

THE NEXUS BETWEEN EDUCATION AND EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Christy Ayi Alademerin, PhD
School of Educational Studies
University Sains Malaysia
Chrsty4@yahoo.com

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ADIDI, Dokpesi Timothy
Department of Philosophy,
Veritas University,
timothyadidi403@gamil.com

Abstract

Studies have shown that effective leaders see all experiences as learning experiences. And, with that, they are able to build a sustainable development. As such, it becomes evident that education is a catalyst for development. This further points to the fact that effective leaders never stop learning. Sustainable development is “the development that meets needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own need development.” This work hopes to discuss the necessary connection between education and effective leadership and their role in building sustainable development with Nigeria as the case study, using expository, analytic and critical evaluative method. This work concludes that the quest to build a sustainable development, a robust and

peaceful economic nation and a well-governed nation, the educational sector is, no doubt, the perfect foundation stone as it instills into individuals, from young lings, the necessary steps and precautions to arrive at this feat.

Keywords: Education, Leadership, Sustainable Development, National, Learning

Introduction

Education, undeniably, occupies an important position in the sector of any nation and this position cannot be over-emphasized. As a matter of fact, education is the bedrock of any nation. It is an enterprise which tends to form the human person in all ramification to full maturity. Education can be said to be a major service of the state and essential instrument of the training of its citizen. The objective of education, therefore, is to familiarize one with one's surroundings and learn how to cope with life generally.

Nigeria's struggles for sustainable development, leadership and good governance since the wake of her independence have been so daunting that it has become evident in all spheres of the nation's dealings to the extent that all woes facing the nation and stunting sustainable development have either been attributed or linked to bad leadership. Was there leadership prior to the independence? Yes! But for the sake of this paper, specifically its topic which deals with sustainable development, the concern of this paper will be the post-independence era and how Nigeria has thrived in building a sustainable development especially in relating education to effective leadership

This work aims at arriving at an understanding of the nexus between education and effective leadership for sustainable development in Nigeria. To this effect, this work adopts an expository, analytic and evaluative method. It concludes by affirming that any nation, like Nigeria, that aims at sustainable development needs to find the link between education and effective leadership. Since education involves learning, this

work will, sometimes, use “education” and “learning” interchangeably.

Education And Effective Leadership: An Understanding

There are no generally accepted definitions of Education. Etymologically, the word “Education” is derived from the Latin root word, “Educare” which means “to lead out from” or “bring out from”. This simply means educated people are led out from ignorance and illiteracy. According to Fafunwa, “education is an aggregate of all processes by which a child or young adult develops the abilities and other forms of behavior which are of positive value to the society.” This implies that the processes of education aims at the formation of behavior and development and abilities that are not just helpful to the individual but to the society at large. So, primarily, education is the transmission of the values and accumulated knowledge of a society.

Obafemi Awolowo, addressing the Union of Teachers in Ibadan in the year 1947 posited that “education is that process of physical and mental culture, whereby a man's personality is developed to the fullest.” From this point of view, it has become evident that education is designed to guide one in learning a culture, molding the behavior in the ways of adulthood and guiding one towards an eventual role in society. Thus, education becomes a cumulative process of development; the development of the intellectual abilities, skills and attitudes, all of which for one's various outlooks and dispositions of action in life and in living generally. In an address to the International Commission on Education for the Twenty First Century, Federico Mayor, a General Director at UNESCO asserted that “education is not only instilling knowledge but awakening the enormous creative potential that lies within each of us, enabling all of us to develop to our fullest potential, and better contribute to the societies which we live.” This position is an indirect commentary on the Socratic learning aimed at bringing out the innate ideas in man simply through dialectics.

Education also involves the training of individuals in order to acquire a particular skill or skills and also the formation and development of moral character and mental power. Education has been viewed with different lenses by various individuals and groups down through the ages. It is a common dictum that Education is the best legacy. It can, therefore, be said that education adds value and it is one of the best gifts that can be given to an individual. From a general view, education is a cumulative process of development. This development will invoke the skills, intellectual ability, attitudes and all other kinds of development.

There are basically two types of education. They are: formal and informal education. Formal education has to do with the kind of education given in an academic institution where there is a laid down curriculum or programme which the students follow. Formal education helps in acquiring the proficiency demanded by the very nature of the educational institution. Formal education is also known as Western education. Informal education, on the other hand, can be said to be the opposite of formal education as it does not follow a particular curriculum. As a matter of fact, it does not have one. This kind of education is given or received at home and the immediate society. It is the type of education that existed before the Western education. Although it still exists, informal education is given by religious groups, the family and the society. There is also the presence of moral teachings.

