# ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 4 IN NIGERIA: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

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**ABSTRACT:** *Education has been widely recognized not only as a fundamental human right but also as a catalyst for sustainable development and a vehicle for confronting the challenges facing societies in terms of socio-economic, environmental and ecological realities, considerable attention is shifting towards it. As a corollary, Sustainable Development Goal 4 have equally been identified as constituting a force contributing to social and economic development. As a member of the United Nations, Nigeria is committed to achieving not only the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 but also the Global Goals, especially SDG 4 on equitable quality education. This paper examines the UNESCO Sustainable Development Goals 4 and it's conceptual dimensions. The paper also outlines current trends in the context of the Nigerian education system and suggests policy, strategy and institutional considerations for the purpose of achieving SDG 4 in Nigeria. A number of suggestions were made towards the achievement of sustainable development goal 4, such as integrating education and training at all levels.*

**KEY WORDS:** sustainable, development, goals four,

## INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development is mostly regarded as the development of that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own development needs. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO 2016) concisely expressed that, sustainable development is an organizing principle for global development that supports the welfare of both people and planet. The theory of sustainable development itself has been disputed and variously affirmed with emphasis on different imperatives. It is absolutely a critical developmental paradigm for the global community given the various social, environmental and economic challenges facing the world today. There are quite a lot of sustainable development goals in practice in Nigeria, eg sustainable development goal 1,

goal 2, goal 3 even up to goal 17. However this study is basically anchored on sustainable development goal 4 which is focused on quality equitable and all-inclusive education.

Sustainable Development Goal Four (SDG4) is geared towards all-inclusive and equitable quality education and promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all. The emphasis under this goal has worldwide coverage of quality education from pre-school through at least secondary education, and then on to more advanced, skills training (Sachs, 2015). The ambition of the goal is to build a nation that will facilitate a realization of the full potential of each child in order that he/she can contribute to building a just, tolerant and egalitarian society. The vision of an inclusive quality education reflect on the idea of education for all, principally for those groups who are seen to be vulnerable. Particular emphasis is on equal access to all and lifelong education. It then means that those who lead education in several countries must give attention to all forms of education, both formal and non-formal.

In the Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action, approved in May 2015 at the World Education Forum in Incheon, Republic of Korea, made the following statement: The renewed education agenda captured in Goal 4 is comprehensive, holistic, ambitious, aspirational and universal, and inspired by a vision of education that transforms the lives of persons, communities and societies, leaving no one behind. The Declaration also outlines numerous critical processes to forestall impediment against the achievement of SDG 4, to include subjects of access, equity and inclusion with specific attention to gender equality, quality education and lifelong learning. The possibility of education in terms of promoting and assuring environmental, economic, and social sustainability has been widely acknowledged. There is a rising awareness that education can play a significant role in confronting the challenges of the 21st century (Madsen, 2013). Goodier (2017) reiterates that the major objective of education in societal and economic development is acknowledged in the right to primary education forming part of many international reports on human rights.

Education is also perceived as the first step of sustainable development and a very significant step in improving a generation of people to appreciate the importance of sustainability (Zenelaj, 2013). As reaffirmed at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, "full access to quality education at all facets is an indispensable condition for achieving sustainable development, poverty eradication, gender equality and women empowerment, as well as human growth, for the attainment of the internationally agreed development goals, including Goals 4, and for the full involvement of both women and men especially young people (United Nations, 2012). Buttressing the importance of education, Okebukola (2013) sequences the contributory role for educational sustainability for strengthening the economy of a nation as including: developing skills and knowledge for growing the economy and spawning new industries; promoting creativity; stimulating research for innovative discoveries; alleviating poverty; enhancing gender equality; and improving health.

Education, predominantly the all-inclusive and quality education is the focus of SDG 4, and is critical to all of the other SDGs and sustainable development in general (Buckler & Creech, 2014). SDG 4 is therefore a wise decision because education is the bedrock of any society that is willing

to open up employment opportunities for all which help in bringing out individual from the shackle of unemployment and poverty; reduces societal inequalities and provide the knowledge and skills needed to live supportive lifestyles. McKeown (2002) posits that an educated citizenry is spirited to employing informed and sustainable development. This essence implies that, a national sustainability plans can be put in place to ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes. Hence, the introduction of all-inclusive education can expedite changes in values, world views and behaviour at the level of the individual, the community and society at large (UNESCO, 2016).

