

## Sustainability and Learners Knowledge, Skills and Poverty Reduction

<sup>1</sup>Adebola Ade., ADEBAYO, <sup>2</sup>Soyebi G. A., <sup>3</sup>Dasaolu A. O., <sup>4</sup>Adegboyega ADEBAYO, <sup>5</sup>C. A.

Sanusi, <sup>6</sup>Maradesa W. O., <sup>7</sup>Oladire I. S., <sup>8</sup>Ojo O

Corresponding author: [adebayoaa@tasued.edu.ng](mailto:adebayoaa@tasued.edu.ng)

<sup>1</sup> Department of Business Education Tai Solarin Federal University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State of Nigeria

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### Abstract

*The study examined sustainability in education preparing learners for a changing world. Five research questions and five hypotheses were answered and tested. A descriptive research design of correlational type was used. The population of this study comprised 476 public secondary school teachers in Ijebu-Ode local government area. A total of 200 public secondary school teachers were selected as sample size using stratified sampling technique. A self-researcher-designed instrument tagged: Sustainability in Education and Preparing Learners Changing World Questionnaire (SEPLCWQ) was used for data collection with reliability coefficient 0.86. Inferential statistic of regression analysis used for answering research questions. The findings of the study revealed that sustainability in education can equip learners with knowledge and values needed for a changing world ( $\beta = .126, t = 2.287, p < .05$ ). Sustainability in education promote learners' awareness needed for changing world ( $\beta = .270, t = 4.823, p < .05$ ). Sustainability in education promote learners to develop teaching sustainable life skills ( $\beta = .511, t = 18.841, p < .05$ ). Sustainability in education promote learners' social inclusivity ( $\beta = .804, t = 42.853, p < .05$ ). This implied that sustainability in education can promote learners' social inclusivity. This further implied that about 80.4% increases in learners' social inclusivity could be attributed towards sustainability in education. Sustainability in education could aid learners' poverty reduction ( $\beta = .588, t = 23.079, p < .05$ ). Government and other stakeholders in education should increase effort towards sustainability in education which can equip learners with knowledge and values needed for a changing world.*

**Keywords:** Sustainability, Education, Learners, Changing World

## Introduction

Education is the activity of preserving, developing and transmitting the culture of people from one generation to another. It enables the people to develop the knowledge, values and skills to participate in decision making about them, individually, collectively and globally (Rajaj & Chiv, 2019). Student sustainability refers to the knowledge, skills, and actions students adopt to promote environmental protection, social equity, and economic stability. It involves [Education for Sustainable Development \(ESD\)](#). Its empowering students to think critically about climate change, biodiversity, and responsible consumption to shape a sustainable future and learner knowledge. Learner knowledge in sustainability refers to the cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioral understanding that empowers individuals to contribute to a sustainable future, balancing environmental, social, and economic needs. It goes beyond traditional, siloed environmental education, focusing on systems thinking, critical reflection, and action-oriented competencies for poverty reduction (Asodike, 2018).

However, poverty reduction among learner or students is a critical, multi-dimensional approach designed to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty by providing equitable access to quality education, essential resources, and skill-building opportunities. It focuses on enhancing the human capital of children and youth, empowering them to secure better employment and improve their economic circumstances, with research showing that each additional year of schooling can increase earnings by 10% (Muoghalu, 2022). However, the association between student sustainability and poverty reduction is a multi-dimensional relationship where education, innovation, and active participation by students in sustainability initiatives act as catalysts for economic empowerment and improved living standards. This link is built on the premise that promoting sustainable practices (environmental, social, and economic) directly addresses the root causes of poverty

This vision of development embraces environmental concern as well as issues such as the fight against poverty, human right, gender equality, cultural diversity and education for all. To this end, education is a means through which sustainable development can be achieved. Education is seen as a right just like a right to have food or freedom of speech. It is seen as a passport to human development. It opens doors and expands opportunities and freedom. It contributes to fostering peace, democracy and economic growth of the citizenry (Muoghalu, 2022). UNESCO was mandated to lead the movement

and to coordinate the international efforts to achieve this goal. Since the mandate, There had been several conferences held in several countries to deliberate on strategies to achieve this goal (Ekwueme, Ekon & Ezenwa-Nebife, 2022).