In present day Nigeria situation, getting one of the two kinds of education is not enough, not even advisable. This is the reason people still discuss the rise in the number of out-of-school children. Is it the case that they do not get to receive education at home? Of course not, they receive! However, we cannot underestimate the role of the formal education because in a society, you do not get to relate to the member of your clans alone but those from other sophisticated family and exposure. One of

the reasons to get the two. Secondly, the synthesis of these two forms of educations brings about the totality of one's developments and moral value.

Leadership is a position of being the head of a group, organization, country etc. Leadership is a position of authority. Leadership entails both a leader and the followers. Hence, the presence of followers is a necessary situation for the existence of a leader. Who, then is a good and effective leader? What constitute good and effective leadership? What can make one not be an effective leader? Managerial skill is a tool that can neither be underestimated or over-emphasized in making and deciding an effective leadership. Anthony D'Souza puts it thus, "a good leadership role should entail the leader having: a basic knowledge of group behavior, human relations and managerial skills and training in applying those skills."

Leadership is the art or process of influencing people so that they will strive willingly and enthusiastically toward the achievement of group goals. Leadership might be based on the function of personality or it can be seen as behavior and position. It may also be viewed in terms of the role of the leaders and their ability to achieve effective performance from others.

Leadership is the relationship through which one person influences the behavior of other people. This means that the process of leadership cannot be separated from the activities of groups and with effective building. Akindele defined leadership as "a process of goal attainment using strategies and skills in directing others towards achieving the target." Effective leadership is essential to the survival and growth of every organization; leadership is the process of motivating and directing others towards the accomplishments of goals.

What qualities must a leader possess to be effective? Stogdill highlighted some psychological traits that should be identified with a leader. They include: Capacity, the originality of

judgement, intelligence, alertness and verbal faculty. Achievement, being goal-oriented, scholarship and accomplishments. Responsibility, initiative and self-confidence. Participation, sociability and cooperation, among others. To begin with, a leader must be a gentleman and one of the hallmarks of a gentleman is a humility. So, gentleman attitudes and humility are steps towards achieving effective leadership. To be humble does not imply stupidity but freedom from pride and arrogance.

Education And Effective Leadership: The Relation

Learning and leadership represent two rich lines of research because one is about how people learn and the other is about how people lead. Could there be a relationship between the duo? This section of the work will attempt to connect these two ideas together. What relationship does the way that people learn have with the manner in which they lead?

In analyzing the question of how people learn to lead, there have been thousands of case studies and research that evidently show that there is a connection between learning and leading. Kouzes and Posner found that people reported learning how to lead from three sources: trial and error, observation of others, and education. Honeywell undertook a six-year research program to determine how managers learn to manage. Findings from their study revealed these three categories: job experiences and assignments, relationships, and formal education/training. Added to this statistics is the recent research from The Center for Creative Leadership when they interviewed successful executives to find out what career events they considered to be important in their development and clustered the results into these sets: job assignments that the executives had experienced; other people with whom they had come into contact; hardships they had endured; and formal training. It has, thus, become evident that in the formation and development of leadership, learning cannot be ruled out as it takes primary role.

There are basic keys to effective leadership, as analysis has posited. Bennis and Nanus describe the four keys of effective leadership as: Attention through vision, meaning through communication, trust through positioning, and the deployment of self through positive self-regard. Bass has described transformational leadership along the dimensions of charismatic leadership, inspirational leadership, intellectual stimulation, and, individualized considerations. The five key practices of leaders, according to Kouzes and Posner's framework of what people are doing when they are leading, include: Challenging the process, inspiring a shared vision, enabling others to act, modeling the way, and encouraging the heart. Moreover, it has been claimed that "effective leaders are constantly learning. They see all experiences as learning experiences." This further points to the fact that effective leaders never stop learning. Continuous learning and the ability to recognize what to learn can be easily done when a leader is humble. As such, humility plays an important role here. Therefore, it is important to be sure of what people digest in form of learning. The educational background and learning which have been experienced during a human's lifespan is essential in understanding the root issues and challenges that will be faced in the organizational business arena of life.

Key concepts in transformational learning are: (a) experience – critical incidents or trigger events; (b) critical reflection – content reflection, process reflection, and premise reflection (examine long held beliefs, values about the experience); affective learning – feelings play a primary role in triggering reflection, (d) Dialogue and relationships that are supportive and trusting and, € individual development (Taylor, 2000). Experience is envisioned as the starting point in this approach and becomes the content for reflection. Engaging the life experience in a critically reflective manner is a necessary condition for transformation. Indeed, the entire process of learning is a journey of change – change that is growth enhancing and developmental (Mezirow, 2000).

