

## CHAPTER TEN

### **Globalising Education for Sustainable Development: Bridging Global Approaches and Local Realities**

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#### **Abstract**

The world is committed to achieving sustainable development, and education is central to the transformative change we wish to see. But the road to globalising education has not been smooth, especially in developing countries, like Nigeria, where local realities often conflict with global frameworks and imported models of education. This study critically analysed the apparent disconnect between global education for sustainable development (ESD) strategies and practical implementation in Nigeria. This study examined the theoretical underpinnings of global integration, drawing on policy analysis, comparative education, and historical reforms. It also discussed challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, curriculum misalignment, digital inequality, and cultural resistance that impede effective global integration. Finally, it suggested case-specific strategies to contextualise planetary educational aspirations without diluting its principled content. Bridging this gap would require a hybrid model that infuses global competencies into local knowledge systems, such as support for experiential learning and education, ensuring that education systems in Nigeria are globally relevant and socially and culturally sustainable.

**Keywords:** Glocalising, Education, Sustainable Development, Local Realities.

#### **Introduction**

The relationship between education and development has been established such that education is now internationally accepted as a key development index, and it is in recognition of this importance that governments all over the world have made commitments in their countries' educational policies for their citizens to have access to education (Odukoya, 2009). Castle in Adeyinka (2012) defined development as "a situation wherein man himself

becomes both the object and the subject of his own improvement, not merely an instrument in a process imposed from above and from without." Education policy issues continue to be a critical concern in developing countries in Africa and a critical tool for development (Imam, 2012). When it comes to education and development, Nigeria's philosophy since independence has been anything but static. At independence, Nigeria's foremost educational objective was to train its nationals to take over its civil service. Educational policy at independence was most concerned with using schools to develop manpower for economic development and Africanization of the civil service (Woolman, 2001). Many changes have been made to education policy over the years in compliance with the changing educational policies across the World. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) originated in the late 20th century from increasing recognition that the education system must tackle environmental, social and economic issues. Its origins are in the 1972 Stockholm Conference and were more fleshed out in the 1987 Brundtland Report, which popularized the term "sustainable development." These ideas came together at the 1992 Earth Summit and acknowledged education as being central to sustainable development. Global goals, such as the UN Decade of ESD (2005–2014) and SDG 4.7, serve as mandates to incorporate sustainability, global citizenship, and cultural awareness into education.

The world has shown minimal progress on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) despite this progress, signalling the need for stronger locally rooted actions. The need to envision and realise more sustainable futures for people and the planet has become increasingly urgent in recent years, as evident in the limited progress the world has made in achieving the 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) adopted by United Nations member states in 2015 and which are intended as an holistic framework for realising sustainable futures by 2030 (UN, 2015). The evolution of the Nigerian education system has long been shaped by colonialism and post-independence, with early emphasis on administrative training rather than technical or environmental education (Tijani et al., 2009). Strategies, like the 1977 National Policy on Education, attempted to be aligned with development goals, but were largely driven by donor priorities, lacked continuity, and were poorly funded. Disparities persist between global sustainability concepts and local contextual realities, such as antiquated curricula, underfunding, and socio-political instability.

Nigeria accounts for 15% of the global figure, which is about 10.5 million children aged 5-14 years old. It is the first time the World Bank has fixed this 10% figure, and it says Nigeria is the world capital of out-of-school children. (UNESCO). The country still under-invest in education, with just 7.9% for education in 2024, well below the national recommendation of UNESCO itself of 15- 20%.

