



**EDUCATION: A TOOL FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND  
DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA**

**Samaila Mande**

Department of Business Administration and Marketing  
National Open University of Nigeria, Abuja  
[Smande@noun.edu.ng](mailto:Smande@noun.edu.ng)

&

**Olaide Kehinde Taofeek**

Doctoral Student of Business Administration and Marketing  
National Open University of Nigeria, Abuja



**Abstract**

*This paper explains the impact and importance of education on the growth, sustainability and development in Africa .The paper uses exploratory studies to analyze the importance of education to be a veritable tool for achieving economic growth and development in Africa countries. It was found that,education has a positive and significant impact on sustainability .economic growth and development in Africa as well different levels of education affects development and growth in the entire economy of the Africa .Also ,primary and secondary education are more important than tertiary education in some countries while some tertiary education are very crucial for their economic growth and development. Hence , the results of this study have significant implications for economic growth and development policy in Africa countries .The study concluded that education is an essential tools for achieving sustainability ,economic growth and development in Africa and the world and should be taken*

*as a priority. The paper recommended that tertiary education should be expanded in Africa as we have in Egypt. frequent curricular reform of education policy and evaluation of quality of data on education and also education should be funded and taken as a core and important sector.*

**Keywords:** Education, Growth, Economic, Development, Sustainability

## **Introduction**

**E**ducation is a tool which is generally agreed to be a critical success factor for promoting economic growth and development in Africa and the entire world.

Regarding the continent of Africa where growth and development is essential in moving out of poverty which ravages the most Africa continent. It is virtually known that, African Countries mostly concentrated on primary and secondary education and neglected higher education which is the ultimate institution for economic growth and development improvement and this mitigate the rate of poverty.

For instance, Dakar Senegal Summit on Education for All in 2000 advocated for primary education to be a tool for social welfare which left out higher education in the background.

Basically, new theory of economic growth and development lay much emphasis on the impact of human capital development, importantly through education.

Also education is belief to be a catalyst for development and growth of any economy most importantly African countries. Some few empirical studies shows that ,there is significant relationship between education and economic development in African in terms of income growth.

Furthermore, there has not been a clear indication of what level of education is right for the required development in a country which are considered low in income as well as measuring developmental outcome with the levels of education.

It is belief that, educational attainment in Africa is low compared to advanced countries of the world. Also, it is viewed that education has grown in Sub -Saharan Africa, since the past half century. For instance, 1970 to 2015, the percentage of children across the region of Africa that finished primary school rose by 50% from 46% to 68%.

Hence, the rate of children who finished lower secondary school doubled from 22% to 40%, (Bold et al, 2017; Adeniran et al, 2020).

World Bank(2018a) asserted that international community has categorized this issue to be a leaning crisis. This paper seem to emphasize the importance and relevance of education as a tool for economic growth and development in Africa as a continent.

### **An Overview Of Education In Africa**

The future of Africa depends on people and these set of people must be those who are well skillful, knowledgeable in solving the Africa problems in this modern world (Rena 2006).

For the future of Africa to be bright, people must be invested on in order to raise the level of economic growth and development as education acquired by people accelerates growth and development in Africa and this make people free from poverty(World Bank, 2007).

It is important that education and educational practice through acquisition of skills and, knowledge expedites understanding of information and communication technology. In most African countries,

lack of quality education bridge the gap in the educational system of African countries

### **Contributions Of Education To National Development**

According to Afolabi & Loto (2014), opined that ,education ensures that ,manpower for national development are provided . It is argued that, developed and educated polity has required and positioned manpower the right department for contributing their own quota for economic growth and development in the society .

Ajayi & Afolabi (2009), buttressed that, education is a veritable instrument that achieved the country's social, political, moral, cultural and economic goals and inculcates this in every individuals knowledge, skills, dexterity, character and desirable values, hence, it fosters national development and growth in African countries .

It is averred that , without education , a country cannot develop as this is needed for manpower that accelerates advancement and development in a country as we have in the likes of trained engineers, accountants, marketers, bankers, medical doctors and teachers, etc.

Hence, equality of education possessed in a country determines its level of development. Obasanjo (2012) stated that education trains every people to be sociable , relates and interacts freely in the society . Educational systems promotes development as it's brings people of different and diverse culture together for a common goals.

According to Armstrong et al (1981), students are known with their school and this have a positive attitude towards their teachers , learners and their entire educational system.

Obasanjo (2012), further said that, education enhances the culture of productivity by making individuals to be a creative and innovators in doing their tasks.

Education teaches people to be useful to themselves, families and the society. Education inculcates into an individual honesty, selflessness, tolerance, dedication, hard work, personal integrity and good leadership traits as a responsible citizens .