Furthermore, for sustainability in education lifelong learning as noted in SDG4 in indispensable, this is because it facilitate reflective or critical learning, knowledge and skills acquisition and greater agency to address complex sustainability issues, for example, how to create a sustainable school or a carbon-neutral city' (UNESCO, 2016). Lifelong learning (LLL) as a component of SDG4 is a continuous learning which translates the acquisition and development of knowledge to a process that is essentially an integral part of living. Lifelong learning conceptualizes learning as the life wide, voluntary and self-motivated quest to knowledge for not only personal but professional reasons as well.  It recognizes that learning is not confined to childhood or the classroom, but takes place throughout life and in a diversity of circumstances (Ates & Alsal, 2012), the ultimate goal being to enable learners to obtain more of the new skills required by the knowledge economy as well as more traditional academic skills (Soni, 2012). In Soni (2012) four characteristics which transform education and training into Lifelong Learning were identified. They includes: the integration of both formal and non-formal/informal learning; self-motivated learning; self-funded learning; and a commitment to universal participation in education and training. Therefore, Lifelong learning indicates an inclusive education and learning model that embraces all children, youth and adults, both as learners and as educators (Torres, 2003).

**Objectives of Sustainable Development Goal Four (SDG4)**
The International Education Framework and the 2030 Agenda, as cited by (Global Campaign for Education, 2019) SDG4 is the education goal objectively based on guaranteeing all-inclusive and equitable education that promote lifelong opportunities for all. SDG4 is embodied with 10 definite targets/objectives which includes;

1.  By 2030, to ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes. The provision of 12 years of free, publicly-funded, inclusive, equitable, quality primary and secondary education of which at least nine years are compulsory, leading to relevant learning outcomes should be ensured for all, without discrimination.

2. By 2030, to ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education. The provision of at least one year of free and compulsory quality pre-primary education is encouraged, to be delivered by well-trained educators, as well as that of early childhood development and care.
3. By 2030, to ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university. It is imperative to reduce barriers to skills

development and technical and vocational education and training (TVET), starting from the secondary level, as well as to tertiary education, including university, and to provide lifelong learning opportunities for youth and adults. The provision of tertiary education should be made progressively free, in line with existing international agreements.

4 By 2030, to substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship. Equitable access to TVET needs to be expanded while quality is ensured. Learning opportunities should be increased and diversified, using a wide range of education and training modalities, so that all youth and adults, especially girls and women, can acquire relevant knowledge, skills and competencies for decent work and life. Beyond work-specific skills, emphasis must be placed on developing high-level cognitive and non-cognitive/transferable skills, such as problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, teamwork, communication skills and conflict resolution, which can be used across a range of occupational fields.

5. By 2030, to eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations. Emphasizing on inclusion and equity, all people, irrespective of sex, age, race, colour, ethnicity, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property or birth, as well as persons with disabilities, migrants, indigenous peoples, and children and youth, especially those in vulnerable situations or other status, should have access to inclusive, equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities. Vulnerable groups that require particular attention and targeted strategies include persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities and the poor.

All girls and boys, women and men, should have equal opportunity to enjoy education of high quality, achieve at equal levels and enjoy equal benefits from education. Adolescent girls and young women, who may be subject to gender-based violence, child marriage, early pregnancy and a heavy load of household chores, as well as those living in poor and remote rural areas, require special attention. In contexts in which boys are disadvantaged, targeted action should be taken for them. Policies aimed at overcoming gender inequality are more effective when they are part of an overall package that also promotes health, justice, good governance and freedom from child labour.

6. By 2030, to ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy. The principles, strategies and actions for this target are underpinned by the contemporary understanding of literacy as a continuum of proficiency levels in a given context. It goes beyond the understanding of a simple dichotomy of 'literate' versus 'illiterate'. Therefore, action for this target aims at ensuring that by 2030, all young people and adults across the world should have achieved relevant and recognized proficiency levels in functional literacy and numeracy skills that are equivalent to levels achieved at successful completion of basic education.

