
ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 4:IMPLICATIONS
FOR VOCATIONAL AND TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Sustainable Development (SDG) works in the spirit of partnership and pragmatism to make the right choices towards improve life in a sustainable way for future generations. While Millennium Development Goal (MDG2) focused on children and access to primary education, Education for All (EFA) had a broader agenda aimed at meeting the basic learning needs of children,youth and adults. Unfortunately,MDG and EFA commitment to ensure the right to basic education for all was not achieved by the 2015 deadline. SDG4 seeks ways to achieve this unfinished education agenda.In this paper,SDG4.4 and 4.5 were the areas of emphasis because the country is moving towards being enterprising which can best be achieved through Vocational and Technical Education and training (TVET). However, it was hoped that by 2030, there will be a substantial increase in the number of youths and adults who have relevant skills including technical and vocational skills for employment,decent jobs and entrepreneurship. This paper in its effort to achieving this targets suggested that Governments should have clear,realistic and financed plans for implementation of SDG4.

Key words:Sustainable Development Goal(SDG):TVET;MDG;EFA; Upper Basics

Introduction

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) is the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. In the view of Helen (2017), Sustainable Development Goals otherwise known as the Global Goals, is a universal call to action to end poverty,protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. Similarly,Inter-Agency and Expert Group (2016) affirmed that SDG aims to address the global challenges humans face,including those related to poverty,inequality,climate, environmental degradation, prosperity, peace and justice. These SDGs are built on the successes of the Millennium Development Goals while including new areas such as climate change, economic inequality, innovation, sustainable consumption,peace and justice,among other priorities (Olaiya, 2016). The goals are interconnected. Often the key to success on

one will involve tackling issues more commonly associated with another.

SDG proposed a good number of targets. This study is however, anchored on targets 4.4 and 4.5. Targets 4.4 proposed that by 2030, there would be a substantial increase in the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills,including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship. Target 4.5 ensures equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university (Sustainable Development Goal, 2015).

The SDGs work in the spirit of partnership and pragmatism to make the right choices now to improve life, in a sustainable way,for future generations. SDGs also provide clear guidelines and targets for all countries to adopt in accordance with their own priorities and the

environmental challenges of the world at large. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2019) supported that SDG would tackle the root causes of poverty, and unit people together to make a positive change for both people and planet. Supporting the 2030 agenda is a top priority for UNDP (Helen,2017). The SDGs provide people with a common plan and agenda (EFA) in scope and of the pressing challenges facing the world such as poverty, climate change and conflict. According to Fehling, Nelson, and Venkatapuram (2013), UNDP has the experience and expertise to drive progress and help support countries on the path to sustainable development. The SDGs aim to integrate sustainability much more closely into the education agenda.

Vocational Training (VT) also known as vocational education and training (VET) which refers to all activities that aim at providing practical knowledge, skills and attitudes for effective and efficient performance of activities within an occupation or group of occupations (United Nations, 2004). In an effort to realize SDG 4 on vocational and technical education, entrepreneurship education should be a school-wide programme covering basic education through tertiary education. Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council NERDC (2016) present a list of secondary school curriculum to include one basic entrepreneurship course in an effort to realizing equal opportunity to access to vocational education for both boys and girls.

1.2 Connections between SDG4, MDGs and EFA

differs from both the education-related of poverty, and unit people together to make a millennium development goal (MDGs) and from education for all (EFA) in scope and geographical coverage. Table 1 below highlights the differences in a broader.

While MDG2 was focused on children and access to primary education, EFA had a broader agenda aimed at meeting the basic learning needs of children, youth and adults. According to Fehling, Nelson, and Venkatapuram (2013), the EFA commitment to ensure the right to basic education for all was not achieved by the deadline set for 2015. SDG4 therefore pursues this unfinished education agenda but also goes beyond committing all countries to ensure equal opportunity in access to quality learning opportunities at all levels of education in a lifelong perspective.