This gap between policy intent and implementation underscores the need for historically informed reforms. This article examined global ESD discourse and situates it within the context of Nigeria's educational progress, delineating barriers and opportunities for a more inclusive and sustainability-oriented education practice in the country.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Although there have been improvements towards global Environmental Sustainable Development (ESD), it may be noted that Nigeria has failed in the implementation of ESD issues as global goals. Nigeria's goals had long been at divergence with the international goals since the 2005 World Summit on Social Development held in Geneva, which had agreed in principle to take action for sustainable development at the international level. Nigeria's education system in the post-independence era was centred on the need for trained manpower as opposed to sustainability, and in most cases, colonial models inherited overtly disregarded knowledge of the indigenous people. Inadequate teacher training and professional development represent significant challenges within the Nigerian education system, impeding the quality of teaching and limiting the overall effectiveness of the education system (Obiakor & Okoli, 2019). Continued under-funding, policy instability and political interference also constrain the incorporation of ESD into curricula and teacher training. Addressing these gaps would require a confrontation with the historical foundations of the problem and modifying global models to Nigeria's socio-cultural realities.

Historical context is vital to think through reforms that might work. This study illustrated enabling evidence of how Nigeria's education policies have been shaped by a complex interplay of colonial legacies, global influences, and internal dynamics. It promoted a "glocal" perspective that combines global ESD ideals with local contexts, recognising the importance of

indigenous knowledge and significance of culture. It provided learning that can really help steer other post-colonial nations with a similar strategy to align global mandates to local needs.

### **Aim and Objectives**

This study revisited the historical dynamics between global ESD ideals and education policy in Nigeria. Its objectives were to:

1. explore the historical trajectory of global ESD frameworks;
2. chart Nigeria's engagement with these frameworks;
3. hypothesise historically attuned strategies for bridging global and local education gaps; and
4. Propose pathways that internalise indigenous knowledge, dismantle systemic barriers and localise ESD

### **Literature Review: Conceptual and Theoretical Framework**

The study applied the historical and critical theories to understand the globalisation of ESD and its local pathology in Nigeria.

#### ***Key Concepts***

*Education:* A wide-ranging, lifelong process of gaining knowledge and values, formal and informal. Gandhi, Durkheim and others defined it as essentially holistic, socialising. Aristotle: "Education is the creation of sound mind in a sound body." Herbert Spencer: "Education is complete living."

*Globalisation of Education:* Overseas, the identity of education systems and ideals that span ideals and policy on the international stages.

*ESD:* Provides learners with the skills and values needed to tackle global issues such as climate change and inequity. UNESCO views ESD as a key to unlocking progress towards the global development goals, equipping people of all ages with the tools to address challenges like climate change, biodiversity loss, and inequality.

*Localisation In Education:* Adapting and contextualising education models to fit local frameworks, cultures, needs, and knowledge systems. The goal is to create an educational framework that is tailored to the unique needs of a

specific region or community, ensuring that learning materials are relevant and meaningful for students.

***Theoretical Approaches:***

*A. Historical Institutionalism*

- ✓ Looks at how historical decisions and institutional trajectories shape present-day education policies and make it difficult for them to adjust accordingly to new global trends.

*B. Postcolonial Theory*

- ✓ Critiques the long-lasting impact of colonialism, arguing that Western knowledge systems have been imposed over indigenous ones and urges for decolonisation in education.

*C. The Globalisation vs. Localisation Discourse in Historical Context:*

- ✓ The tension between global models and local needs is an old one from colonial education to contemporary development goals. Grasping this tension is important for situating ESD in Nigeria as it stands today.

**A Historical Perspective on Global ESD Agendas**

Key milestones and changing global discourses have driven ESD forward. This history matters because it reveals the extent of the disconnect between global frameworks, such as the Paris Agreement, and local implementation, particularly in countries like Nigeria.

***Timeline of Key Milestones:***

- Stockholm Conference (1972): The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment recognised the environmental crisis and proposed Environmental education, which laid the foundation for the introduction of sustainability in education.
- Brundtland Report (1987): Provided a definition of sustainable development and emphasised education as a key to realise a balance between growth, preservation and equity.
- Earth Summit, Rio de Janeiro (1992): The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) adopted Agenda 21, where education was established as one of the critical vehicle for

sustainability as is particularly addressed in Chapter 36 on public awareness and training.

- UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005–2014): An initiative launched by UNESCO to build sustainable thinking, acting and living in education but with region based influences.
- Sustainable Development Goal 4.7 (adopted in 2015): Of many international commitments made by countries, SDG 4.7 was to ensure that all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including sustainable development of global citizenship and gender equality by 2030. (UNESCO)
- Shifting Global Narratives about education and sustainability: The world narrative has changed from the need to educate for the environment to the realisation that education itself is essential to address issues facing the world. With the 21st century skills approaches, there is now an emphasis on critical thinking skills, participatory learning and cultural relevance in the classrooms.

### **Nigeria's Education Development and Response to ESD**

With over 350 different ethnic groups speaking more than 500 languages, Nigeria's diverse population has specific challenges when it comes to localising ESD. In this section, we discuss Nigeria's colonial and post-colonial educational legacies, engagement with international sustainability frameworks and ESD implementation barriers.

#### *Colonial and Post-Colonial Education Policies*

- The introduction of formal education in Nigeria was mainly through Christian missionaries who incorporated Western values at the expense of indigenous knowledge. The colonial education system emphasised developing clerks not individuals.
- *National Policy on Education (1977 and Revised)*: The post-independence policies were self-reliant, but adopted, at least, to the extent of being a replicate of foreign policies and did not leave sufficient room for sustainable growth or global citizenship.
- MDGs/SDGs: The two frameworks have measurable targets of 2000, Nigeria is still taming to universal basic education and gender equity.

Nigeria's pledge to Education-for-Sustainable-Development (ESD) had not been shattered after SDG 4.7 was adopted in 2015, but its implementation was selective and inconsistent.

- ESD-related curricula: Initiatives to mainstream sustainability themes into curricula are disparate and underfunded, and there is a yawning gap between curriculum development and the realities of classroom practice. This article examined these structural and ideological discrepancies that have troubled ESD integration in Nigeria.

### **Sustainable Localisation of Global ESD: Strategies**

#### **Algorithms to Measure the Impact of Historically Informed Curricular Reforms**

Curricula reforms must go beyond simply introducing global concepts into textbooks. Traditions, demonstrating how previous implementation of improvement illustrates reform that involves teachers, reflects their values, and suits a given cultural context (sometimes what worked better were informal or relaxed surroundings which promote learning more effectively than the normal classroom analogically speaking environment). A contextualised ESD curriculum needs to integrate global competencies (e.g. climate literacy, global citizenship) with local knowledge systems, culture, languages and practices. UNESCO says that a language which is perfectly suitable for literacy must be known to both the learners and the teachers, and it should also be used as a communication medium (UNESCO 1992:23).

Simply put, this is the institutional memory and kneading of policies.

There are also lessons to learn from successful programmes that have come before. For example, the Agricultural Science uses of the 1980s or community based adult literacy programmes which have proven frameworks that can be invaluable in the broadening of ESD. In the 1980s, Nigeria was flooded with agricultural research programmes like Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) aimed at transforming agriculture for commercial production and food self-sufficiency, and buildings up to research institutes and Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI). Also, during this period, the National Accelerated Food Production Project (NAFPP) was founded in 1973; Nigerian Agricultural and Cooperative Bank (NACB) was also founded in 1973 and the Integrated Agricultural

Development Projects (ADPs) and the National Grains Reserve Programme(NGRP) were introduced in 1975. The NAFPP was created as the acceleration of major staple crops production. There were also National Programmes for Grains and Root Crops Cultivation, again, to increase the production of its mandated crops. ((Akinboyo, O. 2008)

Such a dedicated initiative could help monitor and hold accountable the advances made on ESD, and maintain continuity of knowledge and efforts associated to ESD, despite the general shifts of political cycles.

