

ENHANCING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH EFFECTIVE CHILDHOOD EDUCATION ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION IN PANKSHIN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF PLATEAU STATE

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Abstract

The study examined the effect of assessment on primary education for sustainable development goals in Pankshin LGA; ascertained the effectiveness of evaluation on primary education for sustainable development goals in Pankshin LGA, and identified the factors militating against the assessment and evaluation of pupils' academic achievement for sustainable development goals in Pankshin LGA of Plateau State. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population consisted of all the primary school educators in Pankshin Local Government Area. The sample comprises 100 primary school educators selected using random sampling techniques. The study adopted research instruments titled. 'Teachers Assessment and Evaluation Adoption Questionnaire (TAEAQ), Effectiveness of Evaluation for Sustainable Education (EESEQ) and Factors Militating against Pupils Academic Achievement (FMPAA) ' for data collection. The statistical tool used to analyse the result is descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation. The finding reveals that effective childhood education assessment and evaluation are critical for promoting sustainable Development in Pankshin Local Government Area, as they enable policymakers and educators to make informed decisions about educational programs and policies. The study recommends the development of context-specific assessment and evaluation frameworks and the provision of ongoing professional development for stakeholders in the assessment and evaluation process. The study's findings have implications for the children, teachers, and education policymakers in plateau state and beyond.

Keywords: Childhood, education, assessment, evaluation, Pupils, sustainable development.

Introduction

The issue of poor academic performance of pupils in Nigeria has been of much concern to the government, parents, teachers and even pupils themselves. It has been observed by the research that pupils have issues with writing and reading. To some other pupils, socio-emotional issues are not well addressed, while others' rudimentary understanding of numbers is a thing of concern. These children most time depend on the teacher for assessment. The quality of assessment not only depends on the teachers as reflected in the performance of their duties, but also in the effective coordination of the evaluation (Amnisa *et al.*, 2024). Education is an essential factor for the effective development of any country like Nigeria. The western education adopted by Nigeria is highly based on individualism, socio-economic and internationalisation, which are geared towards national development. Education is basic to national development; therefore, no nation can afford to toil with it. Hence, the foundation of every great nation is said to be the education of its citizens (Yusuf & Ibrahim, 2024). The federal government, in recognition of this important role of education as a tool for the development of the individual, the society and the nation, adopted education in the National Policy on Education as an instrument par excellence for effecting national development (FRN, 2014). Nigeria's education as a nation requires quality assessment skills to improve its social organisation, preserves its cultures, enhance economic development and reform the political structure. Therefore, education is seen as a prerequisite for quality manpower development and creation of wealth, a sure path to success in life and service to humanity.

There is no gainsaying the fact that education is very vital to the pace of social, political and economic development of any nation. Education is a key investment in any nation with enormous social and economic benefits accruing from it. This explains why one of the national education goals is the acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competences as equipment for the individual to live and contribute to the development of the society (FRN, 2014). Qualitatively, the type of education being imparted to the majority of school children is ill-suited to the development need of Nigerians, where the appropriate education approach is yet to be given attention. To affirm this, Babalola and Olawuyi (2021) posited that at present, the quality of education offered to children in primary schools in Nigeria is below the required standard. This has gross adverse effect on quantitative and qualitative human capital development. With the dependency of the individual, family, community and the nation on education for national development, the fundamental place of primary education cannot be overemphasised. The paramount focus is because this level of education is the foundation of the entire system. Therefore, the realisation of the transformation agenda is hinged on making the primary education system viable and functional.

Childhood education as referred to in the National Policy on Education (NPE) is the education given in institutions for children aged 6-11 plus (FRN, 2014). It is the first stage of formal and compulsory education. Primary education is preceded by pre-school or nursery education and followed by secondary education. The primary education is the first six years of the nine years of basic education using the Universal Basic Education (UBE) standard. This stage of education is often addressed as elementary education. In most countries of the world, primary education is compulsory for children including Nigeria. Although it is permissible for some parents to provide it. Children are usually placed in classes with a teacher who will be primarily responsible for their education and welfare for years. This teacher may be assisted to varying degrees by specialist teachers in certain subject areas. Today, there are about 117,242 primary schools with about 62,000 pupils, but with limited and incompetent teachers in Nigeria (GRID3, 2023). The vision statement of Universal Basic Education that encompasses primary education states that, at the end of nine years of continuous education, every child should acquire appropriate and relevant skills and values and be employable in order to contribute his or her quota to National Development, and this is the main focus of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Sustainable Development (SD) is a global imperative, and education is central to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In particular, Goal 4.7 emphasises education for sustainable development at all levels, including early childhood. In Nigeria, Early Childhood Education (ECE) is gaining recognition, yet its role in sustainability remains underexplored. This paper examines how ECE in Nigeria contributes to SD and the challenges faced in integrating sustainability into early learning. According to UN (2016), the history of the SDGs can be traced to 1972 when governments met in Stockholm, Sweden, for the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, to consider the rights of the human family to a healthy and productive environment. It was not until 1983 that the United Nations decided to create the World Commission on Environment and Development, which defined sustainable development as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." In 1992, the first United Nations Conference on Environment and Development was held in Rio. It was here that the first agenda for Environment and Development was developed and adopted, also known as Agenda 21.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), officially known as Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, is a set of seventeen inspirational "Global Goals" with 169 targets between them. Spearheaded by the United Nations, through a deliberative process involving its 194 Member States, as well as global civil society, the goals are contained in paragraph 54 United Nations Resolution A/RES/70/1 of 25 September 2015. The Resolution is broader intergovernmental agreement that, while acting as the Post 2015 Development Agenda (successor to the Millennium Development Goals), builds on the principles agreed upon under Resolution A/RES/66/288, popularly known as the Future We Want. The SDGs were in large measure informed by the often quoted assertion by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon that "there can be no Plan B, because there is no Planet B." The Official Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted on 25 September 2015 has 92 paragraphs, with the main paragraph outlining the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and their associated 169 targets. This includes, among other goals are:

No Poverty, Zero Hunger, Good Health and Well-being, Quality Education. The achievement of an individual to enable full contribution to the well-being of society. In ideal sense, education is an ultimate value, and hence, through the provision of social service, it is an agent of change (Adeyemi, 2022). It is the

responsibility of the educational system of any nation to bring to the light the transformation of the economic, political, scientific and technological recognition. The place of primary education is paramount because it is the foundation of adults' contribution to developmental processes.

In other words, basic education makes a child a better adult. Primary education is to the educational system, and the nation at large, as the mind is to the body. A faulty primary education, which is the foundation of the entire education system can thwart the attainment of the intended outcome of the system. The objectives of primary education, as deduced from Nigerian national education aims and objectives, read thus: Inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy, and ability to communicate effectively; lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking;

Give citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society; Mold the character and develop sound attitude and morals in the child; Develop in the child the ability to adapt to the child's changing environment; give the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable the child to function effectively in society within the limits of the child's capacity, and Provide the child with basic tools for further educational advancement, including preparation for trades and the craft of the locality (FRN, 2014).

These objectives made primary education the concern of all and sundry, and it has become obvious that the foundation to build the future of the Nigerian nation is anchored on it. It can therefore be affirmed that the aims and objectives of the primary education are no longer just the acquisition of the ability to read, write and numeracy as it were in the colonial era, but have moved to a more complex skills acquisition that will enable a primary school leaver to be an independent member of society (Osuji & Alugbuo, 2003). According to Bagudo (2006), the Nigerian schools are always termed as a place of learning functional skills, receiving ideal information, to act rationally to the expectation of the broader society. Writing on the primacy of early education of the child, Oyekan (2000) holds that it behoves us to ensure that children are adequately prepared today so that they may find suitable answers to meet the needs and challenges of tomorrow.

Lack of Political Commitment: The poor socioeconomic condition in Nigeria and the inability of the leader to create conditions necessary for higher national development after 14 years of consistent civil rule or democracy, should be a concern to any person who cares about Nigeria. Owing to the nature of primary education and the school system in general, governments give less concern to issues of funding, provision of infrastructure and supply of qualified and experienced teachers. Given the obvious importance of teachers, problems in supporting newly qualified teachers and a lack of career development opportunities in school settings often combine to make teachers' effectiveness difficult. The working conditions of primary school teachers in Nigeria are in pitiable condition that if not addressed can impede teachers' effectiveness. UNESCO (2009) submits that if we are to put human development at the heart of socioeconomic strategies, the advancement and the working conditions of teachers must be addressed. Salaries are not regularly paid, and industrial actions have become continuous and recurring rituals in the Nigerian public service.

Similarly, Esu and Inyang-Abia (2009) revealed that inadequate motivation arising from a haphazard reward system and delay in payment of salaries has led to a lack of commitment and therefore a slow but steady decay of any innovative programme. **Constraints of Poor Infrastructural Facilities.** Most primary schools both in rural and urban cities, are crumbling because of a lack of maintenance. The degree of infrastructural decay in Nigerian primary schools is an eyesore that should give government sleepless night. Oloruntoyin (2011) stressed that many of the buildings were erected in the late 1950s and early 1960s with mud blocks. Today, they are not only a health hazard but also a potential death trap. In fact, classes are being held in the open during the dry season, and when the rainy season sets in children are crowded into the few available ramshackle buildings. For any curriculum to be maximally implemented to meet the vision 2020 or the sustainable development goals, infrastructural facilities such as classrooms, laboratories, seats, and libraries, among others, must be put in place. The absence of these infrastructures in most cases has seriously constrained the teaching and learning objectives of the curriculum (Enu et al. 2019). **Constraints of Competent Teachers.** At the lower and middle levels of primary education, there are reported cases of increase in the rate of absentee and ineffective teachers in schools (Oloruntoyin, 2011). The conditions in primary schools are particularly peculiar especially when there are fewer teachers than the number of classes that the teacher has to teach. The problem of monitoring teachers also presents additional difficulties to educational managers. Teachers' monitoring is crucial in order to address teacher absenteeism. It has been found that getting teachers to come to work is a major barrier to improving

education outcomes. Recruiting, training, and supporting competent teachers to provide quality learning can be particularly challenging. The ideal primary school teacher, according to Brown (2003), is certified to teach more than one subject or grade level, can teach students with a wide range of abilities in the same classroom, is prepared to supervise extracurricular activities and can adjust to the community.

Academic achievement is commonly measured by examinations or continuous assessment, but there is no general agreement on how it is best tested or which aspects are most important. According to Annie, Howard, Stoker and Mildred (1996) academic achievement is the outcome federal the extent to which a student, teacher or institution has achieve their educational goals. Bossaert *et al.* (2011) defines academic achievement as students' success in meeting short or long term goals in education. In the big picture according to the authors, academic achievement means completing high school or earning a college degree. Lassiter (1995) looks at students' academic achievement as referring to a students' strong performance in a given academic area. A student who earns good grades or awards in science has achieved in the academic field of science. He further stated that education associations and schools monitor the overall level of student academic achievement to decide what, if any, challenges need to be made in the educational system. As a result, teachers must constantly upgrade their skills that focus on assessment and evaluation of the pupil's academic achievements.

Objective of the study

The specific objective of the study is to:

1. Examine the effect of assessment on primary education for sustainable development goals in Pankshin LGA
2. Ascertain the effectiveness of evaluation on primary education for sustainable development goals in Pankshin LGA
3. Identify the factors militating against the assessment and evaluation of pupils' academic achievement for sustainable development goals in Pankshin LGA

Research Questions

These research questions guided this study:

1. What is the effect of assessment on Primary Education for Sustainable Development Goals in Pankshin LGA?
2. What is the effectiveness of evaluation on Primary Education for Sustainable Development Goals in Pankshin LGA?
3. What are the factors militating against the assessment of pupils' academic achievement for sustainable development goals in Pankshin LGA?

Methodology

The study employed a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study specifically targeted at primary school educators in Pankshin Local Government Area in Plateau State. Through a simple random sampling technique. The sample comprised 200 primary school educators. The study adopted research instruments titled. 'Teachers Assessment and Evaluation Adoption Questionnaire (TAEAQ)', Effectiveness of Evaluation on Primary Education for Sustainable Education Goals (EEPESE) and Factors Militating against the Assessment and Evaluation of Pupils Academic Achievement for Sustainable Development Goals (FMAEPAASDG) for data collection. The study used a 4-point Likert.

Table 1

S/N	ITEMS STATEMENT	SA	A	D	SD	Mean (x)	Std.D	Decision
1.	Different assessment strategies has effect on primary school pupils understanding of environment, social and economic aspects of SDGs	20	29	30	21	2.48	1.04	Rejected
2.	The current assessment practices in schools measures pupils development of critical thinking, problem solving related to sustainability	59	21	12	8	1.69	0.97	Rejected
3.	It gives clear relationships between specific assessment tasks and pupils acquisition of sustainability-related knowledge and values	70	20	8	2	1.42	0.73	Rejected
4.	Pupils engagement in assessment practices foster their engagements with SDG-related concepts	40	30	29	1	2.13	0.85	Rejected
5.	Teachers observed that connection between assessment practices and pupils attitude towards sustainable development brings change in behavior	50	30	13	7	3.03	0.85	Agreed
6.	The specific impact of sustainable development brings quality to education and responsive education to pupils	60	30	9	1	1.51	0.70	Rejected
7.	Assessment tools used in my school reflect SDG principle	37	29	28	6	2.97	0.95	Agreed
8.	continues assessment(CA) is used effectively to measure pupils progress	41	35	16	20	2.59	0.85	Agreed
9.	Feedback from assessment helps pupils improve their attitudes and behaviors toward sustainability.	36	31	28	5	2.54	1.27	Agreed
10	Used of rating scale to assess teachers understanding of specific SDGs defines a clear concept.	50	30	13	7	1.77	0.93	Rejected
Weighted Average		2.29						

N= 100; key: 4 = Strongly Agree (SA), 3= Agree (A), 2= Disagree(D), 1= Strongly Disagree (SD) Decision Value: Low effectiveness = 0.00-2.44. High effectiveness = 2.50-4.00.

