

CRITICAL ISSUES IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH EMPLOYMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Sustainable development means that people should often be mindful of economic, social and environmental activities on the ecosystem of our nation and people should also make effort to maximize the value they add to the environment while reducing any adverse implications that can affect the natural resources people consume and other activities in the environment. However, this paper attempts to examine the critical issues in sustainable development through employment in Nigeria. To achieve this, the definition of sustainable development, the concept of sustainable development, the goals of sustainable development and the challenges of sustainable development were given. The need for employment was also highlighted before the exposition on the challenges of employment opportunity in Nigeria. It was concluded that there is need for sustenance of reforms on the part of government since a good reform is capable of making serious impact on entrepreneurship skills which is the catalyst of national development. The paper recommended that job creation should be regarded as a priority in government programmes and plans in order to address the gap between available job opportunities and job seekers in Nigeria. Indeed, there should be establishment of small-scale enterprises such as petty-trading as well as some businesses such as sales of phones and its accessories which will go a long way in combating unemployment among the people, hence, contributing to the sustainable development. Finally, preference should be given to human development since, it is noted that they are the factor that will bring the best of infrastructures and other resources meant for sustainable development.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Employment, Nigeria

Introduction

The issues of sustainable development and employment cannot be overemphasized in Nigeria. It is not over statement that employment is one of the factors that normally responsible for sustainable development in the nation. Indeed, according to Mangwat (2002), human resources also cannot be overemphasized in the area of development and sustainable development at large. In view of this, it is the responsibility of the nation to enlist the participation of the entire citizen in the process irrespective of gender, age and creed in realizing their potentials fully so as to dispose them favourably towards development.

However, the issue of unemployment in the nation is increasing drastically. This underscores the contention that labour market has become so saturated that everyone has lost count of the number of citizens that are now jobless in Nigeria. In fact, Nigeria is experiencing much instability of all forms in the areas such as religion, politics, economy, education, etc. These instabilities are seriously hindering progress, peace as well as national development.

As a result of the aforementioned information that this paper examines the critical issues in sustainable development through employment in Nigeria. To this effect, the paper is sub-divided into the following: the definition of sustainable development; the concept of sustainable development; goals of sustainable development; challenges of sustainable development; the meaning of employment; the need for employment; the challenges of employment of employment opportunity in Nigeria; and conclusion and recommendations.

Definitions of Sustainable Development

Sustainability as a word is derived from the Latin word *sustinere*. There is no single definition of sustainable development that is generally acceptable because there are many different definitions by various authors which explained the concept of sustainable development in different ways. Thus, there is no single definition that is fully comprehensive to capture all the characteristics of the term. However, World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED, 1987), sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development means

the capability to keep going and keep up the progress made in various segments of the society. Indeed, Soubbotina (2008) pointed out that, for development to continue indefinitely, it should balance the interest of different groups of people within the same generation and among generations, and do so simultaneously in the economy, social and environmental dimensions of life. While, in the word of Brundtland Commission (World Bank, 2008), development is sustainable if it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

As a result of the aforementioned definitions, it is certain that for development to be sustainable, Nigeria needs to meet the following criteria:

- i. There should be a balance of interest in the following areas:
 - a. Needs of individual, family, community, private and public sectors (World Bank, 2008).
 - b. Environmental, social and economic objectives (Soubbotina, 2008).
- ii. The national economy base on Gross Domestic Product (GDP) should continue to grow at an annual rate of minimum of 4% and for minimum of 10 years without break. (World Bank, 2008).
- iii. There should be a move towards service-led economy with emphasis on social skills, accountability as well as transparency.

Concept of Sustainable Development

Like any other type of development, sustainable development perceives man at the very heart of development. It indicates that man should be empowered with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values in a sustainable manner in order to bring about an expected and desirable change for a sustainable future. Sustainable development indicates using renewable natural resources in a manner which does not eliminate or reduce their usefulness to future generations. Hence, sustainable development demands that the present generation ensures that there is adequate resources for the present and future generations and that sufficient effort be made not to pollute our air and water and the entire environment and not to despoil our forest and biological habitats (Goodland and Ledec, 1987).

