



Issues and Concerns of Education Dead Year in Nigeria: Implications for the Achievement of Sustainable Development Goals

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Abstract: This study examined issues and concerns of education dead year in Nigeria: Implications for the achievement of sustainable development goals. Two research questions and two corresponding null hypotheses guided the study. The theoretical position was anchored on the “Goal Theory” propounded by Edwin Locke (1986), as cited in Kpee (2015). This study adopted a descriptive survey design with a population of stakeholders in Nigeria’s education. A proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used to draw a sample size of 400 respondents representing 6% of the population. A self-designed questionnaire: “Issues and Concerns of Education Dead Year Questionnaire (ICEDYQ)” was used for data collection. Test-retest technique was used to determine the reliability of the instrument which yielded a coefficient index of 0.78 through Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r). Mean and standard deviation were used in answering the research questions while z-test statistics was used in testing the hypotheses. The findings revealed that drawback on academic activities, closure of schools, repetition of academic session and as well as non-achievement of goals are the challenges and as well as the implications of Covid-19 pandemic for the achievement of sustainable development goals. Based on the findings, the study recommended among others: to ensure quick return to school, government should organize seminars and conferences for teachers to be trained and students sensitized because we don’t have choice but to coexist with the reality; the new normal.

Keywords: Issues, Concerns, Education, Dead Year, Implications, Sustainable Development Goals

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is the master key that can unlock a country’s potentials for sustainable development. Therefore, there is no way a nation can develop without investing massively in its education system. However, funding has been one of the issues and concerns to educational development in Nigeria. Agitation over the sustenance and declining standard of the education system were the issues of contention among the stakeholders. The quality of teaching and facilities on ground have been seriously wreaked by age yet, no justice done instead everyone seems adamant. Since the paltry sum from the budget cannot sustain education sector in Nigeria, one begins to wonder on how the nation would pursue Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Sustainable Development Goals is a United Nations effort at improving development for all communities in every country. The programme is planned to bring government, aid organizations foundation and NGOs together to solve basic global problems (Carruthers, 2017). However, these goals are identified as:

1. End poverty, in all its forms everywhere
2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.
3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well being for all at all ages.
4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
7. Promote sustained inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
8. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.
10. Reduce inequality within and among countries.
11. Make cities and human settlement inclusive, safe resilient and sustainable.
12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forest, combat desertification. And Halt and reserve land degradation and Halt biodiversity loss.
15. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective accountable and inclusive institution at all levels.
16. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development (United Nation's 2017).

The significance of SDG 4 lies in the fact that, quality education is a requirement for the transformation of societies. It is also through education that knowledge can be inculcated into the people, especially on how to protect and free themselves from hazards, poverty, labour, exploitation and disease. In addition, education is about acquiring necessary skills, as well as gaining confidence to reach ones full potential (Hepburn. n.d.). Therefore, SDG 4 is a call on the world to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”. SDG 4 which has seven targets and three means of implementation: came about through a deliberation and consultation of Member-State, as well as input and participation from civil society, teachers unions, bilateral agencies, regional organizations, the private sectors as well as research institutes (UNESCO, 2017).

The sudden incursion of Coronavirus popularly known as (Covid 19) was a deadly blow on the Nigerian education system both the kindergarten, primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education. The outbreak of Covid 19 was first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, the capital of China's Hubei province, and has since spread globally, resulting in ongoing 2019-2020 Coronavirus Pandemic. According to World Health Organization (2020), Covid19 is an infectious disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome Coronavirus2 (SAR-Co2).

A research from Baker Mckenzie (2019) opined that the virus is primarily spread between people during close contact, often via small droplets, produced by coughing, sneezing, or talking.