What this indicates is that leadership is closely connected with the concept of change, and change, in turn, as we have already indicated, is at the essence of the learning process. The wellspring of learning organizations is transformational leaders (Rolls, 1995). Indeed, it is precisely because leaders have successfully navigated deep personal change that they are able to create conditions in which employees can themselves be engaged in the practices of learning organizations. This interest in connecting learning (and dealing with change) and actually providing leadership is relevant to the growing interest in the development of leaders. Today's turbulent economic marketplace requires people who thrive on the challenge of change, who can foster environments of innovation, who encourage trust and collaboration, and who are prepared to chart a course into uncharted territories. The Conference Boards of the United States and Canada have both recently affirmed that leadership is the number one competency that Organizations seek to develop in their people (Hackett, 1997; McIntyre, 1997).

Learning how to lead is both a personal and organizational imperative. McCall 1024 et al. (1988) point out that learning by managers is essential to their job performance and career success (and presumably, organizational effectiveness). As managers improve their ability to learn from experiences in the workplace (e.g., through challenging assignments, role models, hardships and the like) the better or more effective they will be as leaders. Lombardo, Bunker and Webb (1990) argue that people who use a variety of learning tactics will be best able to learn from their experiences and will consequently be more effective in the workplace. A series of empirical studies from the Center for Creative Leadership has explored this relationship between learning and leadership (Dalton et al., 1999).

Sustainable Development In Nigeria: The Role Of The Relationship Between Education And Effective Leadership

According to the Bruntland Report, sustainable development is “the development that meets needs of the present without

compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own need development.” As such, the main aim of sustainable development is meeting present human needs in such a way that it will not have any negative effect on the potentials of posterity to meet their needs. Simply put, sustainable development is satisfying the present without affecting the future. Wiedenhoef, discussing sustainable development from a holistic perspective, posited that sustainable development entails the attainment of equilibrium among three contending sub-systems (economic, social-cultural, and environmental). This view was also held by Padisson. Sustainability in this context relates to the ability of the environment to meet the basic requirements for the sustenance of the living and non-living components of the ecological economic and socio-cultural systems in a manner that does not limit the possibility of meeting the present and future needs of the various components and aspects of the environment.

According to the World Commission on Environment and Development, the idea of sustainable development has emerged as a result of the new focus on the environment. This phrase was coined by the world commission on environment and development in its report titled “Our Common Future” (1987). This commission was set up in 1983 by the U.N. General Assembly under the leadership of the Prime Minister of Norway, Gro Harlem Bruntland. Its purpose was to examine the state of global environment and development after the end of 20th Century. In essence, sustainable development is a process of changing in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development, and institutional change is in harmony and enhance both current and future potential to meet human needs and aspirations. Sustainable development requires that mother earth should not be plundered in the name of development.

The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) noted that Africa's efforts to achieve sustainable development had been hindered by conflicts, insufficient investment, limited

market access opportunities, and supply side constraints, unstable debt burdens, historically declining levels of official development assistance and the impact of HIV/AIDS. Considering these many woes, it is important and beneficial to allow education and effective leadership be the drivers of its future. This requires the creation of an enabling environment at the regional, sub-regional, national and local levels which support sustained economic growth and sustainable development, promotes peace, stability, security and establishes good governance, respect for human rights and fundamental freedom. The lack of capacity regarding skills and opportunity to manage environmental resources undermines the potential for sustainable development, consequently, strengthening institutions and empowering people are important strategies (United Nations, 2002).

Urban environmental problems in Nigeria are multi-faceted and are associated with the colonial Antecedents of Nigerian cities, urbanization, and issues that come with developmental challenges, Urban production and consumption patterns and psychological orientation of urban residents as well as institutional failures. These problems pose serious environmental, economic and social challenges to achieving sustainable development in the country (Marcuse 1998). From all indications, various administrations in Nigeria-colonial, military, and civilian placed very little importance on environmental issues. According to Peters & William (2000), the essence of sustainable management of environmental resources and their harmonious relation with nature have not been given adequate attention for decades. The lack of political will within the public sector to address environmental problems remains one of most intricate problems in the country. A typical example of this can be seen in the issue of an end to gas flaring and oil spillage in the Niger Delta Region, where environmental problems due to oil exploration have inflicted tremendous damage on the ecosystem, health and livelihood of the people of this region.

Development is a phenomenon associated with changes in human conditions through the use of their creative energies. Effective leadership is the process of motivating and directing others towards the accomplishments of goals; it involves any attempt at influencing the behavior of others. Sustainable development means development that is environment-friendly and sensitive to the need of the present as well as the future generations. Hence intergenerational equity should be the primary objective of development. Thus, an effective leader is very necessary for development to be sustained. There is no sustainable development without the care for the humans. The sanctity of human life and the fundamental human right are essential tools in building a sustainable development. It is possible to put a price on commodities but human life cannot be valued. It is sacred.