Table 1 shows the effects of assessment on primary education for sustainable development goals in Pankshin Local Government Area in Plateau State. The table shows that teachers observed that connection between assessment practices and pupil's attitude towards sustainable development brings change in behavior (=3.03), Assessment tools used in my school reflect SDG principle (=2.97), Continues assessment (CA) is used effectively to measure pupils progress (=2.59), Feedback from assessment helps pupils improve their attitudes and behaviors toward sustainability (=2.54). The table further shows that there is disagreement that effectiveness gives clear relationships between specific assessment tasks and pupils acquisition of sustainability-related knowledge and values (= 1.42), the specific impact of sustainable development brings quality to education and responsive education to pupils (=1.51), used of rating scale to assess teachers understanding of specific SDGs defines a clear concept (= 1.77). The current assessment practices in schools measures pupils' development of

critical thinking, problem solving related to sustainability (= 1.69) and different assessment strategies has effect on primary school pupils understanding of environment, social and economic aspects of SDGs (= 2.48). Based on the weighted average (2.29 out of 4.00 maximum value that can be obtained), which teachers observed that connection between assessment practices and pupil's attitude towards sustainable development brings change in behavior is high.

Research Question 2: What is the effectiveness of evaluation on Primary Education for Sustainable education goals?

Table 2: Showing the Effectiveness of Evaluation on Primary Education for Sustainable Education Goal?

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	Mean (x)	Std.D	Decision
1	Teachers currently incorporate SDGs principles into evaluating pupils performance in class activities	35	32	28	5	2.97	0.92	Agreed
2	Schools have policies in place to promote sustainability and SDG education for pupils .	80	9	7	4	1.37	0.81	Rejected
3	Schools has the available resources and professional development to integrate SDG effectively during evaluation.	30	29	20	21	2.48	1.04	Rejected
4	Evaluation results are used to plan individualized learning for struggling pupils	1	9	30	60	1.51	0.70	Rejected
5	Evaluation is very good in promoting SDG skills	35	32	28	6	2.97	0.95	Agreed
6	All kinds of assessment tools are good for conducting effective evaluation.	50	30	13	7	3.03	0.85	Agreed
7	I am aware that proper evaluation can promote sustainable development goals (SDG).	80	9	7	4	1.37	0.81	Rejected
8	I am familiar with national/international policies on educational assessment and evaluation	4	9	7	80	1.37	0.81	Rejected
9	I use assessment to identify pupils who need extra support	40	30	29	1	2.13	0.85	Rejected
10	I involvesmy learners in self-assessment activities always	45	40	15	0	1.75	0.70	Rejected
Weighted Value		1.91						

Table 2 shows that effectiveness of evaluation in Primary Education for Sustainable Education Goals in Pankshin Local Government Area in Plateau State can be attained through the use of all kinds of assessment tools are good for conducting effective evaluation (= 3.03), also, teachers currently incorporate SDGs principles into evaluating pupil's performance in class activities (= 2.97), evaluation is very good in promoting SDG skills in

primary schools (= 2.97). Schools has the available resources and professional development to integrate SDG effectively into teaching and learning in school (= 2.13), I use assessment to identify pupils who need extra support(= 1.75),I involves my learners in self-assessment activities always(= 1.75),Evaluation results are used to plan individualized learning for struggling pupils (= 1.51), Schools have policies in place to promote sustainability and SDG education for pupils(= 1.37) andI am aware that proper evaluation can promote sustainable development goals (SDG) (= 1.37). Based on the value of the weighted average (1.91 out of 4.00 maximum value that can be obtained), which falls within the decision value for high, it can be inferred that the level of effectiveness of assessment and evaluation such as tools are good for conducting evaluation is high.

Research Question 3: Table 3:What are the factors militating against the Assessment and Evaluation of Pupils Academic Achievement for Sustainable Development Goals in Pankshin LGA?