According to Ememe (2014) the idea of sustainable development came as a result of the global need to respond to the world environment crises and the realization that despite the fact that life on earth depends on the environment for good health, good housing, clean water and nutritious food. However, people are not doing anything to ensure continuous utilization by the present generation as well as to ensure that the natural resources are protected so that future generations can satisfy their needs. The meaning of sustainable development is that people should often be mindful of economic, social and environmental activities on the ecosystem of our nation and people should also make effort to maximize the value they add to the environment while reducing any adverse implications that can affect the natural resources people consume and other activities in the environment.

A shift of emphasis from the focus of how to comfort the present generation only to include consideration on how the needs of future generation can be met without endangering the ecobalance of nature. Importantly, it stresses and requires the need for the present generation to restraint and exercise caution in the management and use of both unrenewable and renewable resources and reduce any type of waste in the use of those resources, by removing any kind of degradation, depletion as well as pollution of the resources in the environment (Jegede, 2000).

The Goals of Sustainable Development

One of the critical issues in sustainable development that should be looked into is the goal of sustainable development. According to United Nations, the goals of sustainable development include the following:

- i. **To ensure environmental sustainability:** This is to implement natural strategies for sustainable environment by 2005 as well as to ensure that the present losses of environmental resources are reversed globally by 2015.
- ii. **Reduction of mortality rate:** It is to reduce infant mortality rates by two-thirds and maternity rates by three quarters by 2015.
- iii. **Universalization of education:** This is to achieve universal primary education for all by the year 2015.

- iv. **Reproductive health:** It is to provide access to health services to all individuals of appropriate age by the year 2015.
- v. **Achievement of gender equality:** This is to demonstrate progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women by eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education by the year 2011.
- vi. **Poverty reduction:** This goal is to ensure a reduction in the number of people who live in extreme poverty by half in the year 2005.

The question that is likely to come to average person is “how much progress is being made towards achieving the goals despite the fact that these goals seem achievable and laudable? Nevertheless, some nations seem to be making tangible efforts towards realizing these goals, but not much progress seems to have been achieved across boards.

The Challenges of Sustainable Development

Another critical issue in sustainable development that should be taken into highly consideration is the challenges of sustainable development. There are various challenges that affect the sustainable development despite its significance in bringing about improvement in the quality of people life both for the present as well as future generations. Some of these challenges are:

- i. Illiterate and ignorance has made it difficult for citizen to take benefit of sustainable development. It is basically impossible for persons to appreciate and adapt to change without education since sustainable development signifies social economic and environmental changes.
- ii. Poverty is another major hindrance to sustainable development. In fact, about 75 percent of the population of Nigeria lives in rural areas where their main source of income is subsistent agriculture which cannot bring expected yield to satisfy as well as sustain their basic needs. Thus, the rural persons are always found it difficult to finance their essential needs of fuel and food.
- iii. Environmental pollution is one of the vital challenges of sustainable development. Human activities in the environment increases as the population of people increases which normally

generate excessive waste production which in turn results in environmental pollution. Indeed, the fast growing rate of urbanization as well as industrialization encourages environmental pollution. For example, according to Ememe (2014), in Nigeria, the increase rate of rural-urban migration has resulted in increased population of the urban population, especially the urban slums where people live in crowded squalors without reasonable housing as well as other basic social amenities.

- iv. Unusual explosion in population hinders the sustainable development. For instance, the astronomical rise in global population causes a great problem in the achievement of the goals of sustainable development in Nigeria. Hence, unusual increase demand for natural resources such as food, water and land simply because the natural resources base is not increasing in order to sustain the enormous demands on it.
- v. Natural disaster is another important challenge of sustainable development in Nigeria. Typical examples of natural disasters include: earthquakes of different sizes, drought and desertification as well as increased volume of rainfall and the resultant flooding.
- vi. Finally, the problem of deforestation which normally result to large loss of natural resources pose a great challenges to sustainable development. It is noted that forest usually provide both economic and environmental goods and services and still the nation is greatly losing its forest at alarming rate. In Nigeria, large forest resources are lost as a result of degradation and deforestation because the soil is exposed to excessive heat from the sun and serious soil erosion which in turn causes reduction and lost in the quality of water, soil nutrients and biological productivity.

Need for Employment

Need for employment is also a critical issue in sustainable development that worth discussing. According to Adeniran (2009), though Nigeria is blessed with different natural resources coupled with reputable human resources, the nation is bedeviled with a lot of problems with unemployment rising by day culminating into unwholesome scenario of

hired assassins, drug abuse, bribery and corruption, terrorist attacks, smuggling, armed robbery, human trafficking, etc. In fact Matthew (2009) pointed out that many Nigerians are skillful and well trained but unemployed.

Nevertheless, Agbonna, Yusuf and Yusuf (2009) opined that, the fact that availability of job opportunities is imperative for nation building coupled with the fact that recruitment of people for employment is a way of making them the opportunity to participate in their community development underscores the need to empower them effectively.

Ogundare, Jimoh and Oladokun (2011) view that Nigeria citizen should be engaged in gainful employment even about the 'white collar jobs' that can be provided by the private organizations and the government which are not even available now but cutting down of salaries and retrenchment of workers. Indeed, in the efforts at securing sustainable development in Nigeria, empowerment becomes important. According to Dauda (2004), for development to be meaningful, it must enable all citizens irrespective of age and sex to enhance their productivity and to participate fully in remunerative employment and in the process of income generation.

The Challenges in Employment Opportunity in Nigeria

The critical issues in sustainable development is not complete without mentioning about the challenges in employment opportunity in Nigeria. Despite the fact that employment enhances the sustainable development of the nation, there are challenges in employment opportunity in Nigeria. Some of the challenges are:

1. According to Abubakar and Lukman (2010), the competitiveness of human capital resources is reducing as a result of the falling in the standard of education among the young generation of Nigerians.
2. It was stated that in 2008, the Minister of Youths Development Senator Akinlabi Olanikanmi said that 64 million out of 80 million Nigerians Youths are unemployed.
3. This is not the first time Nigerians are being treated to unemployment statistics because a World Bank report on Nigeria put the country's unemployment at a staggering 40 million, the majority of this people being within the ages of 18

to 25. This has a lot of effects on sustainable development as well as national development. In fact, this informed the admonition of Akinrolabu and Akinpelu (2010) that since all aspects of the society and the nation in terms of economy, social and political are indicators of national development, all hands must be on deck in order to make positive contributions.

4. Unemployment still persists, despite the efforts that have been put in place by the federal government. These efforts include: National Poverty Alleviation Programme (NAPEP), National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES) as well as National Directorate of Employment (NDE).
5. In the area of employment provision, due processes are not followed for justice to prevail because all forms of discriminations, marginalization and deprivations are allowed in Nigeria.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Job creation should be regarded as a priority in government programmes and plans in order to address the gap between available job opportunities and job seekers in Nigeria. Paquette (2009) viewed that, there should be establishment of small scale enterprises such as petty as well as some businesses such as sales of phones and its accessories which will go a long way in combating unemployment among the people, hence, contributing to the sustainable development.

In addition, the following conclusions and recommendations are made:

1. Preference should be given to human development since, it is noted that they are the factor that will bring the best of infrastructures and other resources meant for sustainable development.
2. The federal and the state government should make sure that the goals of sustainable development are achieved.
3. Need of employment should be taken as priority if the government wants the nation to be developed.
4. The challenges in employment opportunity in Nigeria should be the responsibility of everybody and should not be left for the government to tackle.

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