7. By 2030, to ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and nonviolence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development. It is vital to give a central place to strengthening education's contribution to the fulfilment of human rights, peace and responsible citizenship from local to global levels, gender equality, sustainable development and health. The content of such education must be relevant, with a focus on both cognitive and non-cognitive aspects of learning. The knowledge, skills, values and attitudes required by citizens to lead productive lives, make informed decisions and assume active roles locally and globally in facing and resolving global challenges can be acquired through SDG4.

8. By 2020 to build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all. This target addresses the need for adequate physical infrastructure and safe, inclusive environments that nurture learning for all, regardless of background or disability status.

9. By 2020, to substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries. Scholarship programmes can play a vital role in providing opportunities for young people and adults who would otherwise not be able to afford to continue their education. Where developed countries offer scholarships to students from developing countries, these should be structured to build the capability of the developing country. While the importance of scholarships is recognized, donor countries are encouraged to increase other forms of support to education. In line with the SDG 4 education by 2030 is focused on equity, inclusion and quality hence, scholarships should be transparently targeted at young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

10. By 2030, to substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and Small Island developing States. Teachers are the key to achieving all of the SDG 4 targets. It requires urgent attention, with a more immediate deadline, because the equity gap in education is exacerbated by the shortage and uneven distribution of professionally trained teachers, especially in disadvantaged areas. As teachers are a fundamental condition for guaranteeing quality education, teachers and educators should be empowered, adequately recruited and remunerated, motivated, professionally qualified, and supported within well-resourced, efficient and effectively governed systems.

From the forgoing, one can attest that these objectives will go a long way in bringing sustainable development in education of Nigeria. However, these will be far-fetched if adequate modalities or measures are not put in place.

**Measures for the Achievement of SDG4 in Nigeria.**

Recognizing the importance of the objectives of SDG4, it is therefore paramount to state that these objectives can be achieved and sustained if stake-holders (educational authorities, institutions, teachers, community members, government at all levels) consider the following measures:

**Re-organization of Curriculum and Instructional Methods**: The provision of curriculum and instructional methods has to be in accordance to the needs and requirements of the students. The teachers have to ensure that students are able to adequately understand the lesson plans. The reorganization of the curriculum and instructional methods enables all-inclusive, quality equitable education that will ensure students acquisition of relevant academic concepts, so that they are able to promote academic excellence. It does not only lead to alleviation of educational sustainability, but teachers are able to earn appreciation from the students and acquire job satisfaction. The students take pleasure in learning from the teachers, since they possess adequate knowledge and skill to transfer same.

**Sociable and Agreeable Atmosphere**: Within the home and in school, the atmosphere should be sociable and agreeable. Equal educational opportunities need to be provided to both boys and girls. In rural and backward areas, individuals usually are of the view that girls are meant to perform the household chores and education is not meant for them. Hence most people take interest in sending their male children to schools, thereby discouraging the girls from obtaining education. In order to reduce educational inequality to realize SDG4 objectives, it is important that sociable and agreeable atmosphere should be created within homes and schools. Both girls and boys should be encouraged towards acquisition of education.

**Health**: To make effective use of education, it is vital to maintain good health. When an individual is healthy and well, he would be able to develop rational thinking and make use of his education to not only sustain the living conditions of his family, but also to bring about well-being of the community. The poverty stricken families are unable to take care of the nutritional requirements of their children. In schools, there should be provision of mid-day meal scheme, where nutritious meals are provided to the students. When students are provided with nutritious meals, they do feel motivated towards learning. It is necessary that meals should be prepared in a clean and hygienic environment, proper ingredients should be used and the system should be properly organized as physical development is necessary for the mental development of the students.

**Proper Teaching Methods**: The teaching methods that have been prevalent in the present secomstance, seem to be counter productive. For instance, there have been cases of class five students, unable to read class three textbooks. This shows that proper teaching methods have not been implemented by the teachers. It is vital for the teachers to make use of proper teaching methods, so that students are able to acquire understanding of the academic concepts and subject areas in an appropriate manner. They should be encouraged and motivated, to generate keen interest and enthusiasm towards learning. The teachers should be qualified and experienced. As qualified and experienced teachers would possess adequate knowledge regarding utilization of proper teaching methods for SDG4.