As a result of the outbreak, stakeholders in the education sectors, the ministry of education authorities, parents and students in the fear of Coronavirus admitted reality and overlooked any form of examination that were on-going before the abrupt emergency. Education system was the worst hit in that the pandemic broke out at the period when Primary and Secondary schools were taking their second semester examinations while the same period was when some higher institutions were into admission for 2019/2020 academic session which was disrupted by the pandemic. The year 2020 could be tentatively termed education dead year if schools could not re-open and students are asked to continue from where they stopped thereby losing one academic year. It may equally be labeled an education dead year because, it was a year that the academic sector experienced the highest draw back in the activity as well as a protracted long break since the inception of schools. Government representatives and head of schools discovered that sitting for examination this year may not be necessary since they have lost so much time meant for studies (Patience, 2020).

The implication of education dead year is so devastating and with far reaching effects. This is because it is an academic year where there is no free flow of academic activities due to factors beyond human comprehension and control. It could be seen as education unfruitful year or education recession. The education system over decades have been on crisis, the government, stakeholders, ministry and other education authorities tried to manage the crisis but the pandemic rather worsened everything and eventually threw the system into a darker path. Apparently speaking, up till now total resumption of school is not predictable. Could it be that all students, irrespective of their levels, have lost the academic year? Are they going to repeat classes or will they be promoted to a new class without learning or examinations? All these issues are factors of concern to education authorities and students whose fate are undefined.

Accordingly, a lot have been lost already to the Covid 19 pandemic, and realization is not envisaged. The primary and secondary schools had an inclusive examination for second term while the whole of third was completely given to coronavirus and lockdown. The controversy raised by the pandemic over the education system is inexplicable such that stakeholders and authorities are yet in a state of misperception. Re-opening of schools have up-stretched much deliberations among government and education authorities. Based on the Covid 19 requirements, students are expected to observe social distancing, put on their face mask, wash their hands regularly with clean flowing water and soap, sneeze or cough into a bent elbow and sanitize always. Unfortunately, these items are not yet on ground, provision for extra classroom has not been made, most schools do not have steady water, and some rather get their water from the community. If the required facilities needed for school re-opening will be laid on ground (and normal academic activities carried out, there may not be reason enough to declare the year an education dead year but if otherwise it then depicts that 2020 is indeed dead year for education). (Kampala Uganda THE INDEPENDENT (2020) noted that members of parliament want the government to declare 2020 a dead year for education as a result of the cumulative cases of Covid 19 disease in the country. In consonance, members of the National Economic Committee of parliament stated that even though schools resume it may be incredible to complete the syllabus and actually achieve what was to be attained in a full educational year.

Joan (2020) reported that during an emergency cabinet meeting held on the eve of the budget reading that Foreign Affairs minister Sam Kutesa asked President Museveni to announce a dead year for every education institution as a measure to keep the students safe. Though the suggestion was rejected rather an option of buying 10 million radio sets was considered in order to enable students go into virtual learning.

The implications of the Covid-19 Pandemic would in so far jeopardise the achievement or realization of the sustainable development goals. This will have adverse implication on SDG 4, which is a call on the world to “ensure inclusive and equitable education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”. This is because the achievement of goal 4 requires implementation, through deliberation and consultation of member-states as well as input and participation from civil society, teachers, unions, bilateral agencies regional organizations, the private sectors as well as research institutes. There is an inherent risk that the pandemic will threaten the achievement of global approved Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in its wholeness. An-initial prediction by the United Nations, World bank and various international bodies inform that, the existing delicate improvement made in the decrease of poverty and undernourishment in the past years may be inverted because the existing global economic slump do not exclude any country. Unemployment is now on the increase, downturn on state revenue and increase in debt will eventually hinder the monetary space for plan action from global to community level.

Summarily, almost all the countries in the world made a promise to improve the planet and the lives of the citizens by 2030. This promise necessitated their obligation to 17 life transforming goals streamlined by UN in 2015. These global goals are (also called the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which is fashioned to enable all the countries of the world to collaborate to ensure that no country is left aside. Although the realization of these goals remain a frantic cry in the moon.

