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HISTORY EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The thrust of this paper is to analyze the role of history education in sustainable economic development in Nigeria. The objectives of the study are to; trace the history of sustainable economic development in Nigeria, highlight the role of history education for sustainable economic development in Nigeria, and explore the challenges of sustainable economic development in Nigeria. In other to achieve the objectives of issues raised in the study, prominence was given to secondary sources of data (textbooks and reputable journal articles from recognized databases). The paper argues that the concern of Nigeria as an independent Nation since 1960 has been the quest for national development. To achieve this goal, various policy measures have been evolved to ensure steady sustainable economic growth and development. Policies focused on at different times by various administrations included agricultural as well as industrial and economic policies. The paper concludes that despite the different policies put in place by the Nigerian government to ensure stable and sustainable economic development, the desired goal is yet to be achieved as the country is still glaringly plagued and threatened by a network of constraints including a disconnect between the goals of environmentalists and that of economic group (business), near absence of environmental regulations, war, and instability, pervasive conditions of poverty, global economy crisis, population growth, poor leadership, poor resource management, high cost of governance, the prevalence of anti-development activities, Ignorance, stupidity, apathy and denial, lack of accountability and weak governmental institution.

Keywords: History, Education, Sustainable, Economic, Development, Nigeria

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Introduction

In recent times, the subject of sustainability has become a topical issue in the global context due to its emphasis on the preservation of the environment and the resources within it for the overall well-being of citizens. Over time, the Federal Government of Nigeria has realized massive amounts of crude oil and natural gas but without corresponding development and improved quality of lives of the citizens (Olamilekan, O. (2021).) It is on this note that this paper investigates the role of History in sustainable economic development. In particular, the paper examines the fundamental role of history education for sustainable economic development in Nigeria. For ease of presentation, the entire paper is structured into the following sub-themes; introduction which is the first segment. This is closely followed by a Review of Related Literature, An overview of the origin of Sustainable Development, History Education as a tool for sustainable economic development, challenges of sustainable economic development, and a Conclusion.

Review of Related Literature

Several previous studies are relevant to this paper titled: History Education for Sustainable Economic Development in Nigeria. One such study is carried out by Little (2009) titled "Successful Globalization, education, and sustainable development" in the *International Journal of Educational Developmen*t number,29. Little sees globalization as the accelerated movement of goods, services, capital, people, and ideas across national borders. To him, globalization is not an entirely new phenomenon since the internationalization of markets and cultures (e.g. the spread of global religions) has been occurring for millennia, but the latest phase of globalization is qualitatively distinct. Little further argues that globalization itself is neither good nor bad, but possesses the power to do enormous good… as in much of the world it has not brought comparable benefits but seems closer to an unmitigated disaster. Central to Little is the fact that globalization may be seen to affect the process of development, and the role of education and skills in several key ways. In general terms, it can be said to increase the importance of international trade, economic development, and national economic competitiveness, and hence national incomes increasingly rely on success in the ever-growing global markets in goods and services. In another dimension, globalization impacts the nature of economic development, changing the terms under which national governments and national economies can engage with the global market.

Little also elucidates the role of education in development. To him, education plays an increasingly central role in mediating social responses to the strains and contradictions thrown up by globalization and ensuring the social as well as economic benefits accrue from development and engagement with the global economy. Issues raised by Little are seminal to the ongoing study as they provide the background to some related areas

covered. However, while little study focused mainly on successful globalization, education, and sustainable development, the thrust of this study is on History education for sustainable economic development in Nigeria hence, a vacuum to fill.

In one of their scholarly works titled "Challenges of Sustainable Development in Nigeria" Ukertor, and Vambe, (2018) opined that the major concern of Nigeria since independence has been the quest for national development. This was to be achieved through various agricultural, industrial, and educational policies, embarked upon by various administrations in the country. Unfortunately, these various policies and programs put in place were not realized due to a network of issues that included; pervasive conditions of poverty, threatened and degraded agrarian and production environment, the prevalence of anti-development activities, ignorance, stupidity, apathy, and denial etc. The authors conceptualized Development as a constant process of transformation. It is a dynamic concept denoting a state of ceaseless change. Development has three major components namely: life sustenance, self-esteem, and freedom.

On sustainable development, the authors argued that it entails the progressive economic and social development of human society through maintaining the security of livelihood for all people and by enabling them to meet their present needs, together with a quality of life through their dignity and well-being without compromising the ability of future generations to do likewise.