Table 3: shows the factors militating against the assessment and evaluation of pupil's

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	Mean (x)	Std.D	Decision
1	Lack of Effective assessment helps pupils develop critical thinking and creativity	45	45	5	5	3.30	0.78	Agreed
2	Lack of Assessment in my school encourages collaboration and teamwork among pupils	50	20	15	15	3.05	1.12	Agreed
3	Lack of Our assessment practices promote fairness, inclusivity and gender equality	40	25	3	5	2.00	0.95	Rejectec
4	Lack of Learners encouraged to think about real-life problems through project based assessment	50	40	10	0	1.60	0.66	Rejectec
5	Lack of Assessment motivates learners to take responsibility for their own learning	60	35	0	5	3.40	0.75	Agreed
6	Teachers use assessment to promote lifelong learning habits in pupils	5	20	35	40	3.10	0.89	Agreed
7	Lack of Assessment results are used for school improvement planning	60	35	0	5	3.40	0.75	Agreed
8	Lack of Continuous assessment contributes to achieving SDG4 (Quality Education)	45	20	10	25	2.60	1.07	Agreed
9	Limited resources (textbooks, ICT tools) affect my ability to assess the learners effectively.	55	30	5	5	3.35	4.15	Agreed
10	Large class size makes effective assessment difficult.	60	35	0	5	2.00	0.95	Rejectec

Table 3 shows the factors militating against the assessment and evaluation of pupil's academic achievement for sustainable development goals in Pankshin LGA. The table shows that teachers agreed that assessment motivates learners to take responsibility for their own learning(= 3.40), Assessment results are used for school improvement planning (3.40), Limited resources (textbooks, ICT tools) affect my ability to assess the learners effectively(= 3.35),Effective assessment helps pupils develop critical thinking and creativity(= 3.30),Teachers use assessment to promote lifelong learning habits in pupils(=3.10),Assessment in my school encourages collaboration and teamwork among pupils (= 3.05), Continuous assessment contributes to achieving SDG4

(Quality Education(= 2.60). The rejection in findings shows that lack of Our assessment practices promote fairness, inclusivity and gender equality, Large class size makes effective assessment difficult are not an agreed factors with (2.00) and another rejection is that lack of learners encouragement to think about real-life becomes a problem through project based assessment.

Discussion of Findings

The major findings of this study indicate that the effectiveness of assessment and evaluation for sustainable developmental goals in primary school is very high. Furthermore, the level of effectiveness of assessment and evaluation with the use of teachers' connections between assessment practices and pupils' attitudes towards sustainable development brings change in behaviour. These findings upheld the result that an ideal sense, education is an ultimate value, and hence, through the provision of social service, it is an agent of change by Adeyemi (2022). The findings says that the assessment tools used in primary school reflect the SDG principle. According to Bagudo (2006), Nigerian schools are always termed as a place of learning functional skills, receiving ideal information, to act rationally in accordance with the expectations of the broader society.

Similarly, this result concurs with the teacher's observation that the connection between assessment practices and pupils' attitude towards sustainable development brings change in behaviour. The quality of assessment does not only depends on the teachers as reflected in the performance of their duties, but also in the effective coordination of the evaluation (Amnisa et al, 2024).

The factors militating against the assessment and evaluation of pupils' academic achievement for sustainable development goals in Pankshin LGA are a lack of teachers' assessment practices that can promote fairness, inclusivity and gender equality, a lack of Learners encouraged to think about real-life problems through project-based assessment, and a large class size makes effective assessment difficult.

Conclusion

The findings of this study have established that the importance of Primary Education cannot be overemphasised. Primary education studies, without doubt, play a crucial role in the sustainable development goals in a nation like Nigeria, despite the challenges. But committed leadership can help achieve Sustainable Development Goals(SDGs) by 2030. Other requirements, teaching tools, connections between the pupils and the practice of pupils' attitudes towards sustainable development bring change in the behaviours of the learners.

Recommendations

The findings of this study have assessed the impact of Primary Education on SDGs in Nigeria. The writer is of the opinion that such problems can be resolved if the following recommendations are considered for implementation:

1. Adequate funding through diversify sources from the government, NGO's and communities should be made available.
2. Administration and supervision of primary education should be entrusted to an experienced educationist.
3. Teachers should be motivated through prompt payment of salary, promotions, in-service training, and research grants.
4. Primary education's curriculum and methodology should be refocused in Nigeria. This involves restructuring of Primary education in line with the ethics of its foundation and training.
5. Government at the national, state, and Local levels should provide a conducive and child-friendly environment for effective teaching and learning in primary schools. Government with public-private partnership (P.P.P) should provide adequate and appropriate fundings of schools for the provision and upgrading of necessary teaching aids, library, computer laboratory materials and other tools for efficient and effective implementation of primary education towards the attainment of SDGs

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