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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

## EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY AS A TOOL FOR ENHANCING SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: A CASE STUDY OF IWO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, OSUN STATE

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### ABSTRACT

Education plays a crucial role in advancing technology and the economy, benefiting both students and non-students. Sustainable development is essential for meeting current needs while ensuring that future generations can meet their own needs. It involves adhering to a national approach to economic management, administration, and policy formulation, showing respect and progress towards democracy. Key concerns for sustainable development in education include focusing on morals and ideals, promoting lifelong learning, prioritizing critical questions, and emphasizing social subjectivity. Re-engineering the Nigerian education system for sustainable democratic growth is vital for preserving cultural heritage, knowledge, ideas, and future civilization. Education is a lifelong process that involves teaching and learning, with three dimensions: character development, mental ability training, and knowledge development. Psychology is essential for these activities to make the teaching and learning process meaningful. Education should aim at self-realization, fostering better human relationships, enhancing individual and national efficiency, promoting effective citizenship, and building national consciousness and unity. It should also drive social, cultural, economic, political, scientific, and technical progress. The Nigerian educational system has been restructured to produce self-reliant citizens, as outlined in the National Policy on Education. Educational psychology plays a crucial role in this process, connecting the home, school, and society through therapeutic services. Teachers are the heart of the educational sector, responsible for implementing educational programs. Educational psychology applies psychological principles and techniques to human behavior in educational situations, highlighting its significance in teachers' education and national development in Nigeria.

### KEYWORDS

Educational Psychology, Sustainable, Democratic Development, Enhancement

### Introduction

Effective implementation of education, in both formal and informal settings, can significantly drive technological and economic progress. Its role in evaluating opportunities and fostering personal and professional development cannot be overstated. It benefits both students and non-

students. Education has provided the foundation for many nations to achieve the necessary levels of technological advancement for innovation, creativity, and economic recovery (Adedokun, 2024; Zhao et al., 2023). Henderson & Loreau (2023) and Mentis (2023) define sustainable development as meeting current needs without

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compromising future generations' ability to meet theirs, emphasising the balance between present and future needs in sustainability. Akintola (2018) describes sustainable development as a commitment to maintaining a national framework for economic management, administration, and policy-making to effectively manage public affairs. This approach respects democratic principles and involves the full participation of all relevant stakeholders while considering local circumstances. These concepts may generate debate, particularly in relation to education. However, sustainable development fundamentally involves meeting and maintaining social expectations in a global marketplace with the involvement of all pertinent stakeholders and consideration of specific conditions.

The following are the primary issues for the sustainable growth of education, according to Agbo (2020):

1. Placing morality and principles at the core of society's issues.
2. Fostering a lifelong love of learning from a young age, grounded in human nature, with the goal of bringing about a significant change in a society that is focused on effective and durable education.
3. Encouraging dialogue within the education sector to ensure that the approaches' primary critical questions are prioritised in order to apply a concrete verdict.
4. Re-emphasising the importance of social subjectivity and the qualitative nature of social existence is crucial.

Re-engineering the Nigerian education system for sustainable democratic progress will equate to conserving individuals' cultural legacy, knowledge, ideas, and future civilisation processes as Athanasius (2018) articulated. Education can be redesigned for sustainable growth when teachers, counsellors, and students, who are the keepers of education's tenets, adhere to its ideals, principles, and processes.

### Concept of Education

Education is a lifelong process of teaching and learning, beginning at birth and continuing until death (Shomoye et al., 2023). Arubayi and Ikoya (2016) contend that these procedures are the last step in a child's or adult's development of the knowledge, attitudes, and other behavioural patterns necessary to make a meaningful contribution to their community. The way that education is perceived has three dimensions. According to Aziza (2016), these are knowledge development, mental ability training, and character development. It is possible to accomplish the three areas listed above by offering psychological assistance to children, teachers, parents, and school administration. Education encompasses all activities involving students, teachers, and the content being taught or learned. To make the teaching and learning process effective, an understanding of psychology is often essential. A section of the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2014) states that the goals of education should be "self-realization, better human relationships, individual and national efficiency, effective citizenship, national consciousness, national unity, social, cultural, economic, political, scientific, and technical progress."

The noble purpose stated above cannot be accomplished by teachers working alone. To help students achieve these learning objectives for sustainable growth, educational psychology must collaborate with the work of professional counselors.

### Concept of Educational Psychology

Educational psychology combines "education" and "psychology." Education is defined as the effort to shape or modify a person's behaviour to equip them with the skills, habits, and attitudes necessary for effective integration into society and its progress, as noted by Baita (2019). Schools are the primary institutions responsible for managing this process. The term "psychology" derives from the Greek words "psyche" (mind, soul, or spirit) and "logos" (discourse or study); thus, it can be defined as the "study of the mind." In simpler terms, psychology is the study of the mind and behaviour, exploring questions such as why birds sing, why certain insects fly while others do not, why plants grow, and why children learn, among others (Bhawna, 2016).

Psychology is the scientific study of behaviour and mental processes aimed at enhancing human welfare. Because scientific observation is methodical, reproducible, and objective, this investigation qualifies as scientific. Perception, cognition, emotion, personality, behaviour, and interpersonal interactions are among the topics that psychologists research. Some people investigate the unconscious mind as well, particularly depth psychologists (Yuri, 2019). Psychological knowledge is used in many areas of human endeavour, such as the treatment of mental health disorders and difficulties pertaining to daily living, such as family, education, and work. Psychologists investigate the underlying physiological and neurological processes in order to better understand the role that mental processes play in both individual and social behavior. Numerous subfields of psychology research and applications are focused on topics related to human development, sports, health, industry, media, and law. Research from the social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences is included in psychology. A psychologist is a person who has studied or worked in the field of psychology. All motor (such as walking, swimming, dancing, etc.), cognitive (such as thinking, reasoning, visualising, etc.), and emotional (such as feeling pleased, sad, furious, etc.) actions are included in the term behavior. It also encompasses the subconscious and unconscious minds of humans in addition to their conscious behaviours and activities (Wallinga, 2020).

As such, it encompasses both overt and covert behaviour, including all internal experiences and thought processes. It's not just for researching how people behave. Psychology also addresses the behaviour of plants, insects, birds, and animals. Simply put, behaviour encompasses all of an organism's experiences and activities over its whole life. Changing one's behaviour is a necessary component of learning. Understanding the science of behaviour and mental processes becomes essential to accomplishing this task successfully. Consequently, a key component of teacher education is educational psychology, sometimes known as the psychology of education.

Educational psychology is a branch of applied psychology that focusses on using psychological knowledge in the field of education. It is the study of human behaviour in educational settings using psychological concepts and methods. Rajesh (2017) states that educational psychology strongly emphasises understanding how people learn in educational settings, evaluating the effectiveness of educational interventions, exploring the psychology of teaching, and

examining the social psychology of schools as institutions. It focusses on a broad range of educational studies specialisations, such as classroom management, special education, curriculum development, instructional design, and educational technology.

### Concept of Sustainable Development

In exploring the role of educational psychology in promoting sustainable democratic development in Nigeria, particularly within Iwo Local Government Area, it is essential to discuss the underlying theoretical framework of educational plans and interventions. According to Cherry (2021), sustainable development is a transformative concept that is often challenging to explain in practical terms. This challenge stems from its limited historical antecedents and ambiguous definitions. Many members of the public find its categorization complex, which impedes their engagement. Although the term is used broadly today across various fields and disciplines, its implementation remains unclear, especially within educational systems.

Dirina (2018) asserts that sustainable development refers to how individuals should use the Earth, focusing on both equity and economic growth, provided that the planet can sustain these endeavours (Adelakun, 2022; Raheem et al., 2018). Consequently, it is essential to implement education for sustainable development (ESD) as a means to address individuals' perceptions and transform their understanding of the world. However, the introduction and integration of ESD into educational systems have encountered several challenges, primarily due to the absence of a standardized or clear definition of sustainability and its implications for teaching practices.

Psychological theories can be integrated into educational frameworks to address the challenges faced in Nigeria. Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory, Bandura's Social Learning Theory, and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory offer valuable insights into how educational strategies can foster analytical skills, teamwork, and good citizenship among learners (Akpan & Kennedy, 2020). These psychological frameworks can assist in designing programs that promote not only democratic engagement but also the human values essential for sustainable development.

Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory and Bandura's Social Learning Theory are both effective in promoting critical thinking, collaborative problem-solving, and fostering social responsibility among individuals and groups (Aziz et al., 2022). These theories can guide the design of educational interventions that not only enhance awareness of democratic principles but also cultivate the competencies necessary for addressing social issues, including those related to sustainability. For example, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory posits that learning occurs through interaction within a cultural context; therefore, educational strategies in Nigeria must be tailored to its cultural framework of manageability.

Nevertheless, the challenges that may arise when implementing these educational strategies in Nigeria are manageable. Some of the drawbacks include resource constraints, multiculturalism, and varying levels of educational infrastructure, which hinder the integration of sustainable development principles into practice. In such situations, an understanding of the practical application of psychological theories can be beneficial, as it helps create learning environments that align with students' experiences and cultural contexts. The use of positive reinforcement, as proposed by

behaviorist B.F. Skinner, ensures that appropriate language and environmental practices are encouraged among students to promote environmental conservation (Díaz-Beltrán & Páramo, 2024).

This concept is highly beneficial for educational institutions in Iwo Local Government Area. As these institutions strive to integrate sustainability into their curricula, they can leverage insights from the field of psychology to enhance their operations. This integration goes beyond merely transferring knowledge; it aims to cultivate responsible and active citizens who can engage in democratic governance and promote sustainability. By fostering critical thinking skills, ethical reasoning, and civic responsibility through educational psychology, Nigeria can effectively address and navigate the challenges faced both within its society and in the international community.

The primary purpose of this research, which focuses on integrating educational psychology and sustainable development in Nigeria, reveals significant potential. By utilising theoretical psychological frameworks, educational systems can enhance their role in promoting a democratically sustainable society. This approach aligns with global trends in education and emphasises the development of knowledge as well as the cultivation of globally aware, responsible citizens capable of addressing current and future challenges. Ongoing efforts to formulate and implement education for sustainable development will significantly influence the future of democratic governance and sustainable living for the people of Nigeria.

### Relationship between Educational Psychology and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

One tool for constructing a nation is education. Teachers take the lead in all aspects of education, including capacity building, training and retraining programs, and all other forms of learning. For this reason, it is critical to give substantial consideration to educational psychology and teacher training. The responsibility of training and preparing teachers for early childhood, elementary, and secondary education falls on the field of education. In addition to improving classroom instruction, teacher education prepares highly trained educators who are devoted, resourceful, self-assured, professional, and able to meet the demands of the country's development (Onwuka, 2014).

Most teacher education programs incorporate educational psychology as a fundamental subject, with most states mandating at least one course on the psychology of human learning for teacher certification. Typically, teacher education majors at colleges and universities take courses in the psychology of learning, development, and instruction before beginning their methods courses, practicums, and actual classroom teaching. These courses are intended to help student teachers understand how students learn and develop (Nwokeocha, 2014), equipping them to apply this knowledge in their practical teaching experiences and future classrooms.

The instruction of educational psychology in teacher education has historically been grounded in well-established psychological assumptions about how prospective teachers learn and apply their knowledge to teaching (Megbo & Hassan, 2015). It is essential to start

by understanding how student teachers comprehend the theories and principles of learning and development that are crucial to educational psychology. Today's educational psychology textbooks typically include this information, covering what Lobert (2021) refers to as pedagogical content knowledge and insights into learners and their characteristics. This includes the theoretical and practical knowledge students bring to a subject, their potential misunderstandings, and the stages they go through from initial understanding to mastery. It also entails being aware of methods for determining students' misconceptions and evaluating their comprehension (Green, 2020).

Despite being ingrained in a particular subject or content area, the information above obviously relates to the psychology of learning. Examples of relevant knowledge include a teacher's deep understanding of the subject matter they are teaching and a student teacher's grasp of the cognitive processes through which students acquire specific knowledge in the classroom.

### Relevance of Educational Psychology on Sustainable Democratic Development in Nigeria

Educational psychology has significantly contributed to both the theory and practice of education. It is crucial for teachers to understand educational psychology because it provides them with essential skills and strategies to address challenges in the teaching-learning process. This understanding is particularly relevant as it empowers teachers to offer their students a quality education and an effective teaching style. Education has three main objectives. According to Ekundayo (2015), these include the student, the learning environment, and the learning process. The teacher's top priority is the student or youngster. To truly get to know a child, a teacher needs to grasp the psychology of the child's development, taking into account not just his surroundings but also, if applicable, his genetic makeup. The student and the educational process are linked once more. Given that educational psychology describes the process of learning, expertise in this area is useful for educators. The educator also needs to consider the context of the learning. This covers the educational institution, the classroom setting, the goals to be met, the expectations of the parents, and so forth. Due to these educational priorities, it is imperative that teachers possess an understanding of educational psychology (Fadugbo, 2017).

Olamilekan (2014) examines the effects of the Boko Haram insurgency on the educational environment in Northern Nigeria, particularly in the North-East, and its psychological impact on students and teachers. The study provides an overview of Boko Haram's history and attacks before discussing the importance of educational psychology in creating a conducive learning atmosphere. Due to the insurgency, school children and teachers experience trauma, fear, and anxiety, which severely disrupt their educational experience. The research highlights how the crisis undermines educational development and offers recommendations to address the psychological challenges faced by students and teachers in affected areas. Suleiman and Abdulkareem (2023) investigate the impact of constructive and social play on primary school pupils' academic performance in numeracy in Niger State, Nigeria. The study addresses the potential causes of poor numeracy performance, such as inadequate instructional materials and teaching methods, and employs Vygotsky's

social-cultural theory as a framework. Using a pretest-posttest control group quasi-experimental design, the researchers selected six schools through stratified random sampling and utilized a Numeracy Performance Test. The results indicate that both social and constructive play significantly enhance pupils' numeracy performance, with no notable differences related to gender or school type affecting the outcomes.

Ononaiwu (2023) explores the vital role of self-regulated learning (SRL) in educational psychology, focusing on how it shapes students' engagement and learning processes. The study delves into the intricate dynamics of SRL, emphasizing its impact on academic achievement and lifelong learning. Through a comprehensive analysis of various authors' perspectives, empirical studies, and practical applications, the research highlights the interconnectedness of metacognition, motivation, and cognitive strategies in driving successful learning experiences. Ononaiwu also discusses effective SRL strategies that optimize student achievement, offering insights into how educators can promote these self-regulation techniques to enhance learning outcomes. Alebiosu et al. (2021) investigate the implications of counseling, psychological, and social services on the academic performance of primary school pupils in Southwest Nigeria. Using a descriptive survey research design, the study sampled 1006 primary school teachers across three states in the region. Data were collected through a questionnaire (CPSSQ) and a data retrieval format (DRF). The study examined how psychological, emotional, and social factors affect pupils' health and academic performance. Findings reveal that these services significantly impact school health programs, which, in turn, influence students' academic success. The study recommends enhancing school health programs to support pupil development and academic achievement.

The following are some ways in which educational psychology contributes to sustainable development:

1. Teachers with a strong grasp of psychology can effectively teach while acknowledging each child's unique qualities. Children have innate desires, inclinations, aptitudes, and tendencies that drive their actions.
2. It helps teachers understand the neurological and psychological bases of behaviour, including the roles of glands, the nervous system, instincts, emotions, motivations, play, intelligence, heredity, and the environment.
3. Knowing students' interests, aptitudes, problems, achievements, and educational and career plans enables teachers to provide appropriate support.
4. Educational psychology significantly influences personality development and helps teachers understand students' unconscious minds.
5. Self-awareness among teachers is beneficial. They become familiar with the traits of effective teaching and the psychology behind it.
6. Children go through distinct developmental stages: infancy, childhood, and adolescence, each with unique characteristics. Teachers who are aware of these traits can tailor their training to align with educational goals.