Ukertor and Vambe's article is seminal to this study as it provides the background to the section of the Literature review of this study. However, the authors limited their scope of study to challenges of sustainable development in Nigeria, while the ongoing study included some new grounds like a history of the emergence of sustainable development and the role of history education in the promotion of sustainable economic development. These are new grounds that have made this study different from their work.

Adesote and Fatoki, (2013) on their part see History as the continuous interaction between the historian and his facts and an unending dialogue between the present and the past. It encapsulates the interpretation of traces or relics of the past in the light of the imaginary idea of the historian which is a self-depending, self-determining, and self-justifying form of thought. This connotes that the historian has access to the traces of the past in terms of relics, monuments, and documents.

What is discernible from the above definitions of history as viewed from different perspectives by scholars is that even though history deals with the human past, it requires analysis and interpretation based on evidence (historical records). A historian analyzes historical records. A historian is not usually in a hurry as he takes time to evaluate the necessary records or information received to come up with a balanced and acceptable account. A historian relies on different sources of historical information such as written

sources, oral traditions, linguistics, ethnographic, and archaeological sources just to mention a few examples.

Sustainable economic development is the process in which the exploitation of natural resources, the direction of investment, the orientation of technological development, and institutional change or reform are all in coordination and harmony and enhance both the current and future potential for meeting human needs. The goal of sustainable development is to secure a good living opportunity for present and future generations, that is, using natural resources sustainably. Economic sustainability refers to balanced growth that is not based on the loss of resources or indebtedness (https://www.ykliitto.fi/yk-teemat/kestava-kehitys). Economic sustainability can be achieved through efficient recycling and the use of renewable resources. This is based on the carrying capacity of the environment characterized by natural resources.

The concept of the economy comes from scarce resources. When resources are scarce, they become pricey. At the time of scarcity of resources, the prices tend to go up and vice versa. A sustainable and stable economy provides the basis for all other sustainable development. Without a solid financial base, there is no way to pay wages, invest in the well-being of employees, or environmentally friendly development. A sustainable economy also helps to meet new challenges, such as rising social security and health care costs due to aging populations.

In another dimension, the concept of sustainable economic growth which is also called economic development is an attempt to satisfy the needs of humans but in a manner that sustains natural resources and the environment for future generations. An economic function in the ecosystem. The ecosystem provides the factors of production that fuel economic growth: land, natural resources, labor, and capital. Sustainable economic development encompasses managing these resources in a manner that they will not be depleted and will remain available for future generations (www.sd,commission.org). This is hoped to be best achieved through the application of the knowledge of history since history is the study of past, present, and future events.

According to the Brundtland report of 1972, Sustainable development is a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts. The **first** is the concept of '**needs**', in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and the **second** is the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs.

In conceptualizing education, Sujan (2021) sees education as a social institution through which a society's children are taught basic academic knowledge, learning skills, and cultural norms. Education is an inseparable part of human life. Without it, human life is

incomplete, painful, and hopeless. Education does not merely mean being able to read and write, but rather a process of the harmonious development of an individual. The most obvious rationale of education is to inculcate in individuals those habits and attitudes that are needed so that they can successfully face the future challenges of life.

In the view of Ellis (2023), for economic growth to be considered sustainable, it must not compromise resources or environmental factors for the future. To her, sustainable economic growth has become a topic of considerable discussion in the 21st century, but many economic and environmental experts believe that there is still a long road to trek before economic growth stops compromising societal and environmental health. Although, it may be thought that society, the economy, and the environment exist in isolation of function and need, but proponents of sustainable economic development insist that these three pillars of human existence are interdependent and interconnected. For example, a factory that spews toxic waste into the air and water can pose risks to global health and irreparable damage to the environment. Similarly, if the environmental stores of a resource fully vanish, the industry may be decimated for want of usable supplies, thus depriving the public of necessary goods.

The principles of sustainable economic development focus on creating a balance between the needs of these three concerns; only when economic growth can be obtained without unduly harming society or the environment can it truly be considered sustainable in the long term. Sustainable development can be facilitated through five guiding principles, namely living within environmental limits; ensuring a strong, healthy, and just society, achieving a sustainable economy; promoting good governance; and promoting the culture of information dissimilation as a social responsibility.