Okorosaye-Orobite (2023) defined education as a process, as a product, and as a discipline; as a process, it is the activity of preserving, developing, and transmitting the culture of a people from one generation to another, 'as a product it refers to change, whether over or covert, implicit or explicit, which education is expected to bring about'. Asodike (2018) stresses that the product of education is the educated man, who in the African context is one who shows evidence of a well-integrated personality. The role of education towards the development of nations of the world can never be over emphasized. Education is a systematic process which is aimed at changing the behavior of an individual, group or country through formal and informal methods. It deals with the mental, physical, psychological and social development of the citizens in a given society (Rajaj & Chiv, 2019).

The goal of education is manpower development, aimed at national growth and development. Education is the fundamental cultural process that prepares an individual to live and work, function and survive in a given society. Okorosaye-Orobite (2023) conceptualizes education as an instrument for inducing social change. Also, Muoghalu (2022) opined that education is a tool for empowerment, emancipation and national development; that education constitutes one of the critical foundations for any meaningful socioeconomic transformation of any country. Hence, education presupposes a comprehensive national system and a functional national structure which is useful in changing behavior. Education at all levels and in all its forms constitutes a vital tool for addressing virtually all global problems. Education is not only an end in itself. It is a key instrument for bringing about changes in knowledge, values and behaviours and life styles required to achieve sustainability and stability within and among countries (Rajaj & Chiv, 2019). Education has been seen as the greatest force that can be used to bring about changes. The greatest investment a nation can make for the development of its economic, sociological and human resources is that of education. Education according to provides us with people possessing the necessary knowledge and skills to win a nation 's state and to even export brains. Education shall continue to be highly rated in the national development plans because education is the most important

instrument for change: any fundamental change in the intellectual and social outlook of any society has to be preceded by an education revolution.

However, to further aid education revolution, most challenging developments in Nigeria in recent times are the issues of poverty, human right, gender inequality, cultural diversity and education for all. These issues have eaten deep into the society that policy makers and stake-holders in education are worried and are in search for possible solutions. Past researches are of the opinion that education for sustainability could assist in solving these ethical menaces. Education for sustainability allows every human being to acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to shape a sustainable future to make judgments and choices in favor of sustainable lifestyle (Ekwueme et al., 2022). Education has been heralded as a critical pillar in the quest for sustainability since it enables people to develop values, skills, and knowledge required for participating in decision-making at a personal, collective, and global level (Akinsemolu & Arijeniwa, 2021).

Sustainability in education embraces environmental concerns and issues such as human rights, gender equality, holistic education, the fight against poverty, and cultural diversity. Sustainability in education enables all persons to acquire the values, knowledge, attitudes, and skills required to shape a sustainable future. More often, the most acceptable definition of sustainable development or sustainability is that it is a development that caters to the current generation's needs without jeopardizing the capacity of future generations to meet their needs. Sustainability has further been emphasized as a form of development that spurs critical thinking and decision-making collaboratively. Also, education for sustainability can create opportunities for students to learn and look at how their resources impact the planet. Since it entails learning about the environment, interacting with it to make decisions, and deter harmful environmental activities, sustainability education strengthens and fosters the ability of individuals to make choices and decisions that favour a sustainable lifestyle (Akinsemolu & Arijeniwa, 2021).

Sustainability in education is a strategy that aims to ensure that all learners have relevant knowledge, values, skills, and dispositions for motivating and empowering them to be informed citizens. Contrary to the traditional way of teaching, sustainability education implies embracing a more holistic methodology to education to create a better world for the current and future generations (Nwuche &

Enyia, 2022). In Nigeria today, sustainability has been embedded into the school curriculum to foster awareness on poverty reduction, biodiversity, climate change, sustainable consumption, and disaster risk reduction. To foster this awareness in learning environments, it needs learner-centred, participatory, and activity-based teaching methods to empower and motivate learners to reorient their behaviours and attitudes while taking action for sustainability.

Knowledge acquired can help students relate what is learnt in the classroom with their real-life activities, thus placing them in a better position to change behaviours and embrace sustainable lifestyles. Whereas numerous countries globally have embraced education to attain sustainability, the lack of awareness and vision has deterred progress in Nigeria (Akinsemolu & Arijeniwa, 2021). This can be partly linked to the lack of appropriate supervision, planning, and poor implementation of well-designed policies (Nwuche & Enyia, 2022). Tackling these crucial challenges can enable the Nigerian government to minimize or deter delays or derailment of sustainability.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Sustainable development or sustainability has not been given a specific meaning, but the common viewpoint is that it is a development of the present without hampering future needs. The present standards of education in Nigeria whereby young people are not well educated are concerns for the future of the nation. It is equally worrisome that teachers in Nigeria are not performing to expectation. The human resources required to develop the nation are the product of education where such are compromised as the case of Nigeria, it is apparent that the future is at stake. Unlike many countries like Finland, where the teacher commands respect from society. Funding for education in Nigeria is inadequate. The UNESCO 'stipulates years' back that 26% of the total annual budget should be for education (Nwuche & Enyia, 2022). This has not been implemented in Nigeria, which explains reason there is always a dearth of learning materials in schools, inadequate infrastructure and research-oriented learning in the tertiary institutions. The school buildings in most schools are dilapidated with old furniture resulting in students learning under the tree and on the bare floor in some part of the country because of lack of funds. Hence This study is an attempt to examine sustainability in education preparing learners for a changing world.

## Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study was to examine sustainability in education preparing learners for a changing world. The specific objectives are as follows:

1. Identify extent to which sustainability in education can equip learners with knowledge and values needed for a changing world;
2. Determine the extent to which sustainability in education can promote learners' awareness needed for changing world;
3. Find out how sustainability in education can help learners to develop teaching sustainable life skills;
4. Ascertain how sustainability in education promotes learners social inclusivity;
5. Examine the extent to which sustainability in education could aid learners' poverty reduction.

## Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. To what extent sustainability in education can equip learners with knowledge and values needed for a changing world?
2. Can sustainability in education promote learners' awareness needed for changing world?
3. How does sustainability in education promote learners to develop teaching sustainable life skills?
4. To what extent does sustainability in education promote learners social inclusivity?
5. What is the extent to which sustainability in education could aid learners' poverty reduction?

## Methodology

A descriptive research design of correlational type was used for the study. The design was appropriate because it enabled the researcher to establish the existing relationship between the independent variables and dependent variable. The population of this study comprised 476 public secondary school teachers in Ijebu-Ode local government area of Ogun State Nigeria. A total of 200 public secondary school teachers in the selected local government form the sample size. However, purposive sampling

technique was adopted in selecting the sample size. Further, stratified sampling technique also be adopted in ensuring both the gender are represented in the sample size. A self-researcher-designed instrument tagged: Sustainability in Education and Preparing Learners Changing World Questionnaire (SEPLCWQ). SEPLCWQ was used for the collection of data from teachers regarding extent to which sustainability in education equip learners with knowledge and values needed for a changing world; extent to which sustainability in education promote learners' awareness needed for changing world; how sustainability in education help learners to develop teaching sustainable life skills; how sustainability in education promote learners social inclusivity and the extent to which sustainability in education could aid learners' poverty reduction. The questionnaire requested responses on a four (4) – point scale format which is a modification of 5-point Likert scale. The responses rating scales are as follows: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD).