To monitor the basis for knowledge, the world Bank created knowledge Economic Index (KEI). The index is measured on four basis such as the favourability for knowledge development, institutional regime education, innovation and information communication technology.

### **Education For Sustainable Development (Esd)**

Education for sustainable development makes people to develop their knowledge, values and skills to be part of decision makers to improve the quality of life presently without compromising the needs of the future generations (Alkis 2008).

Education for sustainable development is a sub -field of education and is a conceptual tool for policy makers in making educational policies that consider the present environmental, societal and economic challenges into teaching and learning such as climate change, biodiversity, poverty reduction, sustainable consumption and disaster risk reduction.

Also, education for sustainable development is an important tool for making individuals aware of his environment for economic development and growth (Lindroos & Passo 2008).

### **Education Outcomes And Sustainability**

United Nations General Assembly, (1987), asserted that, education is an important tool for the development of any nation and sustainability cannot be achieved without education.

According to ESD Toolkit, (2016), education is the bedrock for sustainable development as it brings about change as our learning outcome, hence, improve the quality of our life .

World Summit on sustainable development (WSSD2002),embraced the Johannesburg plan of implementation on education that, formal education builds society and makes students to know what is best in their cultural,economic and natural heritage and to nurture values and strategies for achieving sustainability for national and global contributions(UNESCO 1998).

The role of education in sustainable development was also acknowledged in the United Nations Conference on Environment,and Development ,UNCED 1992 in Rio -de- Janeiro , that education is the right of man and is the gate path to economic growth and social development for lifting oneself out of poverty.

Wilhite,Jaja &Lou,(2012),outlined the features of education to be these: (i) Availability (ii)Accessibility (iii) Acceptability and (v) Adaptability. Jickling (1994), said that ,education is a critical element for promoting sustainable development whether formal or informal education changes people's attitudes and it is essential element for growth and development in a country and simultaneously increase annual per capital GDP growth from 2 percent to 2.5 percent ,as this is the same with per capital income by 26 percent over 45 years ago.(UNESCO,2014).

### **Education And Development**

It is universally known that , there is significant relationship between education and development .As people have different misconception of meaning of development .some define development as the liberation of the masses from exploitation in an unjust socio-economic and political system.

Hence , there are three perceptions to development in line with some schools of thoughts .Firstly, we have neo-classical theoreticians , which added to the ideas of Adam Smith and his contemporaries ,hence ,they asserted that ,education is not only a consumption article , but also make a provisions where government invest in people in order to provide long term training of workers that possess the requisite skills and knowledge that will increase productivity and makes them earns higher incomes .

The period of 1950s and 1960s is termed to be equation of economic growth with development in the area of factories establishment with modern equipment and staff alongside with skillful and trained managers which led to rapid industrialization .

Furthermore, what brought about economic growth lies on inputs such as funds,trained workers and modern technology. Also, development planners gave out their own ideal type of education relevant to create human capital which is western -type educational system based on formal education which is the main source of modernization and achievement of economic resources.

In 1970s ,theoreticians and development planners questioned the validity of ideas of human capita; formation as a result of low level of economic growth experienced in third world despite huge investment in formal education .

World Bank (1985), carried out different research on the relationship between economic growth and education. For instance, in 1980, Hicks published his study on the relationship between literacy and economic growth with a sample of eighty -three less developed countries and he found that, twelve countries had highest economic growth level with above - average literacy levels.

The Hick's study was observed not to prove a unidirectional causal linkage. For instance, rich countries have higher literacy levels and expands hugely on education than poor countries which means that education aids countries to become wealthier, hence, wealthy countries can afford to expend money on education.

Neo-classicists are majorly concerned with education that are meant to contribute to their economic growth .They strongly belief that ,education gives a powerful and long term method of equating income distribution with formal education that aids in the re-distribution of occupational skills and these determine the allocation of economic benefits within a society . This equality is in form of educational policies which brings educational opportunities for social mobility for the less privileged individuals to grow.

The Reformists belief is that, formal educational system in African countries did not bring the expectation required by the development planners.

There are two dimensions to educational crisis .First is the lack of trained manpower such as professionals in sciences, administration, management personnel and teachers

Secondly, the economies of some countries might not be in position to employ qualified manpower with requisite skills and knowledge .

Hence, Reformists belief that urban migration shows that formal

educational system neither prepares nor equips students with the required skills for living a standard life in the rural areas. Also it is suggested that, educational programmes should be linked to manpower planning in terms of training a enough manpower for employment opportunities in the modern sector as well those in the rural areas should be equipped with knowledge and skills they needed.