**Professional Competence:** The teachers and the staff members, who are part of the educational institutions, should be professional in their conduct. Students may drop out of school due to harsh treatment obtained or unapproachable attitude of the teachers. Even when the teachers are dissatisfied with the performance of the students, they should provide explanation in a polite manner, so that they obtain desirable results in future. Improvements in the professional competence of the teachers are made by providing training facilities, both pre-service and in-service. Within the course of one's job, the teachers have to undergo training programs to acquire knowledge of modern and innovative strategies and methods. They are required to be skilled and knowledgeable in training the students, regarding how to make use of their knowledge and skills in order to live enhanced lives and to bring about well-being of the community.

**Appropriate Evaluation Procedures**: For SDG4 to be achieved, when examinations are conducted, it is appropriate to set up a passing percentage. The teachers employed, work hard towards completion of the course curriculum. Before exams, it is up to the students to adequately prepare themselves in order to obtain good grades. The evaluation procedures that should be put into practice should be fair and motivating to the students. The main purpose is to assess the performance of the students and identify any kinds of flaws and inconsistencies. Grading should entirely be based upon the performance of the students. Various evaluation procedures that are usually put into practice include, class assignments, home-work assignments, tests, exams, participation in competitions, workshops and so forth.

**Provision of Scholarships and Financial Assistance**: As it has been stated that marginalized, deprived and economically weak sections of the society are unable to meet the educational needs and requirements of their children. Financial problems have been a matter of concern to rural people. On the other hand, provision of scholarships and any kind of assistance if made available would to these students would enable them to attain education. At present, some states are providing mid-day meals, books, stationary, bags, uniform to the students in schools. Financial assistance could also be obtained in the form of grants and scholarships. Financial assistance in the form of grants, scholarships or fellowships would help in enhancing the achievement of SDG 4 in Nigeria.

**Effective Communication**:  Within educational institutions at all levels, education and learning can take place in an optimal manner, when the individuals are involved into effective communication with each other. There should be mutual understanding and they should learn how to work in collaboration with each other. Effective communication not only leads to enhancement of learning, but also proper performance of job duties and functioning of the educational institutions. The teachers should be kind and approachable towards the students. It is vital for the teachers to ensure that they do not feel vulnerable or apprehensive within the school environment. The students should feel that they can approach their teachers when experiencing any problems. Fellow students also need to maintain good communication terms with each other and be helpful and supportive.

**Elimination of Criminal and Violent Acts**: In educational institutions, students do drop out and leave education, before obtaining the degree, due to prevalence of criminal and violent acts. There have been cases of sexual harassment and mistreatment against especially girls at all levels of

education. When they experience such types of acts, they not only drop out of school, but also feel vulnerable in going out of their homes. Experiencing criminal and violent acts, such as verbal abuse, physical abuse rap. Hence, in order to have access to sustainable development goal four (SDG4), it is vital to eliminate various kinds of criminal and violent acts.

**Activities and Creative Actions**: It is essential for the individuals to get engaged into various kinds of activities and creative actions. These does not only motivate them towards learning, but also stimulates their mind-sets. For instance, in schools, extra-curricular activities are promoted, which include, singing, dancing, artworks, handicrafts, sports, games, physical activities etc. When an individual does not perform well in academic subjects, he may develop his skills and competence in other areas. For instance, students may develop interest in sports, music, dance etc. and adopt them as professions in their lives. Therefore, learning some other area in educational institutions and utilizing them to lead to progress and development may encourage the achievement of SDG4.

**Impediments to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal Four (SDG4)**
The objectives of sustainable development goal four (SDG4) could be defeated thus;

**Inability to Provide Universal Education:** The Child Right Declaration of (1959) includes the right to education and any country which is unable to make provision of educational opportunities for the entire children population is not acknowledging its duty and obligation. Children are the future citizens of the country and if they receive good and quality education, they would efficiently contribute towards the progress of the country. Education leads to development of human resources.

**Inability to Recruit Children into the System**: The demand for education is normally greater as compared to supply. Lack of resources, materials, infrastructure, civic amenities, proper teaching-learning processes, instructional strategies and other facilities are the factors that cause inability to recruit students into the education system. The existence of legal prescription of the age at which children should begin school, together decrease the incidence of the second source of wastage at the first and second level. Yet such form of wastage still needs to be considered, above the age of compulsory education. It is one of the most important factors in making provision of additional and higher education. Recruitment into the voluntary sectors of an educational system depends upon ensuring that the pupils and their families recognize the objectives and the framework of education as compatible with their own goals.

**Inability to Retain Students within the System**: The retaining capacity of the educational system in both its voluntary and its compulsory sectors depends upon external and internal factors. The social and economic conditions of the educational institutions are primarily responsible for retaining students. Good quality education, extra-curricular activities, kind and approachable teachers, proper infrastructure and facilities and amiable environmental conditions of the schools are the primary factors that contribute in retaining students. Absence of any of these factors may cause drop-out of students from schools, therefore causing educational wastage.

Nevertheless, in many states, the number of available school places at successive levels of education decreases, and it would be inappropriate to assume that all nations intend to retain children, primarily recruited into the system throughout the total range of provision. However, it is logical to recognize the primary objective as being to retain all students, recruited into the system until the objectives have been adequately satisfied.

**Inability to Set Appropriate Objectives**: In the present world, there are differences among nations in setting objectives for the entire education system and its components. In most cases, the strongest single influence in the determination of objectives arises from a traditional conception of what an educated person should be. The curriculum content and processes, which have promoted this view of the educated man, over many decades still continues to have a considerable influence upon the concept of what education would make one achieve.

A more controlling influence in modern education has been the concept of the nature of childhood itself. Child psychology focuses upon the notion of growth, development and education of children. With the development of economic planning and the recognition of the relationship between the output from education and the manpower needs of the economy, a third major influence has arisen in the determination of objectives of education. It is represented by a statement made at the 1970 conference, i.e. within the development plan, there is a relationship between investment and qualified labour in various parts of the industry. In the present existence. individuals experience the heart-breaking situation of unemployment, amongst those who have been accomplished for specific purposes and the reason is that the relationship between education and qualified labour was worked out without true relationships with industrial developments.

Inability to achieve a balance between the demands of education in leading to operative growth and progression of the individuals, the inculcation of values, morality and ethics among them, and the production of trained and skilled human resources needed by the economy, characterizes the incompetence of the educational system. Educational goals and objectives should be such that will enable the nation achieve the objectives of SDG4.

**Inability to Achieve Objectives**: One thing is tom set a goal, another thing is to achieve the goal. Achievement of goals require certain qualities. Every educational institution has certain goals and objectives. The goals of enhancement of the educamtional system, leading to operative growth and development of the students, making use of modermmmn and innovative strategies and methods and making provision of necessary facilities and equipment are some of the common goals. In order to achieve these goals, it is vital for the individuals to be skilled, aware, competent and knowledgeable. They need to possess the traits of diligence, conscientiousness and resourcefulness to meet the desired goals and objectives. The individuals are required to work in collaboration and share with each other, ideas and suggestions. It is vital for them to create an amiable atmosphere within the school environment and implement truthfulness, honesty and ethics. Absence of any of these factors would result to inability in the achievement of objectives.

At the primary level, teachers are required to depict efficiency is within the education system. There are numerous factors that are included within the education system, in which the teachers

and the staff members of the schools are required to be efficient. These includes, the teaching-learning methods, instructional strategies, time management, tests, class assignments, homework assignments, competitions, workshops and other areas that are needed to enrich learning among students. It is vital for the teachers to be experienced, skilled and qualified. These should possess efficient knowledge regarding how to put into practice, the strategies and approaches that are required to improve the standing of the educational institutions within the community. The individuals need to be aware of how to utilize the financial resources of the schools in an appropriate manner, especially when they have limited funds. In order to depict efficiency in the achievement of objectives, and to make the education system productive, it is imperative for the human resources to be competent and proficient in the performance of job duties.

