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Ndubuisi-Okolo Purity. U and Anekwe Rita. I.

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Strategies for Achieving Sustainable Development in Nigeria: The Nexus

Ndubuisi-Okolo Purity. U. (Ph.D) and Anekwe Rita.I.

Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences, Nnamdi Azikiwe
University, Awka.

Abstract

The quest for sustainable development is not feasible without alleviating poverty drastically, empowering the youths, encouraging entrepreneurship education for effective self-reliance and empowerment. This research banks on the strategies for achieving sustainable development in Nigeria. The strategies enumerated include but not limited to the following factors: poverty alleviation, youth empowerment, entrepreneurship education and effective leadership. The study adopted a conceptual approach in an attempt to x-ray the various strategies for achieving sustainable development in Nigeria. Materials were generated via internet, textbooks and other documents relevant to the study. The findings based on the literature reviewed indicated that sustainable development is achievable only when social, economic, political and environmental sustainability elements in Nigeria are stable, viable and equitable. The study also recommended that the federal, state and local government should ensure that funds allotted to them are properly disbursed to the concerned groups. The policy implication is that the Commitment will ensure adequate provision of social services that are beneficial to the poor masses; fostering growth, and the provision of an enabling environment to boast businesses in different dimensions.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Poverty Alleviation, Youth Empowerment, Self-Reliance, Effective Leadership and Nigerian Economy.

Introduction

Sustainable development requires meeting the pressing needs of all people and extending opportunity to satisfy their aspirations for a better life. It ensures a developed world with secured and healthy environment for all; human beings, animals and plants alike, Ndubuisi-Okolo, Anekwe and Attah (2016). Development is needed to enhance the quality of the lives of citizens in a country. In view of this, Poverty alleviation, youth empowerment, entrepreneurship development, self-reliance and effective leadership are perceived as key strategies for actualizing the four key components of sustainable development (environment, economic, social and political) in Nigeria. A critical look at the population explosion in the country vitiates the vision of

achieving sustainable development in Nigeria. The quest for sustainable economy is not feasible without alleviating poverty drastically, empowering the youths, encouraging entrepreneurship education for effective self-reliance etc, considering the latest trending issues of the population explosion ranging from 139 million in the year 2005 to a whopping 189 m in 2016, Ogbo, Eneh, Agbaeze, Chukwu, and Isijola,(2017).

Poverty is a huge threat to humanity in particular and Africa economy in general. It is a bane to economic growth and development and has simultaneously frustrated and undermined the dreams and aspirations of great champions/giants owing to its obvious negative consequences. Poverty is conceptualized as the inability of an individual or a family to command sufficient resources to satisfy basic needs. Poverty is also a condition of being extremely poor. This poor state succinctly describes the situation of most Africa countries especially Nigeria where the pervasive effect of poverty has reduced men of integrity and repute to a perpetual state of infancy. Poverty is epilepsy manifesting itself in high level of illiteracy, over-reliance on foreign counterparts, insecurity and poor governance. Sokoto State for instance is plagued with 81.2% poverty rate. Also, the terrorist attacks of Boko Haram scents in the northern parts of the country lately have further exacerbated the poverty menace in the area as both human and economic resources are wantonly destroyed.

Previously, myriads of programs have been put in place by the Federal Government to alleviate poverty, empower youths making them more self-reliant via entrepreneurship education. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was established in year 2000 by the United Nations to reduce the adverse effect of poverty and extreme hunger among the one hundred and eighty nine (189) member countries of the United Nations. Its (2015) Summit explicitly opined that sustainable development is channeled towards the achievement of nineteen solid objectives which include: No poverty, zero hunger, Good health, Quality Education, Clean water, Gender quality, Affordable and Clean energy, Decent work, economic growth, industrial innovation and infrastructure, reduce inequalities, sustainable cities and countries, responsible consumption, production, climate action, life below water, life below land, peace and justice, strong institution and partnership for goals.

On this platform, Nigeria was prompted to fulfill the mission of the MDGs via the development of National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) and National Poverty Eradication Program (NAPEP). The major goal of these policies was to eradicate poverty and bring about sustainable development. Specifically, NEEDS has the following actionable goal: Wealth creation, Employment generation, Poverty reduction and Value re-orientation. The NEEDS as a national policy was designed in 2004 to uphold some of the goals of the MDGs, especially poverty reduction. In evaluating the performance of MDGs and NEEDS in Nigeria in sync with 'poverty eradication' one can boldly and confidently declare that MDGs have performed below the expectations of Nigerians. These two agencies proved abortive since they couldn't reduce the scourge of poverty among the citizenry of Nigeria.