What role does education and effective leadership play in the building sustainable development in Nigeria? The earth's ecosystem, its bio-diversity must be understood, and its sanctity must not be vitiated. This view militates against the practice of bringing about haphazard growth without caring the protection of the environment. It rejects the traditional view that economic development is a necessity, while environmental protection is a luxury. It discards the idea of 'development at any cost.' Instead, it desires no development at the cost of Environmental protection. In this way, it integrates the case of development with the interest of the great society of human beings and the entire world having diverse types of life. Thus, development and environment should co-exist. It also implies that no state is an island unto itself and, as such, no state can have its development without concerning the effects on other states (Riggs and Weidner, p.574-575). An effective leader who is equipped with adequate education attends to these many problems and provide policies that harmonize environmental resources and development in a society.

Education prepares a leader and gives him or her the foresight needed to tackle issues and become effective. As a matter of fact, adequate education is core in becoming an effective leader. The leadership role in sustainable development is universal. Most of the common problem of leadership includes lack of continuity in commitment to policy, implementation problem, corruption, mal-administration, and political opposition during implementation, personal interest, inadequate definition of goals, over ambition, lack of well-defined programs for the attainment of goals, lack of clear definition of responsibility. Effective leadership is required or needed for sustainable development by recognizing the connections between the different aspect of the society as well as the complex interactions between factors in human society causing the change to the environment. An effective leader must be conversant with the yearnings of the people at present as well as the future generations, hence intergenerational equity should be maintained for development. An effective leader in sustainable development must be able to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their needs. All of these cannot be done without proper education.

Since education is said to be a major service of the state and essential instrument of training of its citizen, it would seem to follow naturally that if more individuals are educated, the wealth of nation will rise. Sound education attracts higher wages and aggregative higher national income, as such, educating citizens should be prioritized should any nation want to build a sustainable development. As addendum, positive externalities of education increase national income by even more than the sum of the individual benefits. In the quest to build a sustainable development, a robust and peaceful economic nation and a well-governed nation, the educational sector is, no doubt, the perfect foundation stone as it instills into individuals, from younglings, the necessary steps and precautions to arrive at this feat.

Evaluation

For more than half a century the international community of nations has recognized education as a fundamental human right. In 2000, it agreed to the Millennium Development Goals, which acknowledged education as an indispensable means for people to realize their capabilities and prioritized the completion of a primary school cycle. Education is a catalyst for development because education grooms leaders and equip them with adequate knowledge in the form of information that enhances positive development.

Sustainable development is unavoidable for contemporary organizations and it is emphasized as a responsibility of leaders. Sustainability can be conceptualized as the long-lasting or institutionalization of an innovation or practice. In the literature sustainability is addressed in terms of financial, social, ethics, politics etc.

In the face of increasing urban population, Salama and Alshawaikhat (2005) asserted that there is inadequate supply of housing and infrastructure for the teeming population, as a result, the existing infrastructure and housing are overstressed, while unsanitary living conditions characterized by filthy environment, unclean ambient air, stinky and garbage filled streets and sub-standard houses continue to dominate the urban landscape in Nigeria. Nigeria has experienced conflict of values in the past and seem to still experience such today. Nepotism, Godfatherism, embezzlement of funds and other forms of corruption.

As a way of recommendation, The NEPAD initiatives, National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS) and Vision 2020 have gradually embraced a new concept of sustainable development in the face of rapid urbanization and increasing environmental problems in Nigeria. These strategies embrace relationship between all human settlements, from small urban centres to metropolises, and between towns and cities and

their surrounding rural areas. As intractable these approaches may appear, they are potent, dynamic and desirable forces for development. For these initiatives to produce the desired impact in Nigeria, they must adopt strategies that would make a significant impact on problems and issues related to urbanization attitudinal orientation and lapses in legal and institutional frameworks in environmental management (Peters & William 2000). Who, then, will lead the campaign to achieve these goals? That is where a leader who has been well-groomed and versed in knowledge comes to the forefront and thereby, becoming effective.

Conclusion

Thus far, this work has been able to extensively discuss the connection between education and effective leadership and how they relate to sustainable development. This work also discussed in piece the different meaning of these concepts in the process of shedding light to the connection between education and effective leadership. This work held the position that in the quest to build a sustainable development, a robust and peaceful economic nation and a well-governed nation, the educational sector is, no doubt, the perfect foundation stone as it instills into individuals, from younglings, the necessary steps and precautions to arrive at this feat. It also claimed, just as proven, that effective leaders are constantly learning. They see alleperiences as learningexperiences. And, with that, they are able to build a sustainable development. As such, this work posited that Education is a catalyst for development.

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