part of Nigeria and 22% from the northern part were able to read a complete sentence. Based on locality, 31% of youth in urban areas met the literacy benchmark as against 21% in rural areas. The report of the study shows that the impact of UBE is not reflecting on citizens as expected. The study presents gender, region and locality inequalities in terms of the literacy outcomes of the participants of the study. This development negates the expectation of the UBE and SDG 4 which support equitable and quality education for all. By extension, this development portends danger for Nigeria in terms of meeting the targets of the UNO's sustainable development goals. Raising global citizens is tied to the literacy levels of the citizens. If a good number of citizens could not read a complete sentence, then the country is unlikely to meet the sustainable development goals.

Similarly, Oladimeji and Ogunyebi (2019) assessed the extent to which the UBE programme has been implemented in South West, Nigeria with a sample of 100 head teachers, 50 principals, 420 teachers, 200 education personnel/ managers and 600 students and found that the number of qualified teachers engaged in teaching pupils in Southwest Nigeria was lower than the number prescribed by UBE implementation guidelines; and also opined that the level of teachers' motivation, retraining and retention in primary and junior secondary was not consistent with the UBE act (2004). The researchers also observed that teaching of the major Nigerian languages and crafts as stipulated in the UBE guidelines were not adhered to in the region where the research was carried out. The study shows that basic education suffered major setbacks in some key areas. Lack of adequate qualified teachers, non-adherence to the teaching of major Nigerian languages and crafts can impede the actualization of the goals of UBE and sustainable development in the long run since teachers are

major drivers of teaching and learning processes. Many researchers have observed challenges with the implementation of the UBE at various levels of the scheme. Oladele (2018) noted poor teacher and student's performance, outdated buildings with leakage roofs, inadequate infrastructural facilities, lack of teaching aids, poorly equipped libraries, poor power supply, high rate of drop-out among others as challenges facing the effective implementation of the scheme.

A cross section of researchers have also reported various degrees of non-conformity with UBE guidelines as stipulated in the policy. There are reports of inconsistent and non-compliance with UBE standards (Abdulrahman 2012; Amadi, 2013); lack of stimulating learning environments (Amadi 2013); unqualified teachers (Nakpodia 2011; Amadi 2013; Olaleye & Omotayo 2009 Okewole, Iluezi-Ogbedu & Osinowo, 2015); and high cost of education (Amadi, 2013); substandard pre-primary schools (Obiweluozor, 2015); lack of provision for teacher education for early childhood (Obiweluozor, 2015); the use English Language in pre-primary as against the use of mother tongue (Obiweluozor 2015; Oladimeji et al, 2019); and poor government funding (Maduewesi, 2001; cited in Obiweluozor, 2015). The challenges confronting basic education in Nigeria are pathetically worrisome because without a solid basic education, the future of sustainable development that can foster technological advancement is bleak.

Having appraised the UBE project, we shall x-ray Post basic education and career development segment of Nigeria's 10-3-4 system of education. This segment is a fusion of senior secondary schools and technical and vocational education and training. The situation of post basic education in Nigeria is also a thing of concern if sustainable development must be achieved soonest. A lot of studies have faulted curriculum implementation. For instance, Amadioha, (2014) observed the dearth of the required number of qualified teachers who could teach the curriculum of Government as a subject. Criticisms also trail technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes in Nigeria. According to Onwenonye (2019) many Nigerians are even yet to understand TVET, resulting in their negative attitude towards it. Corruption was noted by Wike, (2014) cited in (Akanbi, 2017) as the bane of technical and vocational training in Nigeria, while citing the case of Boy-Child Vocational Schools whose foundations were laid in 15 states in 2012, but by 2014 none of the schools was completed. Akanbi (2017) queried insufficient funding, lack of equipment for practical training and insufficient qualified teachers to drive technical education; while Okoye and Arimonu (2016) cited inappropriate curriculum for technical education, embezzlement of fund meant for education, lack of teacher motivation, inadequate facilities and funding, brain drain, poor staff training, bribery and corruption as the problems hindering the growth of technical and vocational training in Nigeria.

The tertiary educational system of the country has challenges that have hindered its potentials in fostering sustainable development. Isife and Ogakwu (2016) cited examination malpractice, inadequate resources, leadership type, and the societal challenges as some of the problems impeding effective curricular implementation in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Curriculum is the back bone of sustainable education. Thus, impediments on its effective implementation would translate to low quality education and by extension low quality products or graduates that are half baked. Ozurumba and Ebuara (2013) in a study appraised education policy implementation and challenges of leadership in a survey and revealed that university administrative leaders who are experienced and more knowledgeable execute policies with better results than inexperienced ones. The study suggested that some Nigerian universities administrative were not able to manage the affairs of their institutions properly as a result of inexperience. Inexperience of administrative leaders will affect the

implementation of educational policies, and affect the overall outputs of the quality of education given out to students.

Yusuf (2012) found out that research in higher education is pivotal to national development, but lamented that research in tertiary institutions in Nigeria has not made significant impact in advancing technology and the socio-economic well-being of the citizens of the country. Impediments to research success in tertiary institutions include: inadequate and irregular funding, poor motivation, poor or obsolete research infrastructure, brain drain and rising workload resulting from deteriorating staff/student ratio, lack of research skills, inadequate research personnel, frequent industrial actions and “publish or perish” syndrome (Yusuf 2012). The challenges faced by institutions of higher learning could significantly affect the quality of graduates. The quality of graduates determines to a large extent the level of the quality of manpower that would drive the key areas of sustainable development. Global citizens are those with cutting edge knowledge diversities to cope in a dynamic world of today.

Students’ engagement in disruptive activities like cultism has equally contributed to the falling standard of education in Nigeria. Udoh and Ikezu (2015) lamented that Cultism had cast gloom over the educational sector as a good number of Nigerian youths were reportedly members of secret cults. Ajayi, Haastrup, Ekundayo and Osalusi (2010) noted loss of lives and properties, disruption of academic activities on campuses, unsafe university environments as some negative effects of cultism on campuses. Cult activities create panic and other related psychosocial and emotional disruptions which could affect the quality of an educational system. Again, the prevalence of sexual harassment of male lecturers on female students on Nigerian campuses could lead to fear and trauma (Taiwo, Omole & Omole 2014), and negative impacts on victims’ academic performances (Imonikhe, Idogho & Aluede, 2011). Thus, sexual harassment has contributed to the worsening educational situation in the country. Traumatized students may not be able to perform well in school. Certainly, this development could impede sustainable development in the long run.

The Nigerian educational system is said to be in a comatose condition and needs urgent steps to save it from total collapse (Muyiwa 2015). Government’s commitment to educational programmes has been found to be quite unsatisfactory among many scholars. For instance, Omodero and Nwangwa (2020) maintained that Nigeria’s investment in education is too insignificant; and that the number of out-of-school children is higher than the number of the children in school, resulting in high level of illiteracy that is impeding economic growth. Rowell and Money, (2018) decried gradual degradation in infrastructure, in manpower development, in quality of education and poor federal government’s spending on education which was put at below 10% of overall annual budget. Similarly, Olusola (2020) reported that in 2019, Nigeria budgeted a paltry 6% of her total budget on educational sector, representing an allocation of N448.01 billion out of a total of N7.30 trillion. In addition, Lenshie, (2013) agreed that the educational system in Nigeria has suffered major setbacks due to poor funding, implementation, monitoring and copy- syndrome, but further contented that politicization of education as a result of primordial sentiments rooted in ethnicity, religion and godfatherism are rather to be questioned for the falling standard of education.

CONCLUSION

This paper examines the 10-3-4 system of education in Nigeria in relation to the UNO's sustainable development goals, with particular reference to SDG 4. The Nigeria's policy on education supports education for all, but a good number of its citizens are still behind educationally. The Universal Basic Education project that was officially launched in 1999 seems not to have yielded sufficient result to put Nigeria on the path of sustainable development. A lot of students of school age are still not in the school, contrary to the goal of UBE and the targets of SDG 4. The national policy on education lays emphasis on education that would make the average Nigerian citizen self-reliant. Hence, technical and vocational training as well as entrepreneurship skills are well captured in Nigeria's curriculum design, but unfortunately, vocational education at the moment is suffocating in the hands of many problems. The tertiary institutions in the country are also not so promising. Incessant strikes, lack of funding and many other reasons have been cited for their dysfunctional and epileptic states. The Nigerian educational sector needs a thorough overhauling to bring about the desired change in the sector.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For Nigeria to meet up with the sustainable development goals and raise global citizens as expected by the UNO's vision 2030, the following recommendations are necessary.

1. The Nigerian educational policy makers and implementers should evaluate the 10-3-4 system with a view to making necessary adjustments to create an enabling environment for the system to thrive. Education should create skills and knowledge that can enhance technological advancement and facilitate economic growth. Therefore, policy makers and implementers should tailor education towards skill acquisition to foster self-reliance and reduce unemployment of citizens.
2. Government at all levels should show commitment or the political will to implement the Universal Basic Education project to ensure that basic education is available and compulsory for all citizens of the country irrespective of gender, religion or physical disabilities as stipulated in the policy. Government budgetary allocation to education should be sufficient enough to fund educational projects.
3. Qualified teachers and relevant personnel are needed to implement educational curriculum. Hence policies stipulating necessary qualifications guidelines in the educational sector should be enforced. Training and retraining of academic and other supporting staff at all levels should be prioritized.
4. Incessant industrial actions that could cause disruptions of educational activities should be mitigated through dialogues among stakeholders. Grants for research in tertiary institutions should be prioritized. Academic staff should ensure researches are tailored towards enhancement of human and material development and capacity building.
5. All forms of corruptive acts that have been hindrances to educational growth should be resisted at all levels. Punitive measures should be enforced against those that are perpetrating corruptions in the educational sector.
6. Educational counsellors should ensure that learners are properly guided to select subjects and courses that could suit their career goals. Similarly, counsellors should ensure proper guidance programmes in the schools to reduce students' disorderly behaviour like cultism. Early

counselling interventions could help students to maintain adaptive lifestyles and shun acts of cultism on campuses.

7. Furthermore, both government and its citizens must make up their minds to make the Nigerian education to work. Parents, students, teachers, school administrators unite against examination malpractices and other vices that are inimical to growth of the education. Every individual should patriotically strive to build a free and democratic society; a just and egalitarian society; a united, strong and self-reliant nation; great and dynamic economy; and a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens (FRN, 2013) as stipulated in the Nigerian constitution and in the national policy on education.

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