Other attempts by successive regimes in Nigeria aimed at alleviating poverty include National Accelerated Food Production Program (1972) and the Nigeria Agricultural and Cooperative Bank

(1972); Operation Feed the Nation packaged to educate the rural farmers on how to use modern farming tools; Green Revolution Program (1972) created to minimize food importation and increase local food production (1986); Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFFRI). (1987); National Directorate of Employment(1986); Family Support Program and the Family Economic Advancement Program (1993); National Poverty Eradication Program (NAPEP) to replace the previously failed Poverty Alleviation Program (2001). These programs were meant to ameliorate poverty via employment generation, entrepreneurship education and wealth creation. It is against this backdrop that this paper is set to examine the strategies for achieving sustainable development in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The issues bordering on sustainable development are unending owing to heart-felt yearnings for ages to acquaint ourselves with the goal of sustainable economy. Sustainable development requires shifts from mundane ways of doing things to a modern ways of executing activities ranging from low to high productivity, the creation and adoption of new strategies, novel skills and knowledge. It requires entrepreneurship education, youth empowerment, effective leadership and self-reliance. These shifts are made possible by government at all levels, individuals, corporate bodies and entrepreneurs who are the architects of “capacity creation” for sustainable development which leads to growth and development that manifest in high productivity and satisfaction of the inhabitants of the nation.

This great vision has been hampered by incessant political unrest, political instability, abject poverty, poor socio-economic development, teeming population of qualified unemployed youths, lack of entrepreneurial skills, bribery and corruption and numerous other challenges besetting the achievement of sustainable development. This implies that Sustainability is a continuous target which demands urgent attention despite the incessant challenges enumerated above from the leaders and the led.

Therefore, since sustainable development is the dream of any sane person, its non-achievement makes our economy stagnate and creates room for myriads of evils ranging from armed robbery, kidnapping, child trafficking, drug addictions, extortion, etc which go further to aggravate our problems. In the light of the above, this study focuses on the strategies for achieving sustainable development in Nigeria.

Objective of the Study

- To highlight the strategies for achieving sustainable development in Nigeria.

Research Question

- What are the strategies for achieving sustainable development in Nigeria?

Review of Related Literature

2.1 Conceptual Framework

2.1.1 Meaning of Sustainable Development

Sen (1989) in Barnes Anger (2010) views the concept of development as encompassing the economic, political, social, cultural and environmental dimensions. While economic and social

progress and the elimination of poverty are the objectives of development, it includes also freedom from fear and arbitrary arrest; free speech, free association and the right to vote and be voted for. In his contribution to the meaning of development, Seers (1969) argues that, the questions to ask about a country's development are: what has been happening to poverty, unemployment and inequality? If all these have declined from high levels then beyond doubt this has been a period of development for the country concerned. Having looked at the concept of development, sustainable development entails development that can be kept going or maintained. This should entail proper attention given to the transformation of productive forces and commensurate transformation in the social relations of production. The ability to maintain this guarantees sustainable development.

Theoretical Framework

This work is anchored on sustainability development theory propounded by Gro Harlem Brundtland (1980). The theory proposes that sustainable development must meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to respond to their needs. The import of this statement is that sustainable development in Nigeria ensures that future generations have the right to a better standard of living, prevent the crises in resources, show the need for national quality and create the awareness of environmental, economic, and social needs of the people (Abbas, 2011). In line with this theory, the social, economic, political and environmental sustainability factors in Nigeria must be stable, viable and equitable for us to be able to achieve sustainable development in Nigeria.

Empirical Review

Sam (2014) studied Achieving Sustainable Poverty Reduction and Rural Development in Nigeria through Local Economic Development Strategies. This research brought to limelight that all around the world, local governments, the private sector and even the civil society are exploring better ways to achieve poverty reduction and rural development through local economic development strategies. This is sequel to the fact that local governments, particularly in Nigeria face increased challenges of poor quality leadership, financial indiscipline, almost absolute reliance on allocation from the federal government account / meager internally generated revenues, pervasive poverty, income inequality, long-term ethnic conflict and civil unrest, political instability and corruption among others. This study showcases local economic development strategies, as a participating process in which local people from all sectors work together to help create decent jobs and improve the quality of life for everyone, including the poor and marginalized as the most potent tool for achieving sustainable poverty reduction and rural transformation in Nigeria.