Blogger (2022), opined that sustainable development has been the top agenda of many nations globally since the late 1980s and over that time much progress has been made in moving towards a more sustainable world. However, with population growth and issues surrounding climate change, the challenges of sustainable development persist hence the need to tackle it with new initiatives. Blogger sees sustainable development as a guiding principle that focuses on sustaining natural resources and the world's ecosystems in line with human development. Blogger's work is an inspiration to this work as it provides a guide to some issues addressed. However, Blogger couldn't historicize the concept of sustainable economic development. This is a new area covered in this study. Generally, Blogger's work is an impetus to most of the concepts discussed in this new work hence it is a relevant literature to the study.

An Overview of the Origin of Sustainable Development

Sustainable Development is widely recognized to have its origin in the 1972 UN Conference on Human Environment. The concept of sustainable development began to

gather momentum following the 1987 Brundtland Report, Our Common Future, and the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), also known as the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro. The summit marked the first international attempt to draw up action plans and strategies for moving towards a more sustainable pattern of development (www.sd-commission.org.). For the first time, the Brundtland Report introduced the need for the integration of economic development, environmental protection, and social justice and inclusion. It was attended by over 100 Heads of state and representatives from 178 national governments. The summit was also attended by representatives from a range of other organizations which comprised civil society. Sustainable development was the solution to the problems of environmental degradation discussed by the Brundtland Commission in the 1987 report Our Common Future.

The remit of the Brundtland Report was to investigate the numerous concerns that had been raised in previous decades viz-a-viz; that human activity was having severe and negative impacts on the planet, and that patterns of growth and development would be unsustainable if they continued unchecked. Key works that highlighted this thinking included Rachel Carson's Silent Spring (1992), Garret Hardin's Tragedy of the Commons (1968), the Blueprint for Survival by the Ecologist Magazine (1972), and the Club of Rome's Limits to Growth Report (1972) cited in (www.sd-commission.org.).

The concept of sustainable development received its first major international recognition in 1972 at the United Nations (UN) Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm. The term was not referred to explicitly, but the international community agreed to the notion – now fundamental to sustainable development both development and the environment, hitherto addressed as separate issues, could be managed in a mutually beneficial way.

The term was popularized 15 years later in Our Common Future, the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, which included what is deemed the classic definition of sustainable development: "development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (www.sd-commission.org.). It was not until the Rio Summit, however, that major world leaders recognized sustainable development as the major challenge it remains today.

More recently, the World Summit on Sustainable Development was held in Johannesburg in 2002, well attended by 191 national governments, UN agencies, multilateral financial institutions, and other major groups to assess progress since Rio. The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and a range of partnership initiatives. Key commitments included those on sustainable consumption and production, water and sanitation, and energy.

In 2012, the SD action resulted in an outcome document tagged **"The Future We Want"** in which states reaffirmed commitments to all previous SD agreements, plans, and targets.

They also committed to developing a suite of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) building on the priorities identified in Agenda 21 of the SDG(www.senedd.wales.).

History Education as a Tool for Sustainable Economic Development

Since sustainable economic growth connotes economic development that attempts to satisfy the needs of humans in a manner that sustains national resources and the environment for future generations, this suggests that History plays a fundamental role in the process of sustainable economic development of any nation as far as it is a continuous interaction between the historian and his facts and an unending dialogue between the present and the past. The historian accesses the traces of the past in terms of relics, monuments, and documents.

History education is a vital part of sustainable development which is why it is Goal **4** of the Sustainable Development Goals (Matthews, 2018). History education is a fundamental part of building a sustainable society as it provides a link between the past, the present, and the future, and gives a perspective on, among other things. In the education process on sustainability, de-growth, or whatever our environmental aims will be labeled in decades, history should have a pivotal role, in reminding us where human-nature relationships come from, as well as knowing what type of future relationship we want to establish with our natural environment.

Since sustainability entails using natural resources so that people in the future can continue to rely on them in the long term, the knowledge of history becomes indispensable in this regard because history studies the past, present, and future. History is not mere storytelling or a mere fabrication. History is an account of what happened in the past which has a link to what is happening at present and can help in planning or projecting for the future. In a nutshell, History is about yesterday, today, and tomorrow (National Teachers Institute,2015). Interestingly, each generation adds its chapters to history while reinterpreting and finding new things in those chapters already written. History education is imperative to sustainable economic development because education empowers people to improve conditions for themselves and the countries in which they live. It enables people to meet the challenges they face and also helps them to steward their resources more efficiently.