The theoretical position of this study is anchored on the “Goal Theory” as propounded by Edwin Locke (1986), as cited in Kpee (2015). The theory states that to encourage high levels of motivation, goals must be specific and difficult to attain. When goals are specific, there is tendency for individuals

or groups to become focused, having a defined pathway towards the realization of such goals. Also, when goals are difficult, individuals are challenged to explore different avenues toward achieving such goals. The premise of the goal theory is that “conscious ideas regulate a persons actions”. Locke identified two major functions of goals as directing behaviours and providing the basis for motivation. To Locke, intention to work towards a goal is a major source of motivation to work; since goals influence performance when such goals are accepted by the individual to be worth working for.

Adieme 2011) further stated that goals need to be S.M.A.R.T before they can be achieved.

S- Specific

M- Measurable

A- Attainable

R- Relevant, Realistic, Realizable

T- Time-Bound

Thus, the SMART requirement is a necessary condition that goals generally, are accepted to meet. The theory also states that goals should have the capacity of being measured, it should be difficult, but not impossible to attain. It should also have a specific time frame for the goal accomplishment.

Similarly, the Sustainable Development Goals are broad, but made specific through the 169 target areas. The 17 goals are difficult to attain, which make nations, organizations, NGOs to develop blue prints and action plan to achieve them. Developing an action plan ensures that efforts are not wasted, but channeled towards the right direction (Adieme, 2016). The theory also provides a platform for individuals to participate in the formulation of goals and instills in the individuals the desire to stay committed to achieving such goals. However, the SDGs are specific, measurable, attainable and relevant to present global conditions with a time frame thus, they meet the characteristics of an effective goal.

This theory is related to this study in that SDGs are specific with its target indicators. It enables individuals and groups to know what is expected of them. It is very challenging, as it covers a broad spectrum of global issues. Thus, making nations to be focused and channeling their efforts in the right direction towards achieving them. They are attainable, which according to Locke (1986), commitment to goal is proportional to the difficulty, therefore more difficult goals implies more commitment to their attainment.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The crises confronting education system in Nigeria is quite enormous and alarming. In recent past, the concern has been the drastic downturn in the standard of education of which different strategies and policies put on ground have not been able to combat head on.

From what the researchers have observed as an educational stakeholder, instead of progression, the system is witnessing ultimate sequential progression. The blame for the appalling education malady has been thrown to everyone yet no one. Congruently, education is the master key that can unlock a country’s potentials for sustainable development. Therefore, there is no way a nation can develop without investing massively in the education system. The lasting change or development expected in the nation cannot be visible without acknowledging the impact of education to an individual and to the nation. It is only when the essential is realized, that education can be taken to the next level.

Also, the Covid-19 pandemic exposed some of the issues and concerns of education that are unattended to. There has been a decry on the falling standard, eventually, the pandemic emerged and worsened everything. Therefore, the problem of this study is that students are almost losing an academic session resulting in an education dead year if measures are not quickly put in place. Hence, the elements of the problem focus on the challenges of Covid-19 outbreak and as well as the possible implications to the achievement of sustainable development goals.

3. AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to examine issues and concerns of education dead year in Nigeria: implications for the achievement of sustainable development goals. Specifically, the objectives were to:

1. Determine the challenges of Covid-19 pandemic for the achievement of sustainable development goals in Nigeria's education
2. Assess the implications of Covid-19 pandemic for the achievement of sustainable development goals in Nigeria's education.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were posed to guide the study.

1. What are the challenges of Covid-19 pandemic for the achievement of sustainable development goals in Nigeria's education?
2. What are the implications of Covid-19 pandemic for the achievement of sustainable development goals in Nigeria's education?

5. HYPOTHESES

1. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of federal and state ministry of education on the challenges of Covid-19 pandemic for the achievement of sustainable development goals in Nigeria's education.
2. There is no significant differences between the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the implications of Covid-19 pandemic for the achievement of sustainable development goals in Nigeria's education.

6. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised all the educational stakeholders in Nigeria (i.e Ministers, Government, Commissioners, NGOs, Teachers, Students, and Parents). The study sampled the stakeholders. The sample size of the respondents is 400 which was selected through proportionate stratified random sampling technique. This consisted of 220 respondents from ministry of education and 180 respondents from teachers. The instrument used for data collection were 10 item questionnaire titled: "Issues and Concerns of Education Dead Year Questionnaire (ICEDYQ)" Relevant data were elicited from the respondents through the direct administration of copies of a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher and validated by Educational Management Experts which had a reliability index of 0.78 through a pilot study carried out. The instrument was divided into 2 sections A and B Section A contained 2 items which had to do with the personal data of the respondents. Section B contained 10 items which were designed to elicit information for answering the research questions and testing the hypotheses. The response format for the 10 items was strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed and strongly disagreed- while scoring format was 4 points, 3 points, 2 points and 1 point respectively. The research questions were answered with mean and standard deviation while the null hypotheses were tested using z test statistics. For the research questions 2.50 is fixed as the criterion mean .Those with 2.50 and above mean value were accepted while those with 2.49 and below were rejected.

7. RESULTS

Research Question1: What are the challenges of Covid-19 pandemic for the achievement of sustainable development goals in Nigeria's education?

Table1. Means Scores and Standard Deviation on the challenges of Covid-19 pandemic for the achievement of sustainable development goals in Nigeria’s education

S/No	Items	State ministry =220 \bar{x}	SD	Remarks	FederalMinistry =180 \bar{x}	SD ₂	Remarks
1.	Drawback on academic activities	2.72	1.65	Agreed	2.71	1.65	Agreed
2.	Closure of schools	2.64	1.62	Agreed	2.92	1.71	Agreed
3.	Social distancing	2.60	1.61	Agreed	2.66	1.63	Agreed
4.	Repetition of session	2.66	1.63	Agreed	2.61	1.63	Agreed
5.	Lack of focus	2.16	1.50	Disagreed	2.03	1.42	disagreed
	Grand mean (x)	2.56	1.61	Agreed	2.59	1.61	Agreed

Table 1 showed that all the questionnaire (1-4) had mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50 while item 5 had mean score below 2.50 and was rejected. The grand mean score and standard deviation of state ministers are 2.56 and 1.61, while the grand mean score and standard deviation of federal ministers are 2.59 and 1.61 respectively. The data revealed that drawback on academic activities, closure of schools, social distancing and repetition of session are the challenges of Covid-19 pandemic for the achievement of sustainable development goals in Nigerian’s education.

Research Question 2: What are the implications of Covid-19 pandemic for the achievement of sustainable development goals in Nigeria’s education?

Table2. Mean Score and Standard Deviation on of the implications of Covid-19 pandemic for the achievement of sustainable development goals in Nigeria’s education

S/No	Items	Male teachers =220 \bar{x}	SD	Remarks	Female teachers =180 \bar{x}	SD ₂	Remarks
6.	Non-achievement of goals	2.67	1.63	Agreed	2.78	1.68	Agreed
7.	Increase in poverty	2.66	1.63	Agreed	2.67	1.61	Agreed
8.	Lack of participation	2.78	1.67	Agreed	2.84	1.69	Agreed
9.	Threat to goals achievement	2.51	1.58	Agreed	2.58	1.61	Agreed
10.	Goals enhancement	2.32	1.52	Disagreed	2.31	1.52	Disagreed
	Grand mean (x)	12.94	8.03	Agreed	13.18	1.52	Agreed
		2.59	1.61	Agreed	2.64	1.63	Agreed

Table 2 revealed that item (6-9) had mean score above the decision rule of 2.50 while item 10 had a mean score below 2.50 and was rejected in the final decision. The grand mean score and standard deviation of male teachers are 2.59 and 1.61, while the grand mean score and standard deviation of the female teachers are 2.64 and 1.63 respectively. The data revealed that non-achievement of goals, increase in poverty, lack of participation and threat to goals achievement are the implications of Covid-19 pandemic for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria education.