Ogbo, et al. (2017) focused on the strategies for achieving sustainable economy in Nigeria taking into consideration the acceptable stakeholders. This work looks at the explosion of the Nigerian population from the year 2005 till date, the modern state of the Nigerian economy and the failed strategies adopted in the past, with a critical look at the acceptable stakeholders, sustainable economy, and the strategic priorities to be considered in the Nigerian context. Theories of modernization (showing the five take off stages), sustainable development, and human development (with the five key capitals) were used to analyze the problem of achieving a

sustainable economy in Nigeria. The triple-bottom-line strategy was seen to be a possible solution to the impending problem of unstable economy in Nigeria, intending to social responsibility, environmental protection, and economic priority.

Bakar et al. (2014) conducted study on entrepreneurship development and poverty alleviation in Malaysia. The sole aim of the paper was to corroborate the relationship between entrepreneurship development and poverty alleviation built on empirical reviews. In this study, a general search was carried out to accumulate empirical literatures by the name of entrepreneurship development and poverty alleviation in different online database sources such as Google Scholars, Springer Link, Wiley, Science Direct, JSTOR, Emerald full text, Scopus, and EBSCO HOST etc. The empirical findings revealed that innovation, entrepreneurship training & education, family background, government support program, social entrepreneurship, women participation, individual entrepreneurial characteristics, participation of micro, small & medium enterprises, youth empowerment; collaboration of government-university-industry is the main tool for entrepreneurship development which is stimulating employment towards alleviating poverty.

Adali et al. (2013) investigated achieving youth empowerment through repositioning entrepreneurial education in Nigerian universities: Problems and Prospects. They stated that the overall goal of entrepreneurial education is to impart on students and youths the right attitudes, knowledge and skills to act in an entrepreneurial manner. Thus, empowering and preparing them to thrive in the unstructured and unpredictable environment saddled with unpleasant surprises. This paper therefore, examines the relevance of entrepreneurial education in achieving youth empowerment in Nigeria; the challenges facing entrepreneurial education in universities and prospects. The reasons for entrepreneurship education as well as strategies for designing entrepreneurship education. This paper concludes that entrepreneurial education deserves not only to be addressed at tertiary level but also should be incorporated at all levels of education for an all-encompassing model and in achieving desired goals and ensuring self-reliance among Nigerian youths,

Ndubuisi-Okolo and Onwuzuligbo (2015) researched on entrepreneurship Education and Youth Development in Nigeria: The Challenges. The thrust of this piece of write-up is to examine the effect of entrepreneurship education on youth development in Nigeria. The study adopted human capital Theory advocated by Robert (1991). Secondary data were the major instruments used for data collection. Objectives were articulated to investigate challenges militating against success of entrepreneurship education in Nigeria and also how entrepreneurship education can assist in nation building .It was concluded that through well-planned and executed entrepreneurship education, the Nigerian youths will learn to be happy and fulfilled, as they will be more productive and committed as employees or employers of labour; thereby allowing their unique capabilities to be utilized for the development of the national and global goals rather than abandoning their country for greener pastures overseas. It was also recommended that entrepreneurship education should be incorporated into the ongoing career preparation programs in secondary schools, colleges of education, polytechnics and universities, since it is imperative that the country's workforce have entrepreneurial skills and attitudes before they

enroll in employment, whether as employers or employees in order to compete effectively and efficiently in the marketplace nationally and globally.

Entrepreneurship education and sustainable Development in Nigeria

Sustainability depicts meeting our needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet and respond to their own needs (Kuhlman and Farrington, 2010). Entrepreneurship development is a panacea towards achieving this objective as it serves as a means of alleviating the menace of poverty thereby achieving sustainable development. It contributes to poverty reduction when it generates employment through the establishment of new industries whereby the qualified unemployed can be engaged. The jobs created via entrepreneurship activities in turn lead to equitable distribution of income which results in higher standards of living for the teeming population. Entrepreneurial activities are perceived as being capable of making tremendous impact on the economy of a nation and the quality of life of its inhabitants.

In spite of the failures witnessed so far in an effort to inculcate entrepreneurial spirit in the lives of the youths, entrepreneurship education still remains one of the panaceas to quenching the ugly influence of poverty on the citizenry, hence liberating them from economic turmoil ravaging their innate natural endowments. This is because entrepreneurship opens doors for creativity and innovation which are the hallmark of sustainability.

