

INNOVATIVE EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN A DEPRESSED NIGERIAN ECONOMY

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Abstract

This paper assessed innovative educational practices for sustainable development in a depressed Nigerian economy. The secondary data were sourced from printed materials, online journals, and articles. The paper discussed on the Concept of education, sustainable development, innovative educational practices for sustainable development in Nigeria, and some of the factors that hindered innovative educational practices for sustainable development in a depressed Nigerian economy which include: limited funding, inadequate infrastructure, capacity gap in education, high poverty level, policy and governance issue, economic instability, lack of public awareness, corruption and environmental factors. To address these challenges, the paper suggested the following; policy reform and commitment, strengthening partnership and collaboration, investment in infrastructure, capacity building for educators, curriculum overhaul, affordable education solutions, promote alternative learning models, encouraging investors and researchers, resilience in financial management, and creating public awareness about the importance of education for sustainable development.

Keywords: Innovative education, sustainable development and depressed economy

Introduction

Innovative educational practices are essential for fostering sustainable development, particularly in a depressed Nigerian economy where financial constraints, inadequate infrastructure, and socio-political instability hinder educational growth. These practices emphasize the integration of technology with skill-based learning. By utilizing Information and Communication Technology (ICT), blended learning approaches, and entrepreneurship education, institutions can equip students with essential skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and adaptability. These skills are crucial for thriving in a challenging economic environment. Additionally, sustainable educational reforms such as competency-based curricula, vocational training, and partnerships between academia and industry can bridge the gap between education and employability. Adopting these strategies ensures that education remains a powerful tool for economic recovery, poverty alleviation, and long-term national development, even amid economic downturns (United Nation Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 2017).

Concept of Education

The term (education) is quite elusive and not easy to define. The complexity of the discipline is necessitated by what education has to perform in society as one of institution. This paper, therefore looked at the concept of education from the etymological point of a which stated that ‘education’ is derived from two latin words “educere” meaning “to lead out” and “educare” meaning ‘to bring up’. This implies that education bring out skills in someone and build them up. Lenshie (2013) education to play a role in preparing or nurturing individuals to live in society and thus being able to perform specific functions for

society. Clark cited in Olulobe (2016) described education as an interaction between a teacher and a student under the teachers responsibility in order to bring about the expected change in the student's behaviour. Murtala (2010) also noted that educational system of any society is a more or less elaborate mechanism design by society to instil in individuals certain skills or attitude that are judge to be useful and desirable in that society. In a related development, Adeyemi and Olukotun (2010) conceptualised education as an enterprise which sets out to instil values, attitude and skills in members of the society. This was aptly supported by Murtala (2019), that described education as a socializing agent that equips all its beneficiaries with the necessary tools such as knowledge, skills, attitude, cultural values, language and social skills to enable them conform to the desires/demand of their society.

Concept of Sustainable Development

Sustainable development refers to a multidimensional approach to growth and progress that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In the Nigerian context, sustainable development is particularly relevant as the country grapples with challenges such as poverty, environmental degradation, unemployment, and inadequate access to quality education. Innovative educational practices for sustainable development involve the integration of creative and transformative teaching methods that foster critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and adaptability among learners. These practices emphasize the inclusion of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), which equips students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to address complex sustainability challenges (UNESCO, 2017). In Nigeria, this includes adopting technology enhanced learning, curriculum reforms, and community based education programmes that address the unique challenges faced by the country. Innovative practices such as integrating ICT in classrooms and promoting vocational education can enhance learning outcomes and prepare students for real-world challenges (Olawale & Adebayo, 2019). Additionally, localizing education to reflect Nigeria's diverse cultures and environmental issues such as deforestation, desertification, and oil pollution can foster a sense of responsibility and active citizenship among learners. These approaches align with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal, which advocates for inclusive and equitable quality education for all. By embracing innovative educational practices, Nigeria can build a generation of citizens equipped to drive sustainable economic growth, social cohesion, and environmental stewardship. However, this requires strategic investments in teacher training, infrastructure development, and policy frameworks that prioritize education as a tool for sustainable development (Federal Ministry of Education, 2021).

