Lifelong Learning towards the Achievement of Environment and Sustainable Development in Ghana

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Abstract

The government of Ghana has demonstrated its ambition to achieve Sustainable Development Goals SDGs—presently a global catch-cry—through numerous educational developments. However, Ghana still battles with the tensions of environmental degradation such as illegal mining, water pollution, bad farming practices, and improper waste disposal, among several others. Therefore, this paper explores lifelong learning and sustainable development in Ghana. This is done through the implementation of retrospective literature evaluation and qualitative methods. The paper employs available literature and a hands-on study, which commences by tracking the history of lifelong learning, the importance of lifelong learning, and how Ghana demonstrates its support of lifelong learning to ensure sustainable development. A critical analysis is conducted on the reasons why Ghana persistently battles with environmental degradation. Numerous examples are presented as evidence to support the findings and formulate recommendations. The identification of these obstacles to achieving SDGs will enable the government, policymakers and citizens of Ghana to contribute their quota to the achievement of SDGs. This study will also help Ghana to redeem its natural resources, which have deteriorated over time.

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Keywords: lifelong learning; sustainable development; Ghana education; educational development; environmental degradation

Introduction

Lifelong learning and environment and sustainable development have become a global catch-cry in our modern world (Biney and Okai-mensah 2017). The question of how to fuse lifelong learning and sustainable development into an innovative form remains unanswered. Indeed, Webb et al. (2019) postulate that lifelong learning has had global acceptance as a means of attaining sustainable development and quality education, as set out in the "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (Republic of Ghana 2019). The Institute for International Cooperation of the Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband (DVV 2016) and the German Adult Education Association reiterated that "lifelong learning is becoming increasingly crucial as a tool for all sectors of education and learning in the dynamic world" (DVV 2016, 16). Lifelong learning is characterised by literacy for youngsters and the adult population, which is the foundation to guarantee the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is now evident that those international countries that have had the accolade of being "countries with impressive SDGs progress" endeavoured and enhanced education through lifelong learning. All and sundry living on planet Earth are considered potential global citizens; and the 21st century requires a knowledgeable nation to be responsive to contemporary global issues and make a concerted effort to solve some of the world's most complex problems, such as environmental degradation and climate change. In this regard, the African capacity building, which is approximately 50%, can be enhanced to present global African men and women who will contribute their quota to the emergence of global issues through lifelong learning.

According to the Ministry of Education (MoE 2020), Ghana's education service mission is to develop an educated, skilled and confident society with global competencies. The educational policy of Ghana was reviewed in 2004 by a committee formed by the Ghana government. This occurred due to the realisation that education will enhance citizens' ability to accelerate economic and technological development, ensure a sustainable society, equip citizens with the ability to be versatile in the modern world of civilisation, and uphold the great banner of democracy in Ghana (Poku, Aawaar, and Worael 2013). Among the recommendations made by this committee was continuous lifelong learning by employing distance education rather than regular schooling. This available option supports the mission of lifelong learning, which is a constant phenomenon in 21st-century policy discussion of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO 2014, as cited in DVV 2016). UNESCO reported that based on democratic, humanitarian, and emancipatory values, lifelong learning entails merging learning and living activities of learning in all educational sectors and contexts such as organisations, homes, communities, and institutions through informal, formal, and non-formal education to satisfy the needs of learning.

With reference to the existing literature on lifelong learning, it is remarkable that no study has been published on lifelong learning towards the achievement of environment and sustainable development. This paper, therefore, seeks to fill this gap and give a new dimension to the concept.

The Emergence of Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning metamorphosised as an issue in the year 1970, owing to the efforts made by some international organisations such as the Council of Europe that proposed permanent education to develop European citizens' entire life; the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which advocated recurrent education as an alternative to replacing sabbatical leaves; and the UNESCO report (1972) "Learning to Be," which emphasised the impact of lifelong learning to transform schools and the society. These reports motivated the United States educational and political leaders to emulate this idea and implement it in their adult education, but they neglected basic and secondary education. The lifelong learning Act of 1976 comprised adult basic education and education for the elderly and retired individuals. The European and American lifelong learning policies succeeded in the 1980s by capturing the interest of some other non-governmental organisations. Frequent research and reports on lifelong learning showcased it and thereby resulted in national policy discussions, global competition, and economic developments (State University 2021).