**Determinants of the achievement of SDG4 in Nigeria**
SDG4 could be prejudiced by several determinants, such as schools based determinants, socio-cultural determinants and student's personal determinants can deter educational sustainability or SDG4 (Wanjiku, 2014).

**School Based Determinants**
School based determinant manifest in the following areas;

**Student Composition** - The student's characteristics not only influence student composition at the individual level, but also social level. The social composition of the students can influence student achievement, apart from the effect of student's characteristics at the individual level. The social composition of the schools predicts the school drop-out rates even after controlling for the individual effects of the background features of the students.

**School Resources** – The availability of resources and equipment within the schools contribute a major part in influencing the drop-out rate. It is apparent that to make the teaching and learning methods operative and inclusive, it is essential to make proper availability of resources and materials, so they can be implemented in an appropriate manner. The higher the quality of the education, the lower the drop-out rate.

**School Structure** – Structure is a broad term that not only includes the resources or infrastructure, but also the materials, equipment, civic amenities and other facilities. If the school structure contains all the necessary materials and equipment, then it would lead to enrichment of learning. On the other hand, unavailability of materials and equipment would impose many unfavourable effects upon the learning of students and overall functioning of schools.

**School Policies and Practices** – Within schools, it is necessary to formulate certain polices. They should be aimed at inculcating the traits of discipline, righteousness, honesty, morality and ethics among the individuals. Practices such as, proper time management, proper conduct, evaluation procedures, rules regarding improvement in the performance of the students, organization of competitions and workshops, proper teaching-learning processes and effective communication among the members of the schools are the factors contributing to alleviation of educational wastage.

**Discriminatory Treatment** – The teachers in some cases, do discriminate against students. These include, providing more opportunities of progression and leadership to some, leaving out others. The teachers may depict partiality to some students in teaching-learning methods, asking questions, communication processes or in terms of grading. When any sort of discriminatory treatment is observed, then students do not feel comfortable in learning and may discontinue education. Discriminatory treatment imposes detrimental effects upon the educational attainment among students.

Furthermore, when schools have limited opportunities for the students, they are likely to discontinue their education, hence SDG4 achievement becomes in doubt. One of the strongest connections that will lead to non-achievement of SDG4 is school drop-out, as a result of lack of academic success. When students experience problems in meeting the academic demands of the schools, they tend to leave. The lack of opportunities for success can be viewed as an imbalance between the academic demands of the schools and the resources required in meeting those demands for SDG4.

**Socio-Cultural Determinants**

**Child Labour** – Children of deprived, marginalized and socio-economically backward sections of the society usually get engaged in child labour practices. Child labour is referred to as a practice, where individuals, who are below 18 years of age get engaged into any form of work that involves manual labour. In Nigeria, children within school age when found hocking during school hours are detained and their mistress arrested and prosecuted for child labour. This practice has become an impediment within the course of pursuance of education. Hence, children in most cases drop out of school, when engaged in child labour. The work timings and school timings usually is at the same time and children are unable to take out time for studying.

**Family Beliefs and Values** –Families residing in rural areas usually possess different viewpoints regarding the education of the girls and boys. Where they have limited resources, they prefer getting their boys educated believing that education of the boys would provide good employment opportunities, which in turn would enhance their reputation and generate wealth for the family. On the other hand, they hold the view that girls would have to eventually get married and go to another households, hence, they should be taught how to perform the household responsibilities and school education is not meant for them. Even when they do, they see the benefit of educating the girl as belonging to the husband's family. Boys are considered superior to the girls and parents work towards making provision of education for them.

**Notions of Adulthood** – There is no age at which somebody obtain education. Some people see themselves as adults, and for that they can't be educated. Tis notion is wrong because they can attain education by getting enrolled in adult education and training centres. The fundamental problems with adults and education are such factors as, marriage problems, household responsibilities, child development needs, requirements of the elderly family members and other domestic chores. Due to engagement in these areas, they are unable to sustain their educational

desire. In educational institutions, these factors also lead to an increase in the rate of absenteeism. Students are unable to attend classes, remain absent and as a result experience unfavourable effects in terms of their academic achievement.