With its narrower scope on ensuring children's access to, and completion of primary education, the geographical coverage of the MDGs was focused on low-income and conflict-affected countries in the South. This was not the case for EFA according to UNESCO (2015). EFA had a wider scope on ensuring children's equal access to education and completion as compared to MDG. Since the original intention of EFA was a universal agenda to ensure quality basic education for all in all

countries across the world, EFA became focused on countries where the proportion of children out-of-school was the greatest (Miles & Singal, 2010). SDG 4, on the other hand, is by definition a universal agenda applicable to all countries both in the global North, as well as the global South (Olaiya, 2016)

Table 1: Comparison of Global Education Agenda: MDG2, EFA and SDG4

	MDG 2	EFA	SDG 4
Scope	(Children)	Primary Education education(children, youths and adults)	Basic education:post basic education/training;lifelong

Geographical coverage	Low-income, conflict-affected	While intention, in practice lower income	perspective universal in Universal agenda for all regardless of focus on income level/development countries
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Source: UNESCO (2016): Unpacking Sustainable Development Goal 4 Education 2030

Furthermore, varieties of reasons for shortfalls in progress towards the MDGs that gave rise to SDGs are numerous (Amin, 2006). UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon links the lack of progress to unmet commitments, inadequate resources, lack of focus and accountability, and insufficient interest in sustainable development (UN, 2010). In the view of Oya (2011) and Bond (2006), the MDGs cannot be fully met because of how the goals were designed. Reasons for slow or limited progress in achieving the MDGs are complex and with a global recession and inherent challenges with all goals, any limitation in the MDG framework itself cannot be entirely responsible for shortfalls in progress. Nevertheless, studies by Saith (2006) and Waage (2015) identifies a range of important concerns to include; limitations in MDG formulation process, structure, content and implementation. These reasons were elucidated in the work of Poku (2015) and Fukuda-Parr (2006) and explained as controversial issues in the MDGs.

Universal primary education according to UNESCO (2016) consists of three arms namely Lower basic (primary 1-3), Middle basic (primary 4-6) and upper basic (Junior secondary 1-3). The MDGs have generated critical debates among both development practitioners and researchers particularly when they were initially introduced. The numerous points that have been raised concerning primary education can be categorized into two sets of issues

(Fukuda-Parr, 2006) namely those that concern the composition of the goals, targets and indicators, and those that relate to the development and implementation processes. With respect to the composition of the lists, critics have raised the following issues:

Poorly designed development goals: The methodology for setting the goals has been inconsistent and apparently arbitrary (Easterly, 2009; Saith, 2006), the levels set are unrealistic for many countries (Clemens, Kenny & Moss, 2007) and biased against countries with low starting points (Easterly, 2009).

Composition is too narrow and excludes important dimensions of development: The publication of MDGs led to strong reactions from many constituencies whose agendas were left out.

Distortion of national priorities: From the start, many civil society groups in developing countries expressed dismay with the MDGs for undermining their advocacy and policy dialogue with their Governments. For example, some of the goals such as universal primary education took the agenda backwards in countries where the challenge was to improve quality in primary schooling and advance access to secondary education. This led an activist to rename the MDGs as the 'Most Distracting Gimmick' (Atrobus, 2001). A number of issues rose with respect to the process of formulation and implementation as follows:

Lack of broad consultation in formulation: The MDGs were introduced in the 2001

report of the UN Secretary-General, derived from the Millennium Declaration. Both documents built on the outcome documents of the UN development conferences of the 1990s, but the selection of these outcomes for these documents did not involve wide consultations. This led to criticism from civil society organizations (Bissio, 2003) and lukewarm responses from Governments of developing countries.

Global or national goals: An important debate exists on the applicability of the goals at the country level. Some have argued that the global goals should be adapted at the national level (Vandemoortele and Delamonica, 2010), while others have held that they should be achieved in each and every country (Sachs, 2005). The Millennium declaration and subsequent UN official documents leave the question unanswered. In practice, the UN monitoring reports apply the goals to each country, though many countries have also adapted the goals to their national contexts. Applying them at the national level and holding Governments accountable is highly problematic, since they impose a one-size-fits-all set of 2015 targets for countries with hugely divergent starting points, constraints, financial resources and capacity (Clemens, Kenny, & Moss 2007; Easterly, 2005).