Lifelong Learning

Education is one of the human rights which foster sustainable development, nation-building, peace and harmony in society and in the world at large. This is the reason why each goal in the "2030 Agenda" (Republic of Ghana 2019) demands education to equip people with knowledge, values and skills for good living standards, thereby contributing immensely to their society and globally. Lifelong learning has become an international mission of the current millennium, causing nations to invest in their education systems because it is the paramount weapon to develop a nation and, most importantly, the premise for building comprehensive development of the youth and adults. DVV (2016) affirms that lifelong learning has become the most bizarre story globally, which has necessitated governments to engage in educational development projects to reduce or eliminate illiteracy in the dynamic world. According to Biney and Okai-mensah (2017), lifelong learning is a process entailing individual direct learning with objectives and using the available resources in society to achieve it. Lifelong learning entails formal, informal and non-formal learning, mentorship, apprenticeship, training, counselling, and tutoring that continuously transform the living standards of people (Owusu-Aghyemang 2017). Lifelong learning develops an individual's capacity for societal development to achieve its aspirations and transform the social structure. A lifelong learning policy emerged in Ghana during the 60th Annual New Year School when it was raised by the participants of this programme in 2009. Some subtle problems to lifelong learning in Ghana are low literacy rates, limited opportunities for adult learning, and gender inequalities (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning [UIL] 2020).

This paper explores the challenges of sustainable development in Ghana and how lifelong education has been promoted through recent educational developments in Ghana to help attain environment and sustainable development. Finally, the paper covers some strategies to be adapted from OECD and other international countries to enhance the attainment of SDGs in Ghana.

Environment

An environment describes the aggregate external forces, influences and conditions that affect human life, nature, behaviour, growth and development of living organisms. The environment contains natural resources such as water, animals, air, soil, plants, light, temperature, rocks and minerals, that sustain all living organisms and from which mankind acquires a living. Torpey (2012) posited that the global world is confronted with environmental challenges and only a few societies are safe. These challenges are manifested in greater dimensions among developing countries, including sub-Saharan Africa, causing several considerable debates and discussions to ensue on the deteriorating state of the environment. Questions are asked on the systems, structures, protection and the traditional management of the environment. Ghana is not an exception to this global canker, as Torpey (2012) opines that environmental challenges are one of the bizarre stories in Ghana that have portentous consequences for the well-being of the citizenry. Torpey (2012) reveals that environmental problems in Ghana suffer immediate attention and urgency, which have degenerated into problem-solving and exclusionary decision-making strategies to curb this menace. The implication is that chances for the general population to contribute their quota are not available. This has raised concern because environmental challenges are wide-encompassing in nature and necessitate a collective effort to provide enough impetus to jointly shoulder the challenges (Torpey 2012). The OECD (2020) suggests that a concerted effort is required to appropriately manage environmental challenges by enhancing international and national environmental governance through the formation of policies that favour the environment.

This paper, therefore, seeks to be a poignant reminder to Ghana concerning current environmental challenges and how there is a need to act swiftly to be on par or exceed international countries that have excelled in the achievement of environment and sustainable development.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (World Commission on Environment and Development: The Brundtland Commission [WCED] 1987). The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held its first Earth Meeting in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro. They proposed "Agenda 21," which entailed an action plan, a comprehensive proposal to control the socio-economic development and preservation of the natural environment and its resources from degradation. Part of this

agenda was the recommendation for training teachers as a major instrument to promote solving problems of unsustainability, thereby enhancing school and university education for individual capacity building (United Nations [UN] 1992). Education for sustainable development also emerged from the United Nations-sponsored World Commission on the Human Environment and Development (WCED 1987) reported on by Mebratu (1998), UNEP (2002) and Sneddon, Howorth, and Norgaard (2006). This conference was held to coax individuals to end environmental degradation and motivate government leaders to act on obstacles to overcome environmental degradation. The Brundtland Commission propounded a holistic framework that merges economic, social, and environmental issues. Their report, captioned "Our Common Future" (WCED 1987), proposes a new definition for sustainable development:

> … development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. (WCED 1987)

> Their report outlines three pillars for enhancing sustainable development that are environmental protection, social development, and economic development. (UN 2012)

The year 2015 saw the amendment of the "8-Millennium Development Goals" (MDGs) to 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Republic of Ghana 2019 "2030 Agenda"). World leaders reached a collective agreement by all nations, proposing an ambitious target to ensure a more sustainable future for all through the termination of poverty, preservation of the planet, and sustainable living conditions for all. These new goals extend to all disciplines that address challenges confronting mankind, ranging from gender inequality, limited infrastructure, unemployment rate, and environmental degradation. The environmental aspect of the SDGs entailed the management of natural resources, circular economy, water pollution, climate change, ecosystems, environmental management of chemicals and waste, marine problems, and biodiversity. It called for the protection of the environment from environmental degradation, management of natural resources, and taking action to reverse climate change, all with the aim of supporting the present generation and posterity. A report from "The World in 2050" initiative, captioned "Transformation to Achieve Sustainable Development Goals" at the United Nations High-Level Political Forum in New York, presents challenges to the achievement of the "2030 Agenda" (Republic of Ghana 2019) that require immediate action to salvage the situation. The report recommends human capacity building through quality education to ensure better environmental decisions (Plan 2018).

For over a decade, the government of Ghana has remained relentless by embarking on educational reforms to improve the capacity of the citizenry, with the recently developed reforms focusing on the attainment of SDGs. The emergence of educational development is to help improve human life, enhance economic progress, and protect the environment to make it sustainable for the global society (Boakye 2019). Free basic education, senior high education, a school feeding programme, and changes in the

curriculum and the educational structure are among several recent reforms in educational development in Ghana.

Sustainable Development Goal 4

Ensure Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Promote Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All

Education enhances knowledge acquisition, skills and values in all walks of life to improve society's well-being and prepare solid ground for prosperity (UNESCO 2019). Education is the focal point and key enabler in building sustainable and resilient societies. Although MDG 2 made progress in universal primary education, SDG 4 seeks to raise the bar to make education a catalyst in transforming sustainable development (UNESCO 2019). This report's standpoint is that making education a priority will create an avenue for the love of lifelong learning, which will be maintained in society for its sustainability. Making basic education in Ghana accessible to all can be dated back to 1996 (UNESCO 2007). The growth of basic education necessitated the extension made currently to senior high education, which commenced in 2017—being an international agenda of SDG. Enrolment in schools has increased drastically due to the free education policy, enabling many children from low-income families (who would have been school drop-outs) to attain education. The literacy rate will increase from this initiative, as well as the desire for continuous education, which will be enhanced as the opportunity exists for its accomplishment.

Millennium Development Goal 7

Ensure Environmental Sustainability

Ensuring environmental sustainability requires interaction with the Earth to reverse the loss of resources without jeopardising resources, thereby making Earth's resources sustainable for posterity. Improving sanitation, water sources, food, and other economic, social, and environmental needs are the hallmark of MDG 7 (UNICEF 2000). According to Amponsah et al. (2015), the amendment of the MDGs expanded the territory of ensuring environmental sustainability to SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation); SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy); SDG 13 (climate action); SDG 14 (life below water); and SDG 15 (life on land), which collectively require an urgent call for action to preserve our natural resources. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO 2021), managing natural resources will enable people to meet food requirements, but climate change will cause a scarcity of water and pose challenges to access these resources, which in turn will affect food security and environmental sustainability. Hunger and poverty have been identified as the drivers of over-exploitation of land resources on which the livelihoods of the poor depend. Ghana's environment is suffering from atmospheric pollution emerging from untarred dusty roads, industry, and vehicles; depletion of biodiversity from deforestation, poaching, and habitat loss (a deforestation rate currently with 22 000 hectares per annum, giving a signal that the forest sector will soon fade away); water pollution as a result of mismanagement of domestic wastewater,

which brings about bad health conditions (such as malaria being endemic although there is control of the disease); and agricultural lands being released for mining activities causing loss of land (Tamakloe 2010). According to Tamakloe (2010), these environmental challenges do not make the future of Ghana very gloomy, provided that SDGs can be attained. In this regard, drastic measures need to be adopted to revive the environment.

Lifelong Learning and Sustainable Development

Lifelong learning towards the attainment of sustainable development is multidimensional. Lifelong learning is the major key to sustainable development, and not only a basic right. Education that involves lifelong learning is the bedrock for success in developing the human mindset. This will transform individuals for societal benefit; enhance critical thinking, behaviours and actions; improve the ability to withstand technological change; enable us to survive in the world of civilisation; and be responsible for the current generation and posterity, all of which are a collective umbrella for the sustainability of mankind and the planet. Lifelong learning extends its influence to all three branches of sustainable development: 1) environmental (natural disaster, pollution, climate change, freshwater, biodiversity); 2) economic (rural development, food security, poverty, urbanisation); and 3) social (access to education, gender equity, human right, health) (UNESCO 2014).

Environmental Degradation in Ghana

Natural resources abound in Ghana, ranging from minerals (gold, silver, diamonds), cocoa, timber, oil, rubber, cash crops, and so forth, which require environmental stewardship to preserve them. For over three decades, Ghana has had increased prices of oil, gold, and cocoa, which has improved the GDP growth and reduced poverty, thereby helping Ghana to achieve the status of a middle-income country. Although this is impressive, there is a need for a warning on the resources that generate this success (World Bank [WB] 2020). Recently, the World Bank Ghana Country Environmental Analysis (CEA) reported on the scope, scale and economic effect of environmental degradation on the population of Ghana. Water and air pollution, plastics, gold mining, improper disposal of solid waste, deforestation, land degradation, and overfishing, among several others, were identified to have a serious effect on the citizens of Ghana. In 2017, this environmental degradation caused Ghana to lose $6.3. billion, which was approximately 11% of Ghana's 2017 GDP (WB 2020).

Illegal Mining ("Galamsey")

Bagah et al. (2016) state that illegal mining (known in Ghana as "*galamsey*") and small-scale mining are common activities in Ghana that recently caused enormous environmental degradation. The lands are affected by the cutting down of trees, soil erosion, huge trenches, and water pollution from mining activities, which make farming impossible, thereby causing the resettlement of people living in those areas. The *Ghanaian Times* front page of 16 April 2021 had the caption: "Galamsey Canker is

National Emergency … let's Resolve to End it—Stakeholders." This plea was made by the minister of lands and natural resources, Honourable Samuel Abdulai Jinapor, which was feedback from the final day of national consultative dialogue on small-scale mining.

Over Exploitation of Marine Fish

Xinhua (2018) recently reported on new measures adopted by the government of Ghana to reverse the loss of marine fish in Ghana. The decision was necessitated by the overexploitation of fish due to the citizens' misconception that the "sea never dries."

Plastic Waste Mismanagement

Debrah, Vidal, and Dinis (2021) believe plastic waste is a public outcry in Ghana, which is a threat to the environment. This is true mostly in urban areas, where population growth is on the rise from rural migration due to industrialisation. This results in high consumption of plastics, causing blocked gutters, flooding during the rainy season, breeding of insects, and causing havoc to aquatic life when rainwater washes debris into the water bodies. According to Debrah et al. (2021), this menace created by plastics demands rigorous attention and implementing strategies for sustainability. Figure 1 below is a picture of the state of plastic waste mismanagement in Ghana, which causes water pollution and wreaks havoc on aquatic life.