Furthermore, history education has implications for political leadership just as it is important for some wealthiest nations on earth. History Education can help people to cast off the shackles of tyranny just as it can help people to build representative democracies (Matthews, 2018). As evidenced in some developing countries with Nigeria inclusive, uneducated, and uninformed electorates are easily being lured or deceived by those who preach the destructive politics of fear and division. The knowledge of history education helps electorates to bridge such a menace.

Challenges of Sustainable Economic Development

One of the biggest issues facing sustainable economic development is a disconnect between the goals of environmentalists, and the goals of many economic groups, such as businesses. For instance, the goal of a business is to make as much profit as possible, to ensure its economic future, and retain its shareholders. Unfortunately, many alternative energy, alternative farming, and sustainable resource management technologies are either still untested or not cost-effective for business (Ellis, 2023). However, the argument in favor of sustainable economic development points out that without air to breathe, water to drink, and resources to use, the industry will have no customers and, this argument in itself seems insufficient to spur change.

The lack of environmental regulations is another major issue that constrains sustainable economic development. Many developing nations are desperately in need of economic stimulus, and thus willing to allow major sacrifices in terms of wage, labor, and environmental laws to bring in new industry. For instance, if a company based in the Western world can have goods made for significantly less money, with fewer regulations and virtually no chance of violating environmental standards, there is little incentive to manufacture in a developed country. Similarly, proponents of sustainable development argue that those who do not adapt to sustainable practices will destroy their market. Unfortunately, the effects caused by non-sustainable growth do not occur in a vacuum, meaning that ecosystems, species, and even human society as a whole can be damaged and endangered by unsustainable practices.

Another challenge is inequality. Inequality is rising even in those countries that have experienced rapid growth. The social and economic consequences of inequality are profound and far-reaching: a growing sense of unfairness, precarity, perceived loss of identity and dignity, weakening social fabric, eroding trust in institutions, disenchantment with political processes, and an erosion of social contact (Blogger,2022).

Prevalence of anti-development activities: instances of occurrences of anti-development activities in Nigeria, include constant feuds between the executive and legislature both at Federal and State levels, disrespect for the rule of law and the constitution, poor welfare package, and visionless leadership. Other instances are inter-tribal and intra-tribal as well as inter-religious crises. On an annual basis, the Christians and the Muslims are at each other's throats. The Kaduna crisis in 2000 is a classical example. Inter-tribal and ethnic conflicts prevail in various parts of the country with the Tiv/Jukun crisis in Taraba state in 1999, and the Jos crisis in 2004, as good examples. It is also argued that the ruling class manipulates crises (Ukertor and Vambe,2018). The development implications are many as human, financial, and material resources are wasted and economic activities are brought to a halt during such periods. At the international level for instance the war in Ukraine has had an impact on sustainable economic development. One of the biggest

issues surrounding food sustainability since Ukraine and Russia are big producers of wheat and barley. Russia and Ukraine account for around 30% of all exports around the world, which is a big figure and ultimately has a significant impact on food production and availability (Blogger,2022). It is difficult to maintain a civil society and the well-being of people when there is war or threat of conflict over a country. In these cases, sustainable economic development goals cannot be easily met.

Another related constraint of sustainable economic development is government issues. Most governments sign up for issues surrounding global warming and other climate issues, but not always. In some cases, there is political initiative to reject environmental issues and sustainable development goals to instead address the immediate needs of the country. For example, closing certain industries without replacing them can lead to certain communities suffering job losses and poverty. A case in point is the Arewa Textile in Kaduna state. Furthermore, political parties in the country can get into power based on supporting certain stakeholders and groups that are opposed to and have incompatible views with sustainable economic development goals. For instance, gaining support from fossil fuel companies and lobbyists. Once in power, it is difficult for such a government to reverse those policies with more sustainable decision-making since their support base has incompatible agendas.

Pervasive Conditions of Poverty: One of the greatest challenges to sustainable economic development in Nigeria has been that of evolving and effectively implementing policies and programs that will free the vast majority of Nigerians from absolute poverty. Many Nigerians wallow in abject poverty and perhaps do not receive sufficient nutritious diets to alleviate disease. To achieve sustainable development, absolute poverty must be eliminated so that poor people can produce or purchase the food, clothing, and housing necessary to ensure health and self–respect. Ending absolute poverty in Nigeria calls for improved access to education, healthcare, clean water, and sanitation (Ortega,1999).