To ensure the face and content validity of the instrument (SEPLCWQ), copies of the instrument were given to an expert in the Department of Business EDUCATION, Tai Solarin University of Education (TASUED). Reliability test of the instrument (SEPLCWQ) was done using a test-retest method. In this case, copies of the instrument (SEPLCWQ) were administered twice on 20 teachers in Ijebu-North local government area that are not part of the sample size within a week interval. The collected data from the dual administration of the instruments were compared using Pearson moment reliability statistic. Their respective reliability estimate was reported as 0.86 to ascertain whether the questionnaire is reliable or not.

Primary method of data collection was adopted in this study. Primary method includes the usage of questionnaire to collect data from the respondents. However, the researchers make used of trained research assistants in distributing the questionnaire to the respondents. Regression analysis used for answering research questions.

## Results

**Research Question 1:** To what extent sustainability in education can equip learners with knowledge and values needed for a changing world?

**Table 1: Extent sustainability in education can equip learners with knowledge and values needed for a changing world**

Model	Unstandardized		Standardized	t	Sig.	
	Coefficients		Coefficients			
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	5.715	4.630		11.170	.000
	Sustainability in education	.085	.037	.126	2.287	.023

a. Dependent Variable: Knowledge and values needed

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 1 showed that the independent variable was found to be significant and strongly determine dependent variable with the p-value less than 0.05 and magnitude of sustainability in education ( $\beta = .126$ ,  $t = 2.287$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This therefore implied sustainability in education can equip learners with knowledge and values needed for a changing world. Meaning that about 12.6% increases in knowledge and values needed for a changing world could be attributed towards sustainability in education.

**Research Question 2:** Can sustainability in education promote learners' awareness needed for changing world?

**Table 2: Sustainability in education promote learners' awareness needed for changing world**

Model	Unstandardized		Standardized	t	Sig.	
	Coefficients		Coefficients			
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	6.703	2.098		27.030	.000
	Sustainability in education	.228	.047	.270	4.823	.004

a. Dependent Variable: Learners' awareness

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 2 showed that the independent variable was found to be significant and strongly determine dependent variable with the p-value less than 0.05 and magnitude of sustainability in education ( $\beta = .270, t = 4.823, p < .05$ ). This implied that sustainability in education can promote learners' awareness needed for changing world. Meaning that about 27% increases in learners' awareness needed for changing world could be attributed towards sustainability in education.

**Research Question 3:** How does sustainability in education promote learners to develop teaching sustainable life skills?

**Table 3: Extent sustainability in education promote learners to develop teaching sustainable life skills**

Model		Unstandardized		Standardized		
		Coefficients		Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	40.710	1.583		25.710	.000
	Sustainability in education	.739	.039	.511	18.841	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Learners to develop teaching sustainable life skills

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 3 indicated that the independent variable was found to be significant and strongly determine dependent variable with the p-value less than 0.05 and magnitude of sustainability in education ( $\beta = .511, t = 18.841, p < .05$ ). This implied that sustainability in education can promote learners to develop teaching sustainable life skills. This further implied that about 51.1% increases in learners to develop teaching sustainable life skills world could be attributed towards sustainability in education.

**Research Question 4:** To what extent does sustainability in education promote learners social inclusivity?

**Table 4: Extent sustainability in education promote learners’ social inclusivity**

Model		Unstandardized		Standardized		
		Coefficients		Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	36.43	.802		45.412	.000
	Sustainability in education	1.108	.026	.804	42.853	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Learners social inclusivity

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 4 revealed that the independent variable was found to be significant and strongly determine dependent variable with the p-value less than 0.05 and magnitude of sustainability in education ( $\beta = .804$ ,  $t = 42.853$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This implied that sustainability in education can promote learners’ social inclusivity. This further implied that about 80.4% increases in learners’ social inclusivity could be attributed towards sustainability in education.