Figure 1: Effects of plastic waste mismanagement in Ghana

Source: Google.com

Literature has highlighted numerous environmental degradation activities in Ghana, which are depleting the environmental conditions. The figure below is a summary of some major obstacles to the environment and sustainable development in Ghana.
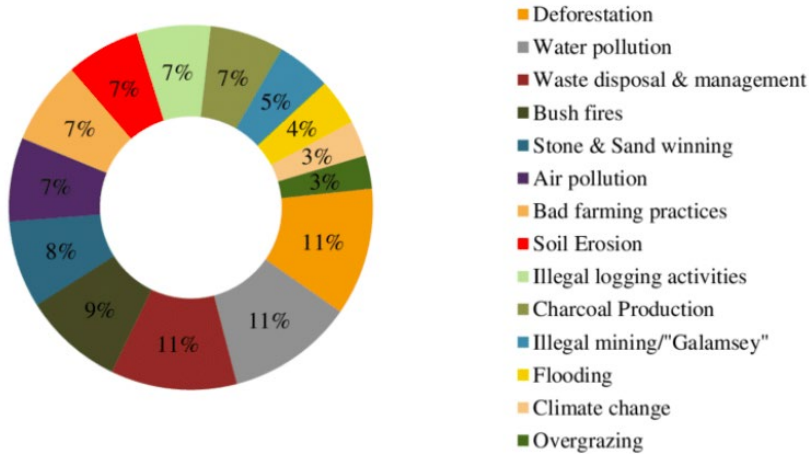

Figure 2: Environmental challenges in Ghana

Source: Research Gate

Current Educational Reforms in Ghana

According to Webb et al. (2019), by emphasising the need to promote lifelong learning for attaining SDG 4, policy-makers have expressed their interest in extending formal education beyond tertiary education. Countries presenting their SDG progressive reports indicate their achievements regarding lifelong learning. The government of Ghana has equally remained relentless, and the results are evident in numerous educational reforms, with recent reforms promoting sustainable development.

Free Senior High School (SHS)

All people living on planet Earth are considered potential global citizens. The 21st century requires a knowledgeable nation to be responsive to contemporary global issues and make a concerted effort to solve some of the world's most complex problems, such as environmental degradation and climate change. This can be made possible through lifelong learning as a key principle for training and educating the youth because they are the pivot for sustainable development (Plan 2018; UNESCO 2014). According to Mosweunyane (2019), lifelong learning enables an individual to realise that continuous learning should be an ambition if they want transformation. According to Abdul-Rahaman et al. (2018), the free compulsory basic education policy was extended to free

Senior High School (SHS) in 2017, in order to reduce the financial burden of parents in paying school fees. This has increased school enrolment and satisfied the Education for All (EFA) agenda of improving access to school and promoting lifelong learning.

Nutrition and School Feeding Programme

The United Nations (UN 2019) posited that nutrition and good health are necessary for sustaining child learning—not only to increase the attendance rate but also to promote educational success. The government of Ghana has currently extended free lunch from basic school to the SHS to motivate the youth (especially those from low-income families) to further their education without any basic challenges (Omari et al. 2020). This demonstrates a commitment to sustaining and enhancing universal basic education and lifelong learning for its populace.

New Standard Based Curriculum

Kartowagiran et al. (2021) believe that an increase in knowledge requires new technologies to learn, and they purport that the delay of these (new technologies) causes a loss of skills and knowledge among the youth, which results in poor living conditions. Ghana has embarked on a revision of the school curriculum that is used as a road map in all educational institutions in Ghana. The purpose of this revision is to revamp the educational sector and prepare knowledgeable and skilled individuals. The design of this revised curriculum was a collaborative effort of the Ghana National Association of Teachers and the Ghana Education Service. Other factors that directed the re-design of the curriculum were globally accepted best practices, global challenges, and meeting SDG 4. The revision of the curriculum (to meet international standards and targets) is also promoting lifelong learning, improving literacy rates, and helping children to attain quality education.

The University of Environment and Sustainable Development

The University of Environment and Sustainable Development is Ghana's first university devoted to environmental protection. It was launched in August 2020 to commence its first academic year. The university has a modern, architecturally designed building with all the necessary resources. It has the objectives of offering degree courses and research in energy sustainability; climate change; energy economics and policy; water resources development; urban architecture; environmental science; natural resources; environmental economics; and environmental policy. This obviously targets the training of environment and sustainable development professionals for Ghana's sustainable national development (Ngounou 2020). The institution also has a modern laboratory and the School of Agriculture and Agro-Entrepreneurship Development. The building of this institution showcases Ghana's ambition to attain the global target of environment and sustainable development (Republic of Ghana 2019).