Challenges of Innovative Educational Practices for Sustainable Development in A Depressed Nigerian Economy

Limited Funding: The Nigerian education sector suffers significantly from underfunding, which is a major barrier to the implementation of innovative educational practices for sustainable development. Adequate funding is crucial for providing the necessary resources, infrastructure, and support systems that enhance the quality of education and drive innovation. However, despite the importance of education, Jacob and Samuel (2021) observed that the budgetary allocation for education is very poor that it cannot be used to implement the educational policies in the educational sector which hindered national development in Nigeria. Inadequate funding is one of the greatest challenges facing the education. A breakdown of budgetary allocation for the ministry of education for one

decade shows that the budgetary allocation for the entire education is scanty as recommended by UNESCO that 20% should go for Education

Inadequate Infrastructure: Inadequate school infrastructure remains one of the most significant barriers to the effective adoption of innovative educational practices in Nigeria. Infrastructure plays a crucial role in creating a conducive learning environment where students and teachers can thrive. However, the absence or poor state of essential facilities such as classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and technological resources has severely limited the capacity of schools to embrace modern teaching tools and methods (Okebukola, 2020). This challenge is prevalent in both rural and urban schools, affecting the quality of education across the country.

Capacity Gap in Education: In the Nigerian context, the capacity gap in education represents one of the most pressing challenges to achieving quality education and adopting innovative teaching practices. This gap is particularly evident among teachers, who often lack the requisite knowledge, skills, and confidence to implement modern and effective teaching methodologies. These shortcomings hinder efforts to transition from traditional, teacher-centered approaches to more dynamic and innovative practices, such as ICT-based learning, project-based teaching, and experiential education (Ajiboye & Akinwale, 2019).

High Poverty Level: The high poverty level in Nigeria remains a significant factor hindering innovative educational practices for sustainable development, especially in the context of a depressed economy. Poverty adversely affects both the demand and supply sides of education, creating systemic challenges that limit the adoption of innovative methods. (Adekunle, 2019).

Policy and Governance Issues: Policy and governance issues represent significant obstacles to the adoption and sustainability of innovative educational practices for sustainable development in Nigeria. The lack of coherent and consistent governance structures, coupled with poorly formulated and executed policies, creates inefficiencies that undermine the education system's ability to implement transformative strategies (Ekanem, 2019).

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Economic Instability: The depressed Nigerian economy creates an environment of uncertainty, limiting investment in education (Nwosu & Onyekachi, 2020). Fluctuating oil revenues, the primary source of government income, result in budgetary inconsistencies. As a result, funding for innovative educational projects is deprioritized in favor of immediate economic needs.

Lack of Public Awareness: A significant portion of the population lacks awareness of the role of education in sustainable development (Ibrahim & Garba, 2020). This lack of awareness affects public support and advocacy for innovative educational practices. Parents and communities may not prioritize education as a pathway to development, reducing the demand for quality and innovative teaching approaches.

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Corruption: Corruption in the education sector siphons resources meant for development projects, leaving schools underfunded and understaffed (Transparency International, 2021). Embezzlement of funds allocated to infrastructure, teacher training, and ICT initiatives has consistently undermined efforts to improve the education system. Osunyikanmi, (2018) opines that Nigeria has been experiencing underwhelming development amidst overwhelming corruption. Education is not insulated from this malaise. Corruption allows a high percentage of the funds allocated to the sector to get diverted into the private accounts of public officials.

Environmental Factors: Environmental factors in Nigeria present significant challenges to the implementation of innovative educational practices for sustainable development. These include natural disasters, such as floods and desertification, as well as human-induced challenges, such as insecurity caused by insurgency and other forms of violence. These environmental issues disrupt education systems, divert resources, and create barriers to integrating innovation into the learning process (Okeke & Adeoye, 2020).