### **Community Engagement**

Community engagement involves the active participation of community members, parents/ guardians, and local organisations and stakeholders in the educational process. It is a multidisciplinary model that considers the unique and strength of the entire community working together to aid in the improvement of education. (Jegede & Ogunleye, 2021). The historical neglect of local voices at Table of Education Policy has resulted in a top-down approach which most of the time is far from ground reality. This trend needs to be reversed for sustainable localisation of ESD. More relevant and effective educational practices can also emerge from these shared decisions that are made with insight, cultural perspectives and local expertise. (Amos,, 2024). Many ESD policies should be co-developed with teachers, parents, students, and community leaders, drawing from participatory traditions of town-hall meetings and local governance systems. Such inclusion garners ownership and aligns reforms with socio-cultural mores and could enhance student learning achievements through a supportive and nurturing environment. Then, by stepping into roles as mentors or helping plan educational events, community members put additional resources and experiences as well as role models at students' disposal. Moreover, community engagement enhances the school-family bond. This might result in an active parental involvement, improved communication and a better support for student learning at home (Obiakor & Okoli, 2019).

### **Historical Lessons and Strategic Directions**

Lessons learnt from previous reforms in education should be used in localising ESD in Nigeria. Nigeria's post-independence educational reforms have fluctuated between aspirations for global relevance and the imperatives of national identity. Historical evidence indicates pathways for aligning global

ESD objectives with local contexts through localised curricula and inclusive policy development. In the quest for rapid development and in pursuance of meaningful educational development, the Western Regional Government gave education highest priority.

### **Nigerian Educational Policy from Colonial Rule to Post Independence (1914-1960 and Now)**

The 1925 memorandum regarding educational policy for British Tropical Africa initiated by the British colonial government resulted in the 1926 Education Ordinance. This ordinance came on the heels of the Phelps-Stroke Commission's recommendations to improve education efficiency and shut down unregulated schools. It called for increased investment in education, formal education suited to local conditions, stresses on vernacular studies, women's education, moral training, etc. It was the first policy to incorporate local content and it steered education in Nigeria from 1926 to 1945.

#### ***The 1948 Education Ordinance***

The 1948 Ordinance, enacted through Sir Arthur Richards subsequent to several reports and the 1946 educational plan administered education centrally, supported regional education boards, privatisation, and enhanced incentives. It also framed grants assessment for mission schools, decentralised educational governance.

#### ***The 1952 Education Ordinance***

As the quest for self-governance became louder in Nigeria, the McPherson Constitution of 1951, which consolidated Nigeria into three regions, emerged. Thus, the Education Ordinance of 1952 granted the various regions the power to develop their own educational plans and policies, and ultimately led to the dissolution of the Colonial Education Board.

#### ***The Regional Education Laws (1955 – 1957)***

The 1954 Federal Constitution granted each region the authority to draft its educational laws, resulting in the enactment of regional education laws such as the Western (1955) and Eastern (1956) templates, as well as the Northern (1957) region and the Lagos Education Ordinance (1957).

#### ***The Ashby Report (1959)***

The Ashby Commission was constituted to examine Nigeria's manpower needs between 1960-1980 stated. It came with the resolution that more primary and secondary schools are required to promote socio-economic growth of the nation and socio-economic development of the individual and that the decentralisation of authority would be maintained as the dominant pattern of education administration until Independence in 1960.

***National Educational Policy of Independence (1960–1979)***

After independence, Nigeria created 19 states by 1976, each with its own education laws. The National Policy on Education (NPE) -1977, was the first indigenous policy and its main objective was to bring about unity and national integration through education.

***The Education Laws of the School Republic (1979–1999)***

Based on military hegemony, the second republic (1979) of Nigeria was inaugurated under another constitution which placed education within the ambit of the concurrent legislative list. In 1976, a UPE (Universal Primary Education) policy was instituted with a target of increasing enrolment but this was short-lived ending in 1981 when monetary challenges forced the government to cut expenditure; thus facing striking teachers and declining standards. UBE was introduced in 1999, replacing UPE to provide equal educational opportunities.

So far, Nigeria's educational policy has been progressively adapted to the colonial policies instead of building new, local frameworks.