Entrepreneurship is a process which is creating long lasting solutions to poverty alleviation since it is a key driver to economic growth and development (Bruton and Ketchen 2013). This is precipitated by the fact that small rapidly growing firms commenced by entrepreneurially minded individuals with creative and innovative skills, created wealth and a significant number of jobs in particular economies, thereby impacting positively on social and economic development (Mohammad, Abul and Rosni (2014). Entrepreneurship activities and innovative ingenuity in Nigeria have developed enterprises in areas such as agriculture/agro-allied, solid minerals, transportation, information and telecommunication, hospitality and tourism business, building and construction etc. According to Anyadike, Emeh and Ukah (2012).The inevitability of entrepreneurship development in the country today is propelled by the fact that entrepreneurship development is a key element of economic growth and development and also the long-lasting cure for extreme hunger and poverty.

Youth empowerment and Sustainable development in Nigeria

Hornby (2001) sees youth as the state of being young, that is, the period between childhood and adult age. In the opinion of Adewoye (2005), a youth is a person between the age of 15 and 24 but the Nigerian National Youth Development Policy classified all persons of ages 18-35 years who are Nigerians as youths. Youths constitute the most essential part of the world population. They are the most powerful, active, diligent, creative, contributive, innovative and energetic people Ogbondah (2017). They can prove more productive and constructive in any field of life but the irony is that a large portion of them around the world are unemployed and they cannot find any suitable job (Olaleye, 2012). Young people represent one-fifth of the world's population and half of the total unemployed global workforce (Adebowale, 2012).

Therefore, to break the bond of poverty among youths in Nigeria, our youths must be empowered to imbibe the culture of self-discipline and self-discovery. This is because as researchers, we have come to realize that the challenges confronting our youths today is lack of discipline and failure to discover their spheres of influence. What do we mean by sphere of influence? This is simply discovering your talents and what you are passionate about. It is very obvious that a lot of programs, diverse schemes, trainings etc have been organized and put in place to nurture our youths but to no avail.

The question remains: How can the youths be empowered irrespective of the quagmire they are currently experiencing as a result of joblessness? The answer remains the novel orientation on entrepreneurial skills. Although, entrepreneurship is a strategy adopted by the government for the past decades till date to reduce the adverse effect of poverty in the economy. Entrepreneurial education is, therefore, essential not only to shape the mindsets of young people but also to provide the skills and requisite knowledge necessary to develop an entrepreneurial spirit and culture. Entrepreneurship education, therefore, provides people with motivation, knowledge, and skills required for launching a successful business venture (Cho, 1998). Developing positive mindsets, good attributes and skills are the basis of achieving entrepreneurial success.

Achieving entrepreneurial goal is also facilitated by education which is the key to shaping young people's attitudes, skills and culture, *Aja-Okorie and Onele Adali (2013)*. Entrepreneurship education can be achieved not only in schools but also by organizing workshops, seminars for already existing employees in various organizations. When entrepreneurship education is enshrined in the curriculum from primary to tertiary levels, empowerment is assured at all levels of human development thereby culminating into sustainable development for all and sundry.

Self-Reliance and Sustainable Development

The importation of foreign made articles has relegated the ingenuity of an average Nigerian to the ground. This is proven by our obvious over-reliance on foreign produced goods and services which has tarnished the image of infant industries in Nigeria. We look down on locally manufactured articles/goods to the detriment of the manufacturers and appreciate adulterated and cancerous products being shipped/imported into the country as Nigeria is seen as a dumping ground. This lacuna (gap) if not closed will cause more harm to the society instead of leading to economic growth which in turn breeds economic sustainability. Self-reliance is instrumental for any economy that wants to survive without foreign interventions.

The development of a nation hinges to a large extent on the development of human resources to meet their personal needs as well as the needs of the nation. This is because non-human capital development is a bane to sustainable development. This is depicted by the correlation between unemployment and crime rate in the country. It is very clear that joblessness and idleness are the major cause of engaging in theft, burglary and violent crimes. Also, non-empowerment of the citizens through gainful acquisition of skills for self-reliance have led to diverse economic, social and political problems which have given rise to alarming rate of unemployment, crime, hunger, poverty, depression, frustration, militancy, kidnapping, armed robbery, cheating, prostitution, human trafficking, terrorism and insurgencies.

But when human elements are fully empowered and developed via profitable entrepreneurship and other enlightenment programs, then the goals of sustainable development are accomplished as people automatically become vibrant, viable, self-reliant, environmentally sound, entrepreneurially-oriented and socially responsible.