Criteria for success and methodology of measuring progress: The methodology for assessing performance used by official national and international monitoring reports focuses on the level of achievement relative to the target. This method is biased against countries with low starting points. A more appropriate metric would be to focus on the pace of progress as discussed above (Fukuda-Parr & Sakiko, 2010).

Further, the MDG on education prioritized on basic universal primary education without emphasis on TVET. This focus neglects post-basic education and training (Onderi, Ajowi & Malala, 2014)

including technical and vocational education and training. This also indicates how the plan and policies concerning TVET were neglected according to (Bagale, 2015). TVET plays an important role in the provision of the skills, knowledge, attitude (Wahba, 2013) and values needed for the development of manpower. Mustapha (2015) affirmed that TVET has emerged as one of the most effective human resource development strategies needed in order to train and modernize their technical workforce for rapid industrialization and national development. Therefore, skill training is important for sustainable industrialization and poverty reduction in terms of creating a critical mass of technically and entrepreneurially qualified manpower that are able to stimulate investment opportunities, create jobs and increase competitive productivity, which can be ensured by a well trained workforce. TVET ensures this through its practical application as opposed to theory, and on acquisition of skills (Bagale, 2015) as opposed to acquisition of knowledge. TVET therefore prepares learners for careers based on blue-collar and practical activities. It is a training opportunity in which the learner participates and directly develops specific skills and expertise.

2.0 Relationship between Sustainable Development Goals and Education

Sustainable Development Goal 4 is the education-related goal of the United National 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in September 2015. Its overall aim as expatiated by Uvalic-Trumbic and Daniel (2016) is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. The Education 2030 Framework for Action, adopted in November 2015, provides a roadmap for achieving the 10 targets which constitute SDG4. Supporting the overall goal of making education a

vehicle for the sustainable development of the world is the thrust of this study. SDG4 which concerns achieving a sustainable education by 2030 in effect proposed some targets which the researcher focused only on target 4.4 and 4.5 for the educational relevance as was earlier stated.

2.1. Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all by the year 2030. Universal and gender-equal access to primary education are arguably among the biggest success stories of the (MDG) according to Sarah (2015) with most countries achieving, or close to achieving both goals. The successors to the MDGs which are the SDGs as affirmed by Langford (2016) have now been universally adopted. Notably, secondary and adult education was addressed explicitly in the new SDGs (Barrett, 2016). This recognizes that it is not just young people who can benefit from the transformative power of education. Government must ensure strict compliance to the policies guiding the implementation of SDGs to enable its realization in the 2030 vision.

2.2. Goal 4 target 4. By 2030, substantially increase the number of youths and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship (Schroeder, Anggraeni & Weber, 2019). Secondary education was present from a gender equality perspective in the MDGs, but was somewhat forgotten due to the large focus on universal primary education with reports from some countries suggesting that resources may have been diverted from secondary education to achieve the universal primary goal. Now, there is an increasing realization that high-quality secondary education is vital to provide the competencies required for sustainable development worldwide.

2.3. Goal 4 target 5. By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including University. The target for Technical Vocational Education and Training and Skills Development (TVETSD) is that: by 2030, government should ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university education. According to Gugulethu (2016), the Goal further compels governments to increase the percentage of youth, and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, entrepreneurship.

In an effort to realize SDG 4 on Vocational and technical education, Entrepreneurship Education should be a school-wide programme covering basic education through tertiary education. NERDC (2016) e-curriculum present a list of secondary school curriculum to include one basic entrepreneurship course in an effort to realizing equal opportunity to acquiring vocational and technical education for both boys and girls. VTE programme can fit into any of the various school programmes be it Basic Education, Senior Secondary Education or tertiary institution as suggested by Akudolu (2010). Vocational education which was neglected in the MDGs should be prioritized in the SDGs. A critical look at the achievement of MDG on universal primary completion in Nigeria, the efficiency of primary education has improved over the years as opined Olabode, Adeigbe, Kayode, and Owonibi (2014) as the primary six completion rate increased steadily from 65% in 1998 to 83% in 2001. It however declined in 2002 only to shoot up to 94 % in 2003. Literacy level in the country has steadily and gradually deteriorated, especially within the 15-24 years group. By 1999, the overall literacy

rate had declined to 64.1% from 71.9% in 1991. The trend was in the same direction for male and female members of the 15-24 years age bracket. Among the male, the rate declined from 81.35% in 1991 to 69.8% in 1999. The decline among the female according to Abraham (2015) was from 62.49% to 59.3% during the same period.

In 2015, governments committed to achieve inclusive, equitable, quality education for all by 2030 (Sustainable Development Goal 4, SDG 4). Four years later, the world is severely off track to achieve the goal opined Edwards, (2019). This paragraph illustrates some of the many obstacles to the achievement of SDG 4, from the point of view of teachers and education support personnel. Governments have taken the necessary steps to implement the Goal, and some have implemented policies that actively undermine the agenda. For instance, Rikowski (2019) and Ball (2009) profess that privatisation of education is intensifying and funding for public education is being cut, excluding the vulnerable from accessing quality education.

Teachers and education support personnel suffer poor employment and working conditions. Munier and Farrell (2016) aver that teachers suffer from unsafe work environments, high workloads, and low salaries while their status continues to decline. The basic trade union and human rights of teachers are being violated, and teachers are inadequately involved in policy development. Ogbuanya (2019) and Shumba (2016) profess that as the result of excess workload, teachers tend to build maladaptive cognitive patterns leading to burn-out. Discrimination against minorities has spread with the rise of the far right, and vulnerable students do not receive the support they need to access, enjoy and remain in education. Teachers often lack the professional autonomy or support to teach students about education for sustainable

development and the topic is marginalised despite being a central part of the full SDG agenda. This shows how far we are from achieving SDG 4.

With these obstacles, achieving SDG 4 target 4 and 5 by 2030 may become unrealistic. The obstacles are many, but failure to achieve SDG 4 by 2030 is not inevitable. It is still possible to make necessary adjustments on loss and grey areas in the educational policies and ensure quality education for all by 2030 if governments take necessary actions towards implementation of the policies guiding the SDG.

3.0. Moderating roles of Government towards achieving SDG 4

In order to get back on track, governments must demonstrate that their commitment to the SDGs goes beyond simply paying lip service to the agenda, using SDG language for existing policies and presenting positive portrayals of progress to the international community. Governments must urgently ensure that they have clear, realistic and financed plans for implementation until 2030 (Edwards, 2019). They must also guarantee adequate coordination mechanisms and leadership within governments to monitor and drive implementation. Government must put their money where their mouth is by ensuring that SDG 4 implementation is prioritised and adequately funded. Government must critically review existing policies and change any policies that undermine the SDG 4. Achieving SDG 4 will never be possible whilst democracy, human rights and public education remain under attack. Finally, to get back on track towards achieving SDG 4, governments must listen to and empower those on the ground, the teachers and education support personnel

who, as education experts, are the most qualified to identify successes and bottlenecks. Though SDG implementation is governments'

responsibility, educators and their unions are also key policy actors in driving progress towards SDG 4 and a better world for all. There is hope. We can get back on track to achieve SDG 4, but time is running out considering that it is 5 years into implementation time frame with about 10 years to end of 2030.

Conclusion

The failure of Millennium Development Goals and Education for All were hybrids of limitations in MDG formulation process, structure, content and implementation. In effect, sustainable development came into being as a global policy framework to cushion the aforementioned anomalies. These limitations need serious attention in order to curtail its repetition in the recent developed Sustainable Development Goals. For vocational and technical education sector to achieve its dream in the SDG, frantic effort such as advancing and implementing policies that concerns the improvement of TVET sector be put in place. Secondly, Government must have clear, realistic and financial plans towards SDG 4. It is worthy of note that being economical with implementation of policies is a key factor to failure of any meaningful development. Thus, any obstacle towards implementation of SDG policies must give way for success in this regards. It is not late to make up lost time, and ensure quality education for all by 2030 if governments take necessary steps towards implementation of the policies guiding the SDG.

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