**Conclusion/Recommendation**

The study mapped the evolution of global ESD, from the Stockholm Conference (1972) to SDG 4.7 (2015), capturing evidence of increasing integration of sustainability perspectives into education throughout the globe. Yet, Nigeria's case, like many other countries, demonstrates a wide disparity between such global aspirations and national/local action, mainly owing to the colonial legacies of education, socio-political instability, poor funding and infrastructural hindrances.

Historical evidence suggests that Nigeria's attempts to adopt international norms have rarely been genuine, and where they have, they have fallen well short of the realities of cultural and socio-economic conditions in Nigeria. The

study highlighted that attempts to import models from around the world without accounting for local contexts regarding historical legacies, indigenous knowledge, and local values are largely ineffective in moving reforms forward.

This makes bridging global sustainability aspirations with Nigeria's history and culture very important. This necessitates participatory and historically cognizant reform with boots on the ground engaging local communities, educators, and policymakers. By analysing the historical and global context what has worked and what has not, Nigeria has the capacity to not only produce a globally competitive education system, but one which is also grounded in local culture, essence, needs, and relevance, thereby creating a more effective, appropriate, eco-friendly future of education.

## **Recommendations**

### ***1. Revive Technical and Vocational Training***

Technical and vocational education schools should be upgraded and included in the basic education system so that students receive job-ready skills, while promoting self-reliance and entrepreneurship and reducing youth unemployment.

### ***2. Re-establishment of Teachers' Training Colleges***

Reintroducing Teachers' Training Colleges will strengthen foundational education, especially in under-served communities. These institutions produced competent, community-rooted educators who understood local realities. Their return would promote inclusive and contextually relevant teaching, a core element of ESD.

### ***3. Reflect Indigenous Arts and Crafts in the Curricula***

Integrate indigenous knowledge systems (such as pottery, weaving, wood carving, etc.) within school curricula to promote cultural sustainability, creativity, and respect for local traditions.

### ***4. Agricultural education should be strengthened***

Focus on practical farming programs to improve agricultural education using the existing school farms to reconnect students with sustainable food practices, traditional farming techniques, and environmental stewardship.

**5. *Localise School Curricula***

Develop a curriculum which integrates Nigeria's social, cultural, economic, and ecological context into it and which makes global goals including ESD relevant and sustainable for local communities.

**6. *Promote Inclusive Education***

Nigeria should adopt flexible and inclusive education policy. Expand initiative by encouraging open and Distance Learning, vocational schools, and community learning centers.

***Revising Academic Policies for a More Inclusive and Sustainable Education***

**7. *Professional Experience for Postgraduate Admission***

Take on an inclusive admission structure, acceptance of professional experience as a portion of postgraduate entrance, validated informal learning, empowering each authority so you can achieve a non-linear-wound scholastic course.

**8. *Ease O'Level Requirements for Postgraduate Degrees***

Scrap outdated policies and rules like insist on O'Levels for postgraduate study, thereby, promoting more inclusive and flexible pathways for adult learners.

**9. *Develop Alternative Ways for Non-Traditional Students to Gain Admission***

Increase access for adults and non-traditional students through relaxed pathways (competency-based assessments, portfolio-based admissions) that expand educational opportunities for those who may not fit the traditional model and will support both the working learner and the goals of employers to prepare current and future employees for the future of work.

**10. *Open and Distance Learning Platforms***

Promote open and distance learning (ODL) to develop education access for marginalized groups and working adults, who could benefit from ODL as it

provides inclusive education and allows marginalised groups to overcome structural barriers.

### ***11. Embed Experiential Learning into the Curriculum***

Scale open academic models that embed real-life experience, community engagement and local knowledge in the formal curriculum, aligning top-down education requirements with local realities.

### ***12. Adopt a national admission policy review and reform process for SDG alignment***

National education policy and practices should align with SDG 4, including components such as equitable access to affordable technical, vocational and tertiary education, and considerations for integrating education for sustainable development, among others.

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