7. Recognising individual differences among students allows teachers to adapt their instruction to meet the needs of each student, fostering an environment where all can reach their full potential.
8. Educational psychology provides insights into classroom learning dynamics and the challenges of learning in general and specific contexts.
9. Teachers can understand learning principles, different approaches to learning, learning difficulties and their remedies, and factors that promote effective learning.
10. Educational psychology offers knowledge on effective teaching methods, helps develop new instructional strategies, and informs on various techniques to address teaching challenges across different age groups.
11. By studying educational psychology, teachers can address the causes of children's issues at different developmental stages.
12. Educational psychology helps teachers support mental health by understanding factors contributing to mental illness and maladjustment.
13. Using psychological tools, teachers can evaluate their students' learning outcomes and adjust their teaching methods accordingly.

### Challenges of Implementing Educational Psychology in Nigeria

1. **Cultural Resistance:** Traditional educational methods often emphasize memorization, which can hinder the introduction of new, psychologically-driven approaches that focus on critical thinking.
2. **Inadequate Infrastructure:** Many schools lack essential resources, such as trained psychologists and appropriate facilities, to implement educational psychology effectively.
3. **Insufficient Teacher Training:** Educators frequently lack sufficient training in educational psychology, which restricts their ability to integrate its principles into their teaching practices.
4. **Rigid Curriculum:** The national curriculum is often excessively rigid, hindering the integration of educational psychology concepts into daily teaching practices.
5. **Socioeconomic Disparities:** Students from disadvantaged backgrounds may struggle to benefit from psychological approaches due to poverty and limited access to essential educational resources.
6. **Limited Research Base:** There is a limited research base in educational psychology, characterized by a shortage of localized studies. This scarcity makes it challenging to adapt global theories to Nigeria's unique cultural and social context.

### Limitations of Implementing Educational Psychology in Nigeria

1. **Narrow Focus on Academic Performance:** Educational psychology frequently emphasizes enhancing academic success

while overlooking the emotional and social dimensions of student development.

2. **Limited Scope of Application:** Psychological principles can lead to inconsistent outcomes, where some individuals may benefit while others do not.
3. **Dependency on Western Models:** The excessive reliance on Western models of educational psychology may not adequately address the specific cultural needs of Nigeria.
4. **Insufficient Collaboration:** There is often inadequate collaboration between psychologists and educators, resulting in a disconnect between theoretical knowledge and its practical application in the classroom.
5. **Lack of Awareness and Understanding:** Many educators and stakeholders are not fully aware of the benefits of educational psychology, which hinders its adoption and implementation.
6. **Resource Constraints:** Financial limitations frequently hinder schools from obtaining the essential tools and training required for the effective implementation of educational psychology.

### Conclusion

The study found that educational psychology plays a crucial role in enhancing sustainable democratic development in Nigeria. The National Policy on Education highlights the goal of producing self-reliant individuals who can support themselves and contribute to society. Achieving this objective requires coordinated efforts from the government, education ministries, school administrators, parents, teachers, counselors, and students, all of whom have significant roles in revitalizing and sustaining the Nigerian educational system. Psychology is pivotal in bridging gaps between family, school, and society through programs offering individual and group counseling and therapeutic services. Teachers are central to the educational sector, which is vital for national growth. They are responsible for implementing instructional programs, and understanding the science of behaviour and mental processes is essential for their success. Educational psychology, a key component of teacher education, applies psychological knowledge to the field of education. It involves studying human behaviour in educational settings using psychological principles and methods. This study highlights that educational psychology provides teachers with the tools to address the diverse needs of students, fostering an environment conducive to learning and personal growth. By applying these principles, teachers can better support students' academic and personal development, contributing to the broader goal of sustainable democratic development in Nigeria.

### Recommendations

In order to enhance education for long-term national development in Nigeria, the following recommendations are made using educational psychology:

1. The National University Commission (NUC) and the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) should prioritise educational psychology during the accreditation of teacher education programs.
2. Universities require Ph.D.s in educational psychology, and lecturers teaching educational psychology courses in colleges of education must hold at least a master's degree. The selection of academic staff members for the teachers' education program should not be compromised or politicised in any way.
3. The administration and academic staff should ensure the proper implementation of educational psychology courses in the teachers' education program, considering the numerous benefits that educational psychology provides to educators.
4. In order to equip student teachers with the psychological theories and principles essential for effective management of learning environments, they should be thoroughly immersed in all aspects of educational psychology.

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