**Early Marriage** – Early marriage is one of the factors that is of utmost significance in causing educational wastage. In the past, within the country, there has been prevalence of child marriage, that is, girls getting married before they have attained the age of 18 and boys before the age of 21. The involvements before and after marriage, possess difficulties to individuals attending schools, they usually have to discontinue their education for this purpose. Marriage imposes numerous responsibilities upon individuals, especially girls and they are deprived of their childhood activities and education. Boys may continue their education after marriage, but girls usually have to discontinue their education and get engaged in the performance of household responsibilities. They are unable to make use of their education in any way, after marriage.

**Family Economic Status** – In order to acquire education and make effective use of it, the economic status of the family is considered important. When individuals possess the resources, they are even able to send their children to other regions and countries to enable them to pursue higher education. On the other hand, when they experience scarcity of resources, they are unable to send their children to even schools that are located nearby, not minding the standards. When the economic status of the family is in a deprived state, the parents encourage their children to get engaged in employment opportunities and not pursue any kind of education. In Nigeria, to bridge this gap, free education has been given at certain levels and uniform and books supplied to children.

**Educational Level of the Parents** – The educational level of the parents is also one of the important factors contributing to the attainment of education of the children. When the parents are educated, they motivate and encourage their children to enhance their educational skills. On the other hand, if they are not educated, they encourage their children to get engaged in employment opportunities to sustain their living conditions or train them, especially girls in terms of household responsibilities. Educated parents will provide support and assistance to their children and guide them towards the right direction.

**Disunity of the Parents due to Divorce or Death** – There had been cases of individuals, who have single parents. When parents are single, they have to take care of numerous aspects. When they are financially strong, they may get their children enrolled in reputed educational institutions. Whereas, when they are not financially strong, they may not provide education in reputed educational institutions. Individuals prefer to live with their single parents and assist them by taking up jobs. In this way, they may either discontinue their education or may not get enrolled in educational institutions to pursue higher education. This point highlights that disunity of the parents due to divorce or death may make them single and in turn, their children get compelled to assist them by giving up their hopes and aspirations. Finances in this case contribute an imperative part in enabling the individuals to acquire education and utilize it appropriately (Kebede, Demissie, & Estifanos, 2015).

**Students Personal Determinants**

**Peer Group Influence and Attitudes towards Schools** - Peer group influence is a major factor of school drop-outs among adolescents. It is well acknowledged that the extent to which an adolescent thrives in meeting the expectations of the schools have a direct bearing with his status within the peer group. The peer group of an adolescent constitutes a world of its own with its values, norms, customs, traditions, manners, and even its own language. Peers can apply unexpected influence over each other, particularly with regards to school drop-out and attitudes of the individuals towards school. Individuals are required to relate to the peers for they are dependent upon their attitudes, feelings and expectations in order to help them create their own views of the world.

**Pregnancy** – Pregnancy is one of the factors that not only lead to a high rate of absenteeism, but women experience problems in getting engaged into certain tasks at this stage. The problem of school pregnancies is primarily related to rape and sexual harassment. There have been reported cases of girls belonging to 14 to 18 years of age, dropping out of school every year due to pregnancy and this sometimes leads to early marriages. Pregnant girls are viewed as adults and they are not meant to be in schools. Such students end up being frustrated and depressed. If they don't conform or if they do, they may be victims of early pregnancy and tend to withdraw from school prematurely.

**Availability of Materials and Equipment** – In order to facilitate acquisition of education, students need materials and equipment. These include textbooks, stationary items, uniforms, school bags, technology, computers, internet, proper heating and cooling equipment within the classroom in accordance to the weather conditions, clean drinking water, restrooms etc. When parents are able to provide the educational materials to their children, it leads to facilitation of learning. On the other hand, when parents cannot afford to provide the required materials and equipment, then students may experience unfavourable effects in improving their learning. Consequently, poor performance would lead discouragement and dropout.

**Lack of Interest** – When enrolled in educational institutions, it is vital for the individuals to develop interest and enthusiasm towards studies. It is a fact that teachers have to implement proper teaching-learning processes and instructional strategies in order to make learning effectual. But to improve their learning, it is up to the students to dedicate themselves wholeheartedly towards acquisition of education and be regular and attentive. At all levels of education, some students exhibit lack of interest in learning. They are either unable to understand the academic concepts, or unable to communicate with the teachers to provide solutions to their problems, they get engaged into other tasks and activities and do not pay attention to studies, undergo family issues etc.

**The Prospects of SDG4**

The SDGs are established objectives contained in a universal agreement to end poverty, protect all that makes the planet habitable, and ensure that everyone enjoy peace and prosperity, now and in the future (Morton, 2017). Apart from the fact that it is being based on the proposal for SDGs developed by the Open Working Group of the UN General Assembly on SDGs, the global goals

are out come of years of high-level global summits, treatises, and conferences. The 15-year SDGs framework, with a deadline of 2030, embodies 17 goals and a total of 169 targets linked to five areas of critical importance, namely: People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnerships. The goals according to (Morton, 2017) are as follows;

1) End poverty in all forms
2) End hunger by prom4oting sustainable agriculture
3) Healthy lives and wellbeing for all
4) Quality and equitable education
5) Gender equality and empowerment
6) Clean water and sanitation
7) Sustainable energy for all
8) Sustainable economic growth
9) Sustainable industrial growth
10) Reduce inequality within and between nations
11) Sustainable shelters and cities;
12) Sustainable production and consumption
13) Combat climatic change and its impact
14) Sustainable use of marine resources
) Protection of terrestrial ecosystems
16) Peaceful and inclusive communities and
17) Global partnerships.

Fundamentally, the SDGs cover the three dimensions of Sustainable Development, namely: economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection (Morton, 2017). While the global goals are in essence interconnected and interdependent, Mohanty and Dash (2018) have recognized a closer relationship amongst SDG4 on equitable quality education and the effective implementation of SDG16, which focuses on peace, justice, and sturdy institutions. This gives emphasis to the central position of SDG4, which envisions ensuring all-inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all.

In the milieu of the International Education Framework and the 2030 Agenda, SDG4 represents 10 targets, encompassing 7 outcome targets and 3 means of implementation (Global Campaign for Education, 2019). The outcome targets according to them include: universal primary and secondary education; early childhood development and universal pre-primary education; equal access to technical/vocational and higher education; relevant skills for decent work; gender equality and inclusion; universal youth literacy; and education for sustainable development and global citizenship. The ways to implement comprise: effective learning environments; scholarships; and teachers and educators. In the context of the 10 targets of SDG 4, the Muscat Agreement of May 2014 upholds that the post-2015 education agenda should be rights-based and reflect a perspective based on equity and inclusion, with particular attention to gender equality and to overcoming all forms of discrimination in and through education (UNESCO, 2014).

## CONCLUSION

Sustainable Development Goal Four (SDG4) is an educational goal aimed towards dispensing all-inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. This education goal is a universal coverage of quality education from pre-school through at least secondary education, and then on to more advanced skills training (Sachs, 2015). The goal is to build a nation that will facilitate a realization of the full potential of each child in order to contribute to building a just and accommodating society. A notion of an inclusive quality education is focus on the idea of education for all, predominantly those groups who are considered to be vulnerable. It therefore means that those who lead education in Nigeria must give attention to all forms of education, including both formal and non-formal education since it is recognized not only as a fundamental human right but also as a catalyst for sustainable development and a vehicle for confronting the challenges facing societies. Nigeria is committed to achieving Global Goals embodied in the UNESCO Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goal 4 (SDG 4), which emphasizes equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all. However, for this to be attain, the study identified current measures towards achieving SDG4. Based on evaluation of perspectives, the study concluded that Nigeria is still a long way to achieving the SDG4.

## Suggestions

Based on the study, the following suggestions are made;

1.      Applicable constitutional provisions on education rights should be strengthened by making them justifiable and legally enforceable.

2.      Expansion of education and training facilities with a view to fostering and improving knowledge and skills relating to sustainable development.

3.      The philosophies and principles of sustainable development should be integrated in education and training at all levels and education systems should be aligned with the elements and challenges of sustainability.

4.      Need for multi-sectorial partnerships that emphasize the economic, social, environmental, political, and legal dimensions of access to education.

5.      The concept of education should be broadened and conceptualized within the framework of the socio-cultural, environmental, and political realities in the society.

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