Our World and Our People

According to the Ghana Education Service (GES 2019), "Our World and Our People "(OWOP) is one of the new subjects introduced in the current curriculum of Ghana's education service, with the rationale to enhance the youth's sense of identity, innovation, creativity, resilience, moral uprightness, and patriotism. This subject endeavours to build responsible citizens who will contribute to solving contemporary problems of environmental degradation; climate change; sanitation; mismanagement of social media and the internet; and eradicating non-compliance to patriotism. This subject goes a step further in preparing the learners to be global citizens; to help solve contemporary global issues like environmental degradation; to enable the learners to contribute to a peaceful global society; and to solve global environmental problems through exploring the world around them by analysing environmental issues.

Individuals are citizens of their immediate society; however, they are also global citizens who can help eliminate global problems that cannot be resolved by science and technology alone. Government and community decision-making, therefore, needs to involve society's participation to motivate their acceptance and adherence to decisions (United Nations Educational 2012). In this regard, the OWOP subject is a good start to equip learners who will grow with the knowledge and understanding of not taking actions that are causing irreversible environmental harm, and to do their share in promoting and ensuring global sustainable development.

Conceptual Framework

Belyaeva et al. (2016) describe the sustainable development component as comprising the social sphere, ecology, and economy (figure 3).
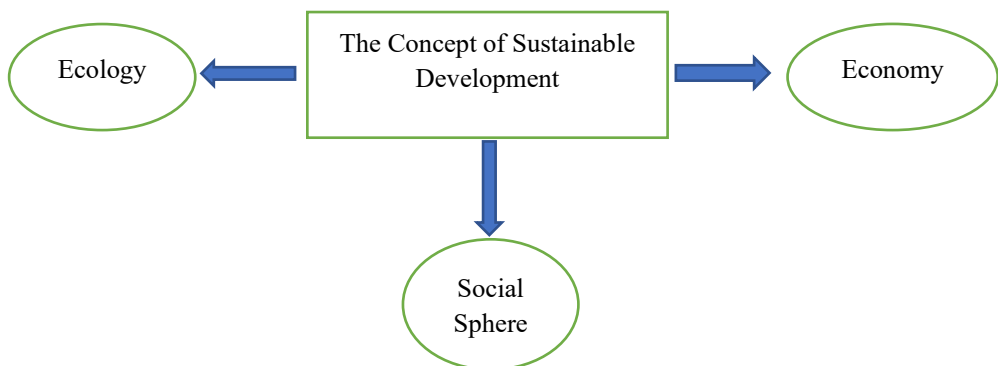

Figure 3: The components of sustainable development

Source: Self-designed by the researchers

The sustainable development diagram above depicts the well-being of the present generation and posterity, the natural resources together with their ecological systems, and the economy, which is the source of development. The ecological part concerns the management of organisms and their surroundings. The economic aspect concerns the proper use of resources without jeopardising them in order to retain them. The social component is about the preservation of social stability and cultural differences across the globe. It is prudent to maintain the environment to make it stable, renew itself, and withstand changing conditions.

However, Ghana is confronted with water and air pollution, plastics mismanagement, illegal gold mining, improper disposal of solid waste, deforestation, land degradation, and overfishing, among several others (WB 2020). It is, therefore, timely to find remedies such as adherence to environmental laws, educating citizens on the effect of environmental degradation, adopting good farming practices, and so forth, in order to salvage the situation by preserving the environment for sustainability.

The Behavioural Change Model

The behavioural change model of Velicer et al. (1996) suggests the education of individuals on environmental problems and their repercussions on society (LaMorte 2019). Therefore, in relating the behavioural change model to the environment and sustainable development, the following suggestions are made. Firstly, as education is not just an integral component but a major enabler to obtaining sustainable development, educating people on the problems of the environment and their repercussions will motivate them to be environmentally friendly. This can be done through lifelong education, community education and mass media to educate agrarian individuals. Secondly, the subject "Our World, Our People" in the curriculum of Ghana's education service involves concepts on the environment that will educate children on the preservation of the environment for posterity. Therefore, when they become adults, they will not engage in activities that will deplete the environment. Finally, teaching environment and sustainable development at an early age will enable the Ghanaian youth to wholly appreciate and embrace strategies to preserve the natural environment for posterity. UNESCO (2002) posited that this could materialise when institutions provide learning strategies that exceed the ordinary educational framework by recognising and ensuring the multiplicity of learning.

Progressive Report from Developed Countries

The SDG agenda required immediate action, causing some international countries to exert much effort to salvage their situations to attain these new sustainable development goals. It is interesting to note that some of these international countries, like Australia, have openly disclosed their progressive reports on environment and sustainable development achievements. One of their major strategies for accomplishing sustainable development was the inclusion of environmental and sustainable development in their citizenship education curriculum (UNESCO 2014). According to Nature.com

(https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-03908-3), the United Nations published an annual progress report toward each goal, and Denmark had the highest ranking in 2019. China also received applause for their progress based on its researchers and policymakers who worked tirelessly on their sustainable measures. However, the SDG index and dashboard report of 2020 indicated that Sweden, Denmark, and Finland were the first three countries with the most impressive rankings in all the SDGs. The UN (2017) commended Sweden for performing impressively on the SDG agenda. OECD (2017) testified regarding their achievement of the SDGs in their daily operations and steering processes with a focus on equitable and sustainable global development.

According to Sweden, it has an ambitious policy that serves as a roadmap (with consideration for the poor) and also has good economic development with solidarity as its hallmark. Their democratic politics have nurtured the development of a welfare package for citizens' good health, quality education, sustainable environment, employment, and housing. They had an environmental objective with a committee set by parliament, who worked on the objectives by presenting a proposal on how their environmental objectives could be accomplished by 2020. Denmark's success in the attainment of SDGs goals was the incorporation of environment and sustainable development into its domestic policies, with monitoring to facilitate the coordination of their national and international SDG activities. In addition, there was consistent progressive reporting to assess implementation and make amendments when the need arose (https://www.oecd.org/env/tools-evaluation/anewstrategyfortheenvironment.htm).

In our present world, a successful nation hinges on its citizens' educational level that enables them to succeed in a lifelong process. On this note, Ghana, as a middle-income country, needs to be applauded for extending free basic education to free SHS, providing free lunch, including the subject "Our World, Our People" into the current curriculum, and building the University of Environment and Sustainable Development, which are all means geared towards the attainment of lifelong education and promoting environment and sustainable development. Although these achievements by Ghana are great, an assessment of the ranking order for sustainable achievement by countries discovered Ghana's position to be the 100th, indicating that there is a wide gap between countries with an impressive improvement in SDGs agenda and Ghana, which is requiring Ghana to strive more for further achievements. The Republic of Ghana (2019) stated in the report that:

> … the present SDG achievements made in Ghana are encouraging, but they also show that we are far from where we need to be and, indeed, want to be.

Among the SDGs, environmental sustainability is the most dominating, and Ghana is confronted with numerous environmental degradation activities. It will, therefore, be prudent for Ghana to emulate the strategies implemented by countries like Sweden, Denmark, and China, whose strategies have enabled them to attain the SDG agenda,

thereby according them with international accolades as the best achievers of sustainable development goals.

The OECD New Strategy for Change

According to the OECD (2020), exploitation of the environment has been very high recently in OECD countries and the global world, but technological advancement, and social and economic development can possibly reduce the pressures. They petitioned the support of nations to help OECD rectify the problem by tackling solutions to their identified environmental challenges that need immediate attention. They suggest management of the environment to retain the integrity of the ecosystem; ensuring that economic growth is not achieved to the detriment of the environment; provision of indicators to measure progress on environmental management; and global co-operation to achieve global environmental interdependence. In addition to these identified problems was a suggestion to formulate an environmental pollution policy to prevent economic development from causing environmental degradation in the OECD countries and other nations.

Benefits Associated with Lifelong Learning

As there is competition in the global world due to an increase in knowledge and technological advancement, lifelong learning equips individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed. In a middle-income country like Ghana, lifelong learning is crucial because it will develop the citizens' capacity for national development and enhance a sustainable society. It is universally accepted that the education people have will influence their life style. For example, people who are educated will consider engaging in sustainable acts to preserve the environment, as compared with illiterates.

Recommendations

With respect to the observations made from lifelong learning, OECD suggestions, and strategies implemented by some international countries, the researcher recommends the unlisted to help Ghana achieve and exceed the international benchmark for sustainable development. First, Ghana should accelerate change to enhance the environment and sustainable development by revitalising its educational policies by using the international organisations' conceptual framework. This can be done by enforcing policy implementation and evaluation strategies to make sure the policies work. This paper recommends extending formal educational development to non-formal educational development for school drop-outs and adult illiterates to acquire knowledge that is needed to preserve the planet. Second, the educational curriculum needs to entail the concepts that will motivate individuals to build resilience without compromising posterity and by strengthening institutions' concern for protecting the environment. Third, Ghana can also emulate other strategies implemented by the OECD and developed countries like Sweden, Denmark, and China. Fourth, it is time that severe sanctions be meted on culprits of environmental degradation to serve as a deterrent to

others. This is an extrinsic motivational strategy to instil discipline in environmental protection. Fifth, education on the sustainable environment can be promoted through the mass media (radio, television, internet) to create awareness of the deteriorating state of Ghana's environment, which has now degenerated into climate change. This is unsustainable for the current generation and will become worse for posterity if immediate change does not take place. Finally, the attainment of sustainable development requires a collective effort from the government, stakeholders, institutions, and the entire population of Ghana to provide enough impetus to jointly shoulder the obstacles to sustainable developments. These recommendations, together with the Ghana government's enthusiasm, commitment, hard work, ingenuity, and emulating of other countries' strategies, will help to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs, protect the planet we inherit, protect Ghana's natural resources, and save posterity.

Conclusion

Lifelong learning is the bedrock for success in developing the human mindset. This will transform individuals for societal benefit; enhance critical thinking, behaviours and actions; improve the ability to withstand technological change; enable us to survive in the world of civilisation; and be responsible for the current generation and posterity, all of which are a collective umbrella for the sustainability of mankind and the planet. Lifelong learning extends its influence to all three branches of sustainable development: environmental (natural disaster, pollution, climate change, freshwater, biodiversity); economic (rural development, food security, poverty, urbanisation); and social (access to education, gender equity, human right, health) (UNESCO 2014).

Ghana has been working assiduously towards the achievement of SDGs and ensuring global citizenship. This is evident from the extension of free basic education to free SHS, extending free lunch from basic school to SHS, introducing the new subject "Our World, Our People" into the current curriculum, and building the University of Sustainable Development in Ghana. According to Becker (2018), the inception of sustainable development into the school curriculum is what is needed presently. Some individual researchers and international philosophers have emphasised the value of education in achieving SDGs (Becker 2018). In this regard, Ghana's search for a remedy for sustainable and environmental development is hidden in lifelong learning, which is an opportunity to acquire knowledge in a sustainable environment, preserve the environment for posterity, sustain the current generation, and achieve global security. Bokova (2015) opines that education is the remedy for the attainment of sustainable development and can also enhance peoples' thinking ability and behaviour. DVV (2016) testified that "indeed, literacy can only unfold its full potential to 'transform our world' if it is conceptualised and operationalised from a lifelong learning perspective" (DVV 2016, 16). The Ghana report on the implementation of the SDGs agenda (Republic of Ghana 2019) contains strategies for achieving SDGs, but the major challenge currently is on implementing these strategies and evaluation.

Literature always finds planning documents, but there are no documents on achievement and progress made from the plans. Educational development is keen on formal education, but development in non-formal education is silent. Furthermore, Ghana has environmental protection policies, but there are always illegal mining activities and other environmental degradation activities. One may wonder why these policies are made, yet the culprits continue to indulge in degrading acts and go free. It can be inferred from this statement that the policies are documented, but checking their implementation and progress is eliminated. Countries that have performed impressively have done so because of their commitments to their policies. It is, therefore, timely for Ghana to have a rethink, understand local issues from a global perspective, and realise that the inability to rectify local problems can degenerate into global consequences.

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