**Research Question 5:** What is the extent to which sustainability in education could aid learners’ poverty reduction?

**Table 5: Extent to which sustainability in education could aid learners’ poverty reduction**

Model		Unstandardized		Standardized		
		Coefficients		Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	41.500	1.262		32.880	.000
	Sustainability in education	1.216	.053	.588	23.079	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Learners’ poverty reduction

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 5 depicted that the independent variable was found to be significant and strongly determine dependent variable with the p-value less than 0.05 and magnitude of sustainability in education ( $\beta = .588$ ,  $t = 23.079$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This implied that sustainability in education can promote learners’ poverty

reduction. This further implied that about 58.8% increases in learners' poverty reduction could be attributed towards sustainability in education.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings of the study revealed that sustainability in education can equip learners with knowledge and values needed for a changing world. Meaning that about 12.6% increases in knowledge and values needed for a changing world could be attributed towards sustainability in education. These findings correlate with Akinsemolu and Arijeniwa (2021) found that there is this recognition, implementing and delivering EE programs remains significantly affected by various practical implementation challenges. Despite various studies documenting the value of EE for the achievement of the SDGs, challenges related to governance and laws limiting the roll-out of these programs in Nigeria continue to pose implementation challenges.

It was also showed that sustainability in education can promote learners' awareness needed for changing world. Meaning that about 27% increases in learners' awareness needed for changing world could be attributed towards sustainability in education. These findings were in consonant with Salaco (2017) revealed that education impacted on sustainable economic development by fostering knowledge which is useful for productive skills from which various degrees of competencies are derived in application that foster development. Education also improves literacy; produces skilled manpower at all levels and contributes to economic growth. Sustainable economic development is besetted by some challenges which includes poverty, income inequality, loss of biodiversity, changing demographic profiles, increased population growth and others.

The findings of the study depicted that sustainability in education can promote learners to develop teaching sustainable life skills. This further implied that about 51.1% increases in learners to develop teaching sustainable life skills world could be attributed towards sustainability in education. These findings were in agreement with Ezenwa, Theophilus and Jude (2022) found that efficient and effective educational management structure is fundamental to education innovations for sustainable development in Africa. In addition, it is very important that educational institutions at all levels are properly funded to further sustainable development in Africa.

Furthermore, sustainability in education can promote learners' social inclusivity. This further implied that about 80.4% increases in learners' social inclusivity could be attributed towards sustainability in education. These findings were in agreement with Adewuyi (2020) results were 'the therapeutic approach of redesigning curriculum in content and form of vocationalism, yielded strengths from the synergy of the monitored and controlled programme and feasible implementation culture by concerned stakeholders. It also generated a reasonable style of independent life in knowledge and skill acquisition required for best professional practice and right attitude to community project participation.

Sustainability in education can promote learners' poverty reduction. This further implied that about 58.8% increases in learners' poverty reduction could be attributed towards sustainability in education. These findings were in correlation with Tete and Matthew (2022) identified some of the problems facing education in Nigeria, amongst which are lack of dependable infrastructural facilities, inadequate budgetary allocation, high cost of education, poor planning, none utilization of educational research conducted etcetera. The paper made some proposals that need priority attention which are capable of curbing the problem facing education in Nigeria.

## **Conclusion**

Having examined sustainability in education preparing learners for a changing world, the following conclusions were drawn based on the findings of the study that sustainability in education add learners with knowledge and values needed for a changing world, promote learners' awareness needed for changing world, promote learners to develop teaching sustainable life skills, promote learners' social inclusivity, and learners' poverty reduction.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are provided:

1. Ensure education focuses on solving real problems to enhance sustainability in education equip learners with knowledge and values needed for a changing world.
2. Emphasize environmental responsibility in education to prepare students and promote learners' awareness needed for changing world.

3. Add entrepreneurship training to the curriculum to help students apply their knowledge in business and innovation.
4. Sustainable education should be integrated properly into the general education system with the hope of aiding sustainability in education which equip learners with knowledge and values needed.

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