#### Current State Of Education In Africa

According to World Bank (2020),the rate of children completing their primary school in different countries has increase drastically from 27% to 67% between 1971 and 2015 inclusive with secondary school has also increased unabated from 5% in 1971 to 40% in 2015.

Ultimately ,this show that ,there is enormous increase also in some countries ,one in three children does not complete primary school and three in five fail to complete lower secondary school.

In Africa , education is not adequately funded and this leads to poor infrastructural development in most of the universities, secondary and primary schools as this is hostile to the learners and students ,hence ,this is disregard for quality education as a result of poor funding by governments .

The international development organization do promote African government neglect of higher education. The world Bank lay more emphasis on developing countries about primary and secondary education to be important points, such as frequent studies brings returns to investment in primary and secondary education is higher than tertiary education and secondary equity point is strongly based on widespread access to the basis of education.

### **Level Of Education Needed For Economic Growth**

More investment pumped into secondary education promotes the economic development through universal primary education. United Nations Millennium Development Goals on universal primary education was inadequate. Hence, universal primary education must be in correlation with the goal of realizing junior secondary education for the entire population (IIASA, 2008).

The sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aimed at ensuring education achievement for the population is achieved by 2030 and both boys and girls complete their free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education in terms of relevant and effective learning results. Hence, this brings about the awareness of the importance of secondary education.

It is from quality secondary education and universal primary education that poverty of poor countries are alleviated to the barest minimum. For countries to be more industrialized, tertiary education of young adults should be taken as a priority for economic growth and development, (IIASA, 2008)

### **Other Considerations Given To Education**

Education does not only involve quantity of schooling (primary, secondary and tertiary education) but on quality of education reflecting in international examinations that ensures economic growth and development (Hanushek & Kimiko 2015a).

According to WEF (2016), the measurement of education of secondary and tertiary enrolment were based on training and the quality of education assessed by business leaders and the rate of staff training.

Hanushek et al (2010), review the impact of education in promoting economic growth and development with main priority on quality of

education .The conclusion is that, cognitive skills of the population are more powerful in the long run for economic growth and development . Human capital is the tool and driver of economic growth and development in developing countries, hence, there has been much progress in closing the gap with developed countries in terms of school achievement, in totality, the spending on education has become a major area of importance worldwide.

### **Level Of Education**

The level of education are as follows according to Hanushek et al(2010):

- (i) Primary Education: the completion of primary school education as had a significant impact on those working in agriculture for more than 40 years (UNESCO 2010).

According to commission on Growth and Development (2008) social returns exceeded the private returns through wider societal contribution of educated individuals .It is evident that, Basic education reduces poverty and hunger Adult literacy survey shows that adult literacy programmes raises earnings potentials (UNESCO2010). Case-study of china for the past 40 years has emphasized that primary education can provide government with the incentive for enhancing the citizens towards higher productivity for economic growth and development.

Quality learning opportunities expansion leads to long term prospects and social change for economic growth and development in a country. UNESCO (2017), asserted that 171 million people could be lifted out of poverty, if all students in poor developing countries are skillful in reading and this led to economic growth and development.

- (ii) Secondary Education: Investment in secondary school education boost the growth and development of the economy of a country and cannot be achieved only through primary education .

In 2000, world leaders meeting in New York brought United Nations Millennium Development Goals which focused on universal primary education by 2015 but was not enough.

The further United Nations Sustainable Development Goals aimed education targets by 2030 for both boys and girls for free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to effective learning and relevant education outcomes.

This show secondary school education is important and should be given wider attention and awareness.

For instance, in 2015, a few countries charged lower secondary fees like Botswana, Guinea, Papua, New Guinea, South Africa and Tanzania (UNESCO, 2016).

Primary and other components of education are important and secondary school education mostly contributed to the achievements of United Nations Development programmes such as Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals.

For instance, in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1.8 million children's lives would have been saved in 2008, if their mothers had at most secondary school education, hence 41% reduction (UNESCO, 2011).

Also, women with a completed secondary school education sought for better medical treatment and ante-natal care, hence, improve their children's health, delay marriage and bear fewer children and send their children to good schools and have better economic opportunities that reduces poverty and hunger.

(iii) Tertiary Education: Heart foundation formulated Higher education topic guide for higher education contribution to economic growth and development (Power et al. 2015).

Education contribution to economic development is viewed from the level of education and earnings and rates of return.

It is evident that, Higher education produces both social and private benefits to the country and individuals (power et al 2015).

Tilek (2003), revealed that, adult population with higher education leads to economic development. Hence, the higher the rate of adult population with higher education, the higher the level of economic growth and development.

India rose to the world economic prominence for the past years as a result of high quality technical higher education of its citizens (Bloom et al 2006). With higher education, market benefits for individuals are better job prospects, higher salaries, labour market flexibility, ability to save and invest (Psacharapoulos 2006).

Public benefits of higher education include higher productivity and output per worker, higher net tax revenue and lower dependent on government financial support.

Higher education is relevant for skilled jobs if students are inculcated with stronger skills by universities. For instance, better engineers produced in a country with greater knowledge capital seem to have an excellent impact on the growth and development of the economy.

(iv) Technical And Vocational Education And Training (TVET): Browne (2016) asserted that UNEVOC (International Center For Technical and Vocational Education and Training) and the National Vocational centre For Vocational Education Research (NCVER), developed an instrument that measures investment return in relevance to Technical and Vocational Education and Training.

Greater Technical and Vocational Education and Training skills expedites social inclusion and this enhances economic productivity and create social well-being (Kautz et al 2014).

Education As a Solution To Economic Growth And Decent Employment In Developing Countries

According to Starreboom & Staneva(2014), earnings tend to rise in relevance with workers' level of educational attainment and those with higher qualifications and with lengthy experience and increasing importance of educational attainment beyond the primary school cannot be over-emphasized.

Relatively, youths are not prepared for better opportunities ahead in terms of higher qualifications the labour market is demanding for (Strreboom & Staneva2014).

#### Education As a Driver Of Development And Economic Growth

Lutz et al (2008), defined human capital as people with a certain educational qualification and health status which are the basic problems of Sub-Saharan Africa in term growth of rapid population with low human capital.

The human drivers of development comprises of interacting population, education and health as a triad. Lutz et al (2008), further said that education is not only measured with health, demographic, individual income but mostly on country's economic growth level. It opined that, for country to experience growth and be out of poverty ,universal primary education and secondary education are paramount coupled with population through family planning .

Population projections for Sub-Saharan Africa in this 21st century envisage a triple population in 2000 to 1.5 billion in 2050 and 2 billion in 2100,hence, population growth lies on future fertility and mortality rate .

#### **Conclusion**

Education is an essential tool for achieving sustainability, economic growth and development in any country of the world. Several countries in the world take cognizance of education and training as an important factors for realizing sustainability, development and growth in a country.

Also, Education is taken as a priority and it is seen as a key tool for bringing about changes in knowledge, values, behavior and lifestyle required and is right of every human being on earth.

### **Recommendations**

This study recommends the following as a policy in improving education for sustainability, economic growth and development in Africa:

- (I) There should be expanding of higher/tertiary education in all African countries as we experienced highest number tertiary institutions in Egypt.
- (ii) Disciplinary courses such as sciences and engineering should be focus on within tertiary education as they are useful for promoting economic development and growth in any country.
- (iii) Curricular for every educational level should be revised and reformed regularly in order to meet up with the current changes and trends in the society.
- (iv) Regular Quality of data on education gathered should be at all - time be evaluated in order to meet up with the current problems and trends.
- (v) The funds allocated to all levels of education be it primary, secondary and tertiary education should be equal and made to be balanced.
- (vi) Data gathered from research on education from developing countries should be focused on as a critical element for improving quality of education
- (vii) Case study comparison of countries education should be done regularly so as to shed more lights to new changes and trends in education.
- (viii) Government of African countries should take education sector to be an important that brings growth and development to

country, hence, good sum of money should be allocated as a budget to educational sector annually.

- (ix) Private and public partnership and collaboration will go a long way to uplift the glory of education through appropriate ideas and innovations channeled to the education sector for growth

### **References**

- Afolabi, F. & Loto, A. (2012). Socio-political vicissitudes and Bureaucratic constraints on Educational Formulation and Implementation in Nigeria.
- Alkis, S. (2008). Education for sustainable Development in Turkey, *International Schulbuchforschung*, Vol 30, No 2, P. 597-598.
- Ajayi, A. & Afolabi, A. (2009). The Role of Tertiary Education in National Development: The Nigeria scenario, *Journal of Teacher Education* .10(1), 34-36.
- Armstrong, D. (1987). *Education: An introduction*, 4th Edition, Canada, Macmillan Publishing Company, P. 142 & 143.
- Browne, E. (2016). What works in Youth employment programmes? HEART helpless
- Communication on Growth Report. strategies for sustained Growth and Inclusive Development, Washington DC, IBRD / The World Bank.
- Dejene, A. (1980). A broader Concept of Development & the role of Non-Formal education analysis of three rural development projects, Ann Arbor University Microfilm,
- ESD Toolkit Version (2016). Discussion of Education for sustainable Development, retrieved from 19/09/2016 from <http://www.esdtoolkit.org/discussion/default.html>.
- Hanushek, E., Schwertati, G., Woessmann, L. & Zhang, L. (2017). General Education, Vocational Education and labour market outcome over the lifecycle. *Journal of Human Resources* .52, No 1(winter): 48-57.
- Hanushek, E. Eric, A. and Leedger Woessmann (2015a). *The knowledge capital of Nations: Education and the Economies of growth*. Cambridge, MA: MIT press.

- IIASA(2008).Economic Growth in Developing countries :Education proves key policy Brief #3<http://www.iiasa.ac.at/web/home/resources>.
- Jickling,B.(1994).Studying sustainable Development:problems &possibilities:Canadian Journal of Education , Vol.19.No 3.P.236.
- Kanu, Ikechukwu A. & Paul Haaga (2013). "A Philosophical Approach to Education for the Transformation and Humanization of Africa". Journal of Integrative Humanism, 3. 1. pp. 29-37.
- Kanu, Ikechukwu A. (2020). "Augustine's Religio-Educational Praxis as a Teacher". AMAMIHE: Journal of Applied Philosophy. Vol. 18. No. 1. pp.1-8.
- Kautz,T.,Heckmsan, J.,Diris,R.,Terweel,B.&Borghans,L.(2014).Fostering and measuring skill :improving cognitive and non -cognitive skills to promote lifetime success .The organisation for Economic co operation and Development .[http://www.oecd.org/edu/ceri/fostering-and-measuring-skills-improving-cognitive -and-non-cognitive -skills-to--promote-lifetime-success.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/edu/ceri/fostering-and-measuring-skills-improving-cognitive-and-non-cognitive-skills-to-promote-lifetime-success.pdf).
- Lindroos,P. and Passo,M.(2008). Strategies &challenges for education sustainable development in Higher Education with a Focus on the Baltic sea Region ,International Schbuschforschung ,Vol,30,No 2 ,pp. 581-582.
- Lutz,W.,Crespo Cuareessma,J.&Sanderson,W.(2008).The Demography of Educational Attainment and Economic Growth ,science 319(5866):1047-2048.[www.sciencemag.org](http://www.sciencemag.org).
- Olusegun O.(2012).Education and National Development .A lecture presented at the 2012 Graduation ceremony of university of Nigeria ,Nsukka ,January 26,P.3.
- Psacharopoulos,G. (2006).The value of investment in Education:Theory ,Evidence and Policy .j.Edu.Finance 32,113-136.
- Sparreboom,T. and Staneva,A.(2014).Is education the solution to decent work for youth in Developing economies ?identifying

- qualifications mismatch from 28 school to work-transition surveys,international Labour office ,Geneva :ILO ,<https://www.ilo.org/Employment/areas/youths-employment/work-for-youth/publication/thematic-reportsWCMS-326260/lang-en/index.html>.
- Rena,R.(2006).Education and Human Resources Development in post independence in Eritrea: An exploratory Note.
- Tilak, J. (2003).Higher Education and Development in Asia J.Educ.Plan.Adm.xvii,151-173
- UNDP,(2010). Millennium Development Goals Reports 2010 ,New York.
- UNESCO,(2010).The central Role of Education in the Millennium Development Goals MDG Summit High level Round Table 22/9/2010.united Nations ,New York Secondary Education ,[http://www.unesco.org/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/ED/ED-new/-images/education for -all-international-coordination-new/PDFanalyticalnote.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/ED/ED-new/-images/education_for_all-international-coordination-new/PDFanalyticalnote.pdf).
- UNESCO,(2012). UNESCO Global Monitoring Report , <http://www.unesdoc.unesco.org/-/images/0021/002180/218003e.pdf>.
- UNESCO,(2014). Sustainable Development begins with education ,2013/14 Education for all .Global monitoring Report ,France .
- UNESCO,(2014).Education for sustainable Development ,2014.World Conference ,ArchNa-goya .Japan.
- World Bank,(2007).Education in sierra Leone ,present challenges ,future opportunities ,African Human Development series .
- World Bank,(1985).World Bank Research Notes ,No 1.
- Woesmann, L.(2015).The Economic Case for Education ,Education ,economics,Volume 24 <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09645292.2015.1059807?journalcode=cede-20>
- World Economic Forum (2016).Global competitiveness Report 2015-2016.<http://reports.weforum.org/global-competitiveness-report-2015-2016/education-view/17-53>.

Zerb,J.(1974).Education and Development in FC ward (ed).Education and development re-Considered : The Beltagio conference papers,New York:Praeger, p.96.