Conclusion

Innovative educational practices tailored to Nigeria's economic realities can catalyze sustainable development. By implementing policy reforms, fostering partnerships, investing in infrastructure, and building educators' capacity, the country can overcome its challenges and transform its educational sector. Commitment and collaboration from all stakeholders are essential to realize this vision for a sustainable future.

The Way Forward

The current economic challenges facing Nigeria have necessitated a rethinking of the educational system to ensure its relevance and sustainability in fostering national development. The following are detailed approaches to achieving innovative educational practices for sustainable development in Nigeria:

Policy Reform and Commitment: The Nigerian government must prioritize education by implementing robust policy reforms that address the root causes of inefficiency in the sector. Policies should focus on equitable access to quality education, accountability mechanisms, and improved funding allocation. Commitment at all levels of government is essential to ensure that these policies are implemented effectively. According to Adebayo and Adeoye (2020), policy reforms anchored on transparency and inclusiveness can drive sustainable educational growth even in challenging economic conditions.

Strengthening Partnerships and Collaboration: Collaboration between the government, private sector, and international organizations is critical for sustainable development in education. Partnerships can help bridge resource gaps, foster knowledge sharing, and ensure the scalability of successful models. For instance, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) has demonstrated the potential of partnerships in enhancing educational access and quality (UNESCO, 2022).

Investment in Infrastructure and Technology: Lack of adequate infrastructure and technological tools hinders effective learning in Nigeria. There is a need for strategic investment in school buildings, laboratories, internet connectivity, and digital learning platforms. Integrating technology into classrooms not only enhances learning but also equips students with essential 21st-century skills. For example, projects like the "e-learning initiative" in Lagos State have shown promise in improving educational outcomes (Oladipo et al., 2021).

Capacity Building for Educators: Empowering educators through continuous professional development and training is crucial for fostering innovation in teaching practices. Training programs should focus on modern pedagogical methods, digital literacy, and classroom management. Peer-to-peer learning models, as highlighted by (Jones, 2021), can also be effective in building educators' capacity and encouraging collaboration.

Curriculum Overhaul : The current curriculum in Nigeria requires significant updates to align with global standards and the demands of the contemporary labor market. A reformed curriculum should emphasize critical thinking, problem-solving, entrepreneurship, and environmental sustainability. This approach ensures that graduates are better prepared for the workforce and can contribute meaningfully to national development.

Affordable Education Solutions: To address the economic challenges of many Nigerian families, innovative solutions such as subsidized tuition fees, scholarships, and flexible payment plans should be implemented. Community-based learning centers and public-private partnerships in funding education can also make quality education more accessible to disadvantaged populations (World Bank, 2023).

Promoting Alternative Learning Models: Alternative learning models such as online education, vocational training, and modular learning can cater to diverse student needs and circumstances. For instance, the success of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) in other countries can serve as a blueprint for expanding access to education in Nigeria.

Encouraging Investors and Researchers: Incentivizing private investors and researchers to contribute to the educational sector can foster innovation and drive sustainable development. Tax reliefs, grants, and funding opportunities can encourage investments in educational startups, research, and development projects. Supporting indigenous research on education-related challenges ensures context-specific solutions.

Resilience in Financial Management : Educational institutions must adopt resilient financial management practices to sustain operations during economic downturns. Transparent budgeting, efficient resource allocation, and diversification of funding sources can enhance financial stability. According to Eze and Nnamdi (2023), adopting these measures has helped some institutions navigate financial crises successfully.

Awareness and Campaign: Creating public awareness about the importance of education for sustainable development is crucial. Campaigns should highlight the societal benefits of education and mobilize communities to support and advocate for educational reforms.

Media platforms, non-governmental organizations, and religious institutions can play significant roles in disseminating information and rallying public support.

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