Global economy crisis; the financial crisis that occurred during the post-corona virus also features as one of the numerous issues that affect sustainable economic development. Take for example the downturn in the United States and its impact on other nations which Nigeria was not an exemption during the period. As a result of the interconnectedness of world trade, there are many synergies between nations around the world, hence what affects one country can also impact another indirectly (Blogger,2022).

Ignorance, stupidity, apathy, and denial also affect sustainable economic development in Nigeria. The **first** consists of the lack of exposure to information, the **second** is related to the lack of capacity to absorb it, and the **third** and **fourth** of having the information but lacking the conviction optimism, or fortitude to act on it. As is evident in many cases, people in Nigeria most times find it difficult to abandon their traditional ways of doing things to modernize. Thus, new administrative procedures, and modernized agricultural

practices including the use of improved seeds, farm implements, fertilizers, and pesticides are seen as an exception rather than the rule of contemporary developmental strategies. These traditional values and practices thus conflict with industrialization and sustainable development. Even though they cannot be said to be bad in any normative sense, they can be best described as uneconomic cultural practices (Abah, 2000).

Another potential challenge of sustainable economic development is population growth; Nigeria for several decades has been described as the Giant of Africa because of her population. Population growth in Nigeria like any developing nation in the world can be seen as both a success and a challenge for the future. This is because the larger the country's population the more resources are needed to ensure that the people remain out of poverty and have utilities such as fresh water and industries.

Poor leadership; poor leadership as evidenced in various facets of governance affects the realization of sustainable economic development in Nigeria. Oftentimes, the Government cannot perform, which is rooted in a lack of ability to innovate and harness available resources. Besides, the government has no regard whatsoever for the principles of good governance: openness, transparency, accountability, and the rule of law (Olamilekan, 2021). Thus, the lack of an open and accountable government has paved the way for corruption and bad governance where public resources are being misappropriated at the expense of the masses. This cripple sustainable economic development in the country.

Poor resource management; poor resource management leads to the formulation of public policy of commercialization and privatization of government enterprises to relieve the government of financial burdens the non-performing enterprises can cause. With no solid accountability framework, poor management of resources is now rife among public officials. It has drained the country of the needed funds and resources to attain the goals of sustainable development.

High cost of governance; it is heartbreaking that about 70% of the government revenues are spent on the government itself, while only less than 20 % of the country's population benefits significantly from the government's revenue (Olamilekan,2021). This issue is further compounded by the increasing recurrent expenditure of the national budget yearly. Simultaneously, a decrease is being recorded for capital expenditure meant to help improve capital infrastructural development.

Lack of accountability among public employees is also one among the numerous challenges militating against the attainment of sustainable economic development in Nigeria. Despite the huge reliance on crude oil and natural gas for economic growth, the government on its part has failed to ensure a proper accountability framework for the sector to be accountable in terms of revenue derived. The implication of poor accountability culture by public officials on the nation's quest for development is that

public resources meant for development are often diverted for individual use, which hinders sustainable economic development in the country (Olamilekan, 2021).

Weak governmental institutions; this challenge is rooted majorly in individuals who head government institutions and ought to spearhead government policies and programs for the overall development of the country. However, incompetence has become the order of the day while many see themselves as bigger than the institutions they head, thus going above the law and not being held accountable for their actions. This in turn slows down the extent of sustainable economic development in the country.

Conclusion

The concept of Sustainable Development became more popular globally following the Brundtland Conference of 1972. Sustainable as a concept is defined as Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Ironically, Nigeria has not yet achieved sustainable Development, despite several efforts since 1960. The knowledge of history is important to the concept of sustainable development because history empowers people or individuals to improve conditions for themselves and the countries in which they live just as it reminds us of where human–nature relationships come from, and the nature of future relationships we want to establish with natural environment. Despite several policies and programs embarked upon by the Nigerian government at different epochs to ensure stable and sustainable economic development, the desired goal is yet to be achieved as the country is still glaringly plagued and threatened by a plethora of constraints including a disconnect between the goals of environmentalists and that of economic group (business), near absence of environmental regulations, war and instability, poverty and unemployment, Global economy crisis, population growth, poor leadership, poor resource management, high cost of governance, lack of accountability and weak governmental institution.

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