Effective leadership and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

The concept of sustainable development was propounded by the World Commission on Environment and Development 'as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). The term has been perceived differently by numerous scholars and authors. By the conception of Malia and Clarkson (2009), the sustainable development subject is complex and multifaceted. The various perspectives on this subject are embedded in people's own beliefs with respect to sustainable development. Politicians view sustainable development in terms of community projects; businessmen as effective production of goods and services; environmentalists as a means of enabling efficient and effective use of natural resources; and by the masses as a means of meeting their needs as well as a strategy for alleviating poverty Kwasi (2014).

However, Mckeown (2002) states that the central tenet of sustainable development unveils three diverse components: environment, society and economy that are interrelated and not separated. Thus, achieving sustainable development requires a more balanced relationship among the environment, society and economy in pursuit of the perceived development and improved quality of life. This implies making the environment a safe place to live in, catering for the needs of the society via efficient and effective provision of goods and services aimed at satisfying human wants thereby making the economy palatable for all.

It is glaringly crystal that leadership situation in Africa is typically ineffective and characterized by susceptibility to the complex global economic system. Nigeria as a part of African continent is the bedrock of poor leadership because its scourge is so endemic that practically all her citizens are suffocating as a result of this malaise. The leadership situation in Nigeria is disheartening and demands urgent attention from both the leaders and non-leaders. The worst part of it all is that the majority of the elite group in Nigeria who rose to leadership positions acquired Western education, some lived outside the continent for years, but still lack the requisite profundity to adapt or translate the ideas they have learned to address our country's leadership challenges.

Sustainable development anchors on effective and quality leadership. In hindsight, the democratic and transformational leadership styles are considered favorable for any nation that wants to make headway economically. This is because transformational leadership stresses higher motive development, and arouses followers' motivation and positive emotions by means of creating and representing an inspiring vision of the future". Warrilow (2012) as cited in Odumeru and Ifeanyi, (2013), described transformational leadership as leadership that "creates positive change in the followers whereby they take care of each other's interests and act in the interests of the group as a whole. From the analogy above, we can infer that the role of

transformational leaders is to meet the needs and aspirations of the citizenry as well as transforming their lives. We can boldly declare that sustainability boils down to effective leadership and in the absence of effective leadership, sustainable development initiatives cannot thrive. This calls for giving room for democracy to thrive at all levels of government, ensuring that right people occupy the political seats.

Finally, the federal, state and local government must also ensure that funds allotted to them are properly disbursed to the concerned group. This Commitment will ensure adequate provision of social services that are beneficial to the poor masses; fostering efficient macro-economic and the provision of an enabling environment to boost businesses in different dimensions.

Gap in Knowledge

Prior studies reviewed concentrated on variables such as acceptable stakeholders, sustainable economy, strategic priorities etc as parameters for achieving sustainable development in Nigeria. But for the purpose of this work, the researchers endeavored to fill the lacuna created by the previous scholars by critically incorporating entrepreneurship education, youth empowerment, self-reliance and effective leadership as indispensable factors towards the achievement of sustainable development in Nigeria.

Motivation and Contribution to Knowledge

This research was motivated by abortive efforts made so far by government and non-governmental organizations to quench the menace of sustainable development in Nigeria.

Methodology

The study adopted a conceptual approach in an attempt to x-ray the various strategies for achieving sustainable development in Nigeria. The justification for the adoption of this approach is because the study is exploratory in nature anchored on discovery of ideas and insights. Materials were generated via internet, textbooks and other documents relevant to this study.

Conclusion

It is as clear as crystal that sustainable development relies heavily on the economy's ability to provide human elements with the basic necessities of life. To accomplish this feat, social, economic, political and environmental sustainability elements in Nigeria must be stable, viable and equitable. In view of this, poverty must be abolished via entrepreneurship development, youth empowerment, quality and effective leadership.

Policy Recommendations

1. The federal, state and local government must also ensure that funds allotted to them are properly disbursed to the concerned group. This Commitment will ensure adequate provision of social services that are beneficial to the poor masses; fostering growth, and the provision of an enabling environment to boost businesses in different dimensions.
2. Our leaders are encouraged to pay adequate attention to human development as well as the plights of the masses under her jurisdiction.

3. Infant industries should be given special subventions in order to boost productivity. This ensures growth, motivation and self-reliance on the side of the entrepreneurs.
4. Restructuring focusing on Poverty alleviation, youth empowerment, entrepreneurship development, self-reliance and effective leadership should form the key basis for achieving sustainable development in this unstable and turbulent era.

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