

## Rethinking Classroom Instruction for Speedy Realization Sustainable Development Goals in Bayelsa State

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### Abstract

Teaching, in the opinion of Clark and Starr (1970), is an attempt to help people acquire some skills, attitude, knowledge and ideas. Again, Clark (1995) saw teaching as the interaction between a teacher and students under the teacher's responsibility in order to bring about the expected change in the students' behaviour. This means that the task of the teacher is to create or influence desirable changes in the behaviour of his/her pupils or students. In other words, the teacher is to effect desirable changes in the students by way of interacting with them in and outside the classroom using different methods. Emerging contemporary issues like sustainable development, national development, character development, entrepreneurial education, teaching to acquire employability skills and others require classroom instruction to assume new trend. This paper therefore advocates newer methods of interaction in the school system. This will be discussed under rethinking classroom instruction for speedy realization of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Bayelsa State.

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**Keywords:** rethinking, classroom instruction, education, sustainable development goals, Bayelsa State

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### INTRODUCTION

Education has from time immemorial been used as a tool for development by all societies. This is so because education is the measure for the socio-economic, cultural and technological advancement of man. Education is therefore a veritable instrument for national sustainable development. The progress or otherwise of any society is therefore a function of the provision of a functional and quality education.

Given that education is a tool for national sustainable development, what actually transpires in the classroom should naturally interest all stakeholders in the system. It must be noted that Bayelsa State and indeed, Nigeria did not meet the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) target on Education For All by 2015, and also did not perform well in the other MDGs, partly because of the corrupt practices of most of the stakeholders as well as the operators of the system. Suffice to state here that what was responsible was not that the people were not educated. The main reason was because most of the operators of the system were corrupt because their character (affective attributes) were questionable as a result of poor training that should have been provided through proper classroom instruction.

To rethink classroom instruction for speedy realization of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Bayelsa

state will therefore require emphasis on the affective characteristics of the pupils/ students alike. This important component in education has been neglected for quite some time. The affective characteristics are the foundation of character and morality. They border on what constitute acceptable and good conduct for humans. Such attributes as honesty, truthfulness, patience, sincerity, integrity, etc are the concern of the affective domain. Suffice to state here that the present educational system in Bayelsa state and other parts of Nigeria pay more emphasis on the cognitive attributes of learning than the affective. This has resulted to poor moral upbringing and character in students and the consequences are corrupt government officials, cultism in schools, kidnapping and all sorts of societal ills as it is being experienced in most parts of the country.

Bloom (1956/1976) introduced the taxonomy of instructional objectives in three domains (cognitive, affective and psychomotor) and emphasized the importance of the affective in the learning process. Woolfork (1998) expatiated on the relationship among the cognitive, affective, and behavioural domains. Alexander (2003) reiterated the strong ties between cognitive / affective attributes of learners and how these attributes impact the acquisition and comprehension of

knowledge and information. Further categorization of the three domains of learning is as follows:

1. Cognitive domain- relating to or involving intellectual activity
2. Affective domain- relating to or influencing values (ethics), emotions, feelings, and attitudes.
3. Psychomotor domain- relating to motor action proceeding from mental activity.

### **The Problem**

Educationists advocate for the proper integration of the three domains of learning in the classroom. The domains of learning as shown are actually interdependent. This is more evident between the cognitive and affective domains. For this reason, according to Olatunji (2013), focusing on cognitive constructs to the exclusion of affective constructs can only unavoidably lead to an incomplete educational experience for learners. Unfortunately, this has been the situation in the Nigerian educational system for some time. The implication of this, among others is that we will have students with advanced knowledge of their specific fields with great abilities but with little or no regard for their professions or the ethical standards that govern them. This has accounted for the high rate of indiscipline among university students, militancy, kidnapping and corruption in public service.

Consequently, to achieve rapid national sustainable development will require educators to pay attention to the affective characteristics of students. Interestingly, the foundation of societal values, character development and all ethical issues is the affective. This paper therefore discusses rethinking of classroom instruction to emphasize affective education for a speedy realization and sustenance of the SDGs in Bayelsa state.

### **Significance of the Study**

Over the years, development plans in Bayelsa State have always been done without considering the role of education in the planning and implementation processes. This factor is responsible for the dismal performance by the state in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This paper is therefore a clarion call on the need for policy makers, both at the states and federal levels to consider education as a necessary tool for the successful planning and implementation of sustainable national policies and programmes, especially the current Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This is significant since education has been recognized as the instrument for sustainable national development for all societies.

### **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

At the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit on 25 September 2015, world leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to end poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and tackle climate change by 2030. The Sustainable Development Goals, otherwise known as the Global Goals, build on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), eight anti-poverty targets that the world committed to achieving by 2015. The MDGs, adopted in 2000, aimed at an array of issues that included slashing poverty, hunger, disease, gender inequality, and access to water and sanitation. Enormous progress has been made on the MDGs, showing the value of a unifying agenda underpinned by goals and targets. Despite this success, the indignity of poverty, diseases, hunger, inequality, poor education, etc have not been ended for all

(<http://undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sdgoverview/post-2015-development-agenda.html>).

The new SDGs, and the broader sustainability agenda, go much further than the MDGs, addressing the root causes of poverty and the universal need for development that works for all people.

UNDP Administrator Helen Clark noted: "This agreement marks an important milestone in putting our world on an inclusive and sustainable course. If we all work together, we have a chance of meeting citizens' aspirations for peace, prosperity, and wellbeing, and to preserve our planet." The Sustainable Development Goals will now finish the job of the MDGs, and ensure that no one is left behind (<https://africapplatform.org/news/why-this-is-sustainable-development-not-global-goals/>)

### **Education for Sustainable Development**

Sustainability Education (SE), Education for Sustainability (EfS), and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) are interchangeable terms describing the practice of teaching for sustainability. ESD is the term most used internationally and by the United Nations. Agenda 21 was the first international document that identified education as an essential tool for achieving sustainable development and highlighted areas of action for education (UNESCO, 2012).

In recognition of the importance of ESD, the United Nations General Assembly declared 2005-2014 the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD). UNESCO leads the Decade and has developed an International Implementation Scheme for the Decade. The goals of the decade are to provide an

opportunity for refining and promoting the vision of, and transition to, sustainable development – through all forms of education, public awareness and training; and to give an enhanced profile to the important role of education and learning in sustainable development. Education for sustainability is the practice of learning how to achieve global and local sustainable communities. The objectives of the DESD according to UNESCO (2012) are to:

- facilitate networking linkages, exchange and interaction among stakeholders in ESD;
- foster increased quality of teaching and learning in ESD;
- help countries make progress towards and attain the Millennium Development Goals through ESD efforts; and
- provide countries with new opportunities to incorporate ESD into education reform efforts, among others.

Today's education is crucial to the ability of present and future leaders and citizens to create solutions and find new paths to a better future. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is not a particular programme or project, but is rather an umbrella for many forms of education that already exist, and new ones that remain to be created. ESD promotes efforts to rethink educational programmes and systems (both methods and contents) that currently support unsustainable societies. ESD affects all components of education: legislation, policy, finance, curriculum, instruction, learning, assessment and so on. ESD calls for lifelong learning and recognizes the fact that the educational needs of people change over their lifetime. Many individuals and organizations around the world already implement ESD (e.g. a teacher weaving sustainability themes into primary education using participatory methods; a community development worker raising people's awareness on rights which are denied them; or a public health worker training people to draw water from clean sources). There are many programmes using an ESD approach to learning which is critical for achieving sustainability

(<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/edu-for-sustainable-devpt>)

Education for Sustainable Development allows every human being to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to shape a sustainable future. Education for Sustainable Development means including key sustainable development issues into teaching and learning; for example, climate change, disaster/risk reduction, biodiversity, poverty reduction, and sustainable consumption. It also requires participatory teaching and learning methods that

motivate and empower learners to change their behaviour and take action for sustainable development. It similarly entails newer methods of education administration to help improve the system. Education for Sustainable Development consequently promotes competencies like critical thinking, imagining future scenarios and making decisions in a collaborative way. Education for Sustainable Development requires far-reaching changes in the way education is practiced today. UNESCO is the lead agency for the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNESCO, 2012).

### **Imperative for Rethinking Classroom Instruction for Speedy Realization of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Bayelsa State**

To rethink classroom instruction in the light of this paper is to emphasize the development and assessment of the affective qualities of pupils/ students in the educational system. What this means is that the teachers in the school system must teach and assess the affective characteristics of the pupils/ students. All types of assessment and grading of pupils/ students performance must take cognizance of the affective attributes as well. These attributes as earlier observed are the foundation for character and moral values. They are the qualities that sustain societies, and so, very crucial for the realization of the SDGs as well. Accordingly, it is interesting to note that all the seventeen goals as outlined in the implementation document of the United Nations can only be readily achieved through education. Furthermore, it has been observed that the type of education required to achieve this, is not only knowledge based but a comprehensive education with particular interest in the affective component of learning. For instance, education holds the key to poverty reduction; zero hunger; provision of good health and well being; gender equality and so on. Education planners must therefore take this into consideration for speedy realization of the SDGs in Bayelsa State.

The education target of the sustainable development agenda of promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all can only be achieved through the development of students' affective skills which have the advantage of inculcating in students the life skills they need such as faith, justice, truth, gratitude, tolerance, co-operation, patience and so on. These qualities according to Popham (2011) are important for people to acquire because they influence future desirable behaviour.

Stiggins (2005) stated that motivation and desire represent the very foundation for learning. Thus, in his opinion, if students do not want to learn, there will be

no learning. However, desire and motivation are not academic achievement characteristics, they are affective traits. Consequently, for the SDGs to be successfully implemented, the operators of the system must have sufficient motivation and desire to achieve. The same is true for virtues like honesty, responsibility, accountability, sincerity of service on the part of project operators. Without these virtues, the SDGs cannot be readily achieved. Educating the populace and other stakeholders of the SDGs agenda on moral rectitude is therefore a necessary requirement for success.

The values of honesty, good conduct, integrity, dedication to duty which are all affective characteristics cannot be over emphasized in Bayelsa State work environment where corruption has eaten deeply over the years. Suffice to state here that if the values of hard work, honesty and other measures of good conduct are inculcated in students while in school, the problem of corruption, resulting to over bloated wage bills would have been minimal in the system. Thus, education that emphasizes the development of affective traits would play a vital role in the realization and sustenance of the SDGs in Bayelsa State.

Buseri and Agih (2016) have observed that the sixteenth SDG of peace, justice and strong institutions is primarily hinged on affective characteristics of the citizenry. Therefore, effective development of character, strong values and virtues through education that pays emphasis of the affective domains of students is a necessary requirement for the realization of the SDGs in Bayelsa state.

The same is true for the seventeenth SDG of partnership for goals. The emphasis here is on co-operation, team work, understanding, tolerance, etc which are all affective traits that the Nigerian society desperately needs to succeed. Unfortunately, these virtues are inappropriately handled in the school system. Thus it is through proper classroom instruction that pays credence to exemplary virtues that can guarantee the realization of the SDGs in Bayelsa state.

## CONCLUSION

Mahatma Gandhi in 1925 as quoted by Kimbro (1998) enumerated seven deadly sins in the world. These are: *wealth without work; pleasure without conscience; science without humanity; knowledge without character; politics without principle; commerce without morality; and worship without sacrifice*. It is evident that all the issues raised by Gandhi border on human character and a critical observation reveals that the current plagues of the world are mostly associated with the seven issues raised by Gandhi. Therefore, for speedy

realization of the SDGs in Bayelsa state and indeed, Nigeria in general will require the operators of the system to have excellent moral character. What this means is that the teachers in the schools have to inculcate worthy societal values into the pupils/ students through sufficient development and assessment of their affective attributes as discussed in this paper. When this is done, the success rate for the SDGs to be achieved over the next fifteen years will be realistic. Buseri and Agih (2016) have already recommended that to sustain this, it is imperative for policy makers and especially those in the education system to develop curriculum to address this salient aspects in teaching and learning. Accordingly, moral education should be introduced as a core subject in the educational system. In the tertiary institutions of learning, moral and ethical education should be taught at all levels under General Studies (GS) Courses. Consequently, university lecturers also need to acquire relevant pedagogy to be able to inculcate worthwhile knowledge, character and skills to students. Thus, university lecturers who do not have teaching qualification will need to undergo a postgraduate diploma in education programme to acquire teaching skills and be duly certified by the Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) to develop capacity for effective teaching. Similarly, seminars and conferences can be organized for the operators of the system at different levels to inculcate the exemplary virtues of honesty, integrity, discipline, etc since these values are significant for the speedy realization of SDGs in Bayelsa state and Nigeria in general.

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