8. TEST OF HYPOTHESES

The null hypotheses formulated for the study were tested through z-test analysis, which is a test of difference of mean.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of Federal and State Ministries of education on the challenges of Covid-19 pandemic on the achievement of sustainable development goals in Nigeria’s education.

Table3. Summary of z-test analysis on the mean scores of federal and state ministers of education on the challenges of Covid-19 pandemic for the achievement of sustainable development goals in Nigeria’s education

Respondents	N	\bar{x}	SD	Level of sig	Df	z-cal	z-crit	Decision
Federal ministers	220	2.56	1.61					
State ministers	180	2.59	1.61	0.05	398	-0.24	+1.960	NS

Table 3 showed that the z-calculated (-0.24) is less than the z-critical (+1.960) with a degree of freedom of 398 at 0.05 level of significance. Hence the null hypothesis is retained. Therefore, there is no significant difference between the mean scores of federal and state ministers on the challenges of Covid-19 pandemic for the achievement of sustainable development goals in Nigeria’s education.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between male and female teachers on the implications of Covid-19 pandemic for the achievement of sustainable development goals in Nigeria’s education.

Table4. Summary of z-test analysis on the mean scores of male and female teachers on the implications of Covid-19 pandemic for the achievement of sustainable development goals in Nigeria’s education

Respondents	N	\bar{x}	SD	Level of sig.	Df	z-cal	z-crit	Decision
Male teachers	220	2.59	1.61					
Female teachers	180	2.64	1.63	0.05	398	-0.39	+1.960	NS

Table 4 showed that the z-calculated (-0.39) is less than the z-critical (+1.960) with a degree of freedom of 398 at 0.05 alpha level of significance. The null hypothesis is therefore upheld. Hence, there is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female teachers on the implications of Covid-19 pandemic for the achievement of sustainable development goals in Nigeria’s education.

9. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings from research question 1 which sought to ascertain the challenges of Covid-19 pandemic for the achievement of sustainable development goals in Nigeria’s education showed that drawback on academic activities, closure of schools, social distancing and repetition of session are the various challenges. The finding is in line with Patience (2020) who stressed that the year 2020 could be termed as an education dead year because it was a year that the academic sector experienced the highest draw back in its activity as well as a protracted long break since the inception of schools. The test of hypothesis one showed that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of federal and state ministry of education on the challenges of Covid-19 pandemic for the achievement of sustainable development goals in Nigeria’s education.

The findings also revealed that, non-achievement of goals, increases in poverty, lack of participation and threat to goals’ achievement are the implications of Covid-19 pandemic for the achievement of sustainable development goals in Nigeria’s education. The test of hypothesis two showed that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female teachers on the implications of Covid-19 pandemic for the achievement of sustainable development goals in Nigeria’s education. In agreement with the findings, (Kampala, Uganda THE INDEPENDENT (2020) noted that members of parliament want the government to declare 2020 a dead year for education as a result of the cumulative cases of Covid-19 diseases in the country. In consonance, members of the National Economic Committee of Parliament stated that even though, schools resume, it may be incredible to complete the syllabus and actually achieve what was to be attained in a full educational year.

10. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that drawback on academic activities, closure of schools, repetition of academic session and as well as non-achievement of goals, increases in poverty, lack of participation and threat to goals achievement are the challenges and implications of Covid-19 outbreak for the achievement of sustainable development goals in Nigeria’s education.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study and as well as the conclusion, the researcher offered the following recommendations for implementation.

1. To ensure quick return to school, government should organize seminars and conferences for teachers to be trained and students sensitized because we don’t have choice but to coexist with the reality.
2. Adequate logistics should be provided by the government for the resumption of school.
3. Finally, National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) should be harmonized and transform SDGs data management in Nigeria. This way, the data released would be accurate, reliable and credible.

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