

Early Childhood Education for Sustainable Development in sub-Sahara Africa

Adenike A. Akinsemolu¹, Adejoke O. Ogunkoya²

¹The Green Institute, Ondo, Nigeria

²University of East London, London, England

Abstract

This article sought to explore the progress of early childhood education (ECE) for sustainable development in Sub-Saharan Africa. The study has used an explorative methodology to review the existing studies conducted in the subject area. The search was limited to the year 2000 to establish the relationship between ECE and sustainable development. The article has also examined the significance of ECE for sustainable development. Findings indicate that in recent years, more priority has been placed on countries developing national intersectoral ECE policies within Sub-Saharan Africa. It identifies that national ECE policies are critical for promoting children accessing essential early childhood services. While these policies have increased significantly during the last two decades, these documents are insufficient in the absence of appropriate enforcement and implementation. Also, despite the increasing significance of ECE, the article has established that various challenges have continued affecting effective implementation” socio-economic challenges, insufficient teaching and learning resources, low number of teachers, poor remunerations, and financial constraints. To this end, the philosophy/African spirit of Ubuntu has been identified as a critical concept in enhancing the sustainable development of ECE programs that respond to the children's needs. Focus should be on socioemotional development, spiritual development, policy adoption, cost, implementation plan, institutional actors, and technical support for guiding local implementation.

Keywords: Agenda 2063, early childhood education, sub-Saharan Africa, sustainable development, Ubuntu

1.0 Introduction

Economic inequalities along with other social deprivation forms in early childhood closely intertwine to social disadvantage and lower-income during adulthood. Despite this, studies have demonstrated that investment in early childhood education is a cost-effective technique that can prevent childhood disadvantages, leading to higher levels of economic profit for the community, individual, and country (Agbenyega, 2013). Ideally, early childhood education results in social, emotional, moral, and cognitive development gains that spill over into the later phases of development. Child development studies have reiterated that all nations should raise their expenses on early childhood education, paying significant attention to sustainable and practical programs and policies. Early childhood education has developed numerous practical and policy initiatives to implement and sustain quality within developing African states. Promoting quality early childhood education in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), especially for disadvantaged children, grapples with numerous cultural, economic, and political obstacles. The negative experiences, including cultural and tribal attitudes, incompetent teachers, political instability, and exposure to war violence, are major factors that inhibit the realisation of quality early childhood education in SSA (Agbenyega, 2013). Moreover, low family income, chronic corruption, and poor environmental conditions within some of the states in Africa have aggravated the situation in terms of barriers to the development of early childhood and care. Sustainable practices in SSA instead of other practices from other parts of the world can be instrumental for promoting early childhood education (ECE) and enhancing its prospects for advancing sustainable development in this region.

2.0 Overview

Early childhood education (ECE) is on the reform agenda of many SSA states intending to provide developmental care and support for children during their formative years to enable them to acquire the skills needed for future success and learning within the school. It is anticipated that this success will significantly accrue benefits for the socio-economic development of society. Despite Africa undergoing significant transformation since being in contact with the European cultural elements, promoting universal access to ECE remains a critical challenge for policymakers and educators in SSA. According to Agbenyega (2013), Africa has emerged from European contact with what is termed as a "bruised cultural identity" that has affected child development in SSA in a significant way. Mothers play a crucial role in children's education, and this role continues to undergo substantial shifts within SSA during contemporary times. Various studies discuss the changing perspectives of childhood in SSA by identifying the substantial gains in acknowledgement of the rights of children (Engle et al., 2011). Poverty is a key obstacle to the welfare of children and education. Thus, SSA states have been encouraged to minimise poverty among the households and get rid of all forms of violence affecting children to make a significant impact in the region.

Furthermore, education is important for providing direction to humans, and society has been trying to impart new skills, knowledge and ideas from one generation to another. Education is still also a key instrument for developing the national economies of many SSA countries. It is the reason many countries globally spend large sums of money to offer education. Thus, education contributes to national development and transformation by reducing poverty, which fosters security, peace, and self-reliance. In light of the educational benefits highlighted, SSA has provided education for many years with a lot of the available human resources. However,

some of the factors preventing the region from promoting ECE are slow economic growth, lack of democracy, and turbulent social coexistence.

3.0 Sustainable Development Concept

The concept of sustainable development seeks to create a future generation whose needs are not compromised by the development happening today. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are the target that took over from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2015. The social dimension comprises goals that focus on ending poverty, ending hunger, good health, quality education, reducing inequality, and gender education quality. Conversely, the economic pillars are inclusive economic growth, decent jobs, access to energy, sustainable communities and cities, infrastructure, innovation, industry, sustainable production, and consumption (Emas, 2015). The environmental dimension includes, conservation of marine and water resources, water and sanitation, climate action, sustainable production and consumption patterns, and sustainable utilisation of land resources (Beckerman, 2017). With the three dimensions in mind, the idea of sustainable development seeks to maintain economic progress and advancement while protecting the environment's long-term value, offers a framework for integrating environmental policies, introducing significant and sustainable societal changes, equitable income distribution, and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all.

4.0 Relationship between Early Childhood Education and Sustainable Development

Unlike the SDGs, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) only considered children in terms of maternal mortality and child mortality. Whereas important, both indicators are not sufficient for ensuring the future wellbeing of families and children. Apart from survival, children have a right to do well, develop their full potential and live within a sustainable world. There is also a need to enhance children's awareness about sustainable development to make more progress during the coming years. The health of children, behaviour, and learning during early years, act as the foundation for increasing the probability of school success and their ability to participate in society and community (Hedefalk et al., 2015). In addition, the development and growth of young children are significantly impacted by learning opportunities, economic resources, interaction, and education offered by adults-whether in services, at home or other community environments. The fields that have contributed to this evidence are psychology, anthropology, neurosciences, and sociology. The field of neurosciences has demonstrated the way brain architecture develops during early schooling years through a process that is quite sensitive to external factors (Hedefalk et al., 2015). Home experiences and other care settings like communities, kindergartens, and daycare centres interact with genes, thus impacting brain architecture development and establishing a crucial foundation for the future. Alternatively, psychology studies discuss the way children develop various skills, including cognitive (mathematics, language, and literacy), socio-emotional (pro-social behaviour and empathy), self-regulation, attention, persistence, and executive functions (Chan, 2013). Anthropology and sociology demonstrate the role played by culture and context in child development. Contrarily, economics depicts how this investment leads to better returns and lower costs on fighting crime and disease (Young, 2014). Given the evidence for early

childhood education benefits for societies and children, investments in ECE are perceived to be an integral aspect of sustainable development. Ideally, such investment in ECE will lead to healthier, better-educated children and a peaceful and prosperous future. SDGs target 4.2 seeks to ensure equitable and quality inclusive education as well as promote lifelong opportunities for all. This target insinuates that by 2030, all boys and girls need to have access to quality ECE programs prior to the commencement of formal learning.

5.0 Relevance of Early Childhood Education for Sustainable Development

Early childhood for sustainable development (ECE) has all the possibilities to lead children into interest, knowledge, and values that will support a more sustainable life and world, since children by nature are open-minded and curious toward the world around them, including humans and animals. Education starts at birth. Since the United Nations (UN) has pointed out ECE (pre-primary education) as a quality aspect of lifelong learning in education globally, educators must take Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) seriously and develop it to become part of all children's life. ESD should be among the most important elements in young children's education (Richter et al., 2017). The first years of life are the most critical, as the foundation of values, attitudes and personality will guide feelings, behaviour, and thoughts for the rest of the life. Notably, the structures of attitudes and values developed during the early years are the permanent and strong roots for someone's whole life. These structures will always be utilised as references for major decisions challenging women and men. These first values ascertain moral and ethical behaviours in life. When one encounters complex and challenging situations, the values that initially carved the personality will guide resolutions and options, behaviours, or reactions. Thus, if SSA desires adults within the next generation to be stewards and protectors of the planet, it is crucial to include the study of nature and the relationship

between people and the environment into the ECE curriculum or program. Anything deeply lived, felt, and practised during the early human development years can remain for the rest of an individual's life.

Children are quite interested, sensitive, and curious regarding the elements of nature. Hence, ECE, from the early beginning, needs to incorporate creative experiences as well as exploratory activities with elements like seeds, water, wing, plants, and flowers. Children are also emotionally touched and intellectually interested in nature. According to evidence, adults living in large towns recall unforgettable moments they experience during their infancy. This can be an efficient educational strategy to consider in these early dispositions, interests, and curiosity (Richter et al., 2017). Thus, countries in the SSA region should include the study of nature as a key area of activity within ECE. Currently, with the global concern for environmental degradation, the subject continues to attract political interest.

Furthermore, SSA governments must recognise the significance of ECE in the development of a sustainable society. Early childhood education, ECE, has not yet been part of great SSA national decisions. Perhaps, this is because the impacts of ECE are only acknowledged in the long and medium-term or due to the fact that children are still perceived as citizens of secondary importance when other aims, objectives, and challenges of a nation are taken into account. This is why countries in SSA should demonstrate their priority of children by putting them on the national agenda.

Education for Sustainable Development, ESD, is explicitly acknowledged by SDGs. ESD is indeed vital in achieving the 17 SDGs. Early childhood education aims to holistically develop a child's socio-economic, physical, and emotional needs to create a solid and robust foundation

for wellbeing and lifelong learning. ECE has the potential of creating able, responsible and caring future citizens. Experiences in children's early life influence their capacity to comprehend biases and stereotypes, thus becoming productive and healthy society members. In situations where formal educational programs are lacking, non-formal education can be used as an important aspect of a community program or to offer grandparents and parents opportunities to discuss what can be done differently in day-to-day life to effectively bring about sustainability (Richter et al., 2017). To ensure children's full potential is in tandem with sustainability, it is crucial to develop a vision for ECE and other vital measures to contribute to SDGs 2030 vision. In a nation like Nigeria, along with other SSA states, ECE needs to be considered an important right for ensuring quality health care, nutrition, and education provision. ECE is also the best investment that countries in the region can make to foster human resource development, social cohesion, and gender equality. Investing in ECE is also critical for combating inequalities in the education sector. This is because many children from deprived communities do not have exposure during their childhood. The other relevance of ECE for sustainable development is that quality early childhood education can increase the chances of children earning better wages when they join the labour market.

6.0 ECE as a Priority for Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)

Agenda 2063, a developmental blueprint proposed by the African Union, requires that Africa invest in science, technology, mathematics, engineering, and skills to enable Africans to drive the continent's development. Thus, Agenda 2063 has developed pillars for priority areas that will actualise this vision. One of the most critical pillars related to early childhood education is investing in its people as the most precious resource. Agenda 2063 clarifies that these

resources include health and nutrition and the expansion of quality education. It acknowledges that SSA and its population are under threat with dire environmental and socio-economic issues, and population growth cannot be controlled, thus negatively affecting children. In this regard, Agenda 2063 emphasises the need to transform ECE for sustainable development and holistic development to secure the future of children (DeGhetto et al., 2016). However, it recognises that this can only be actualised if ECE intentionally considers sustainability issues in the day-to-day learning and teaching activities. ECE can be transformed for sustainability in SSA by teaching children about environmental security through nature awareness, play, appropriate waste utilisation and disposal, and personal hygiene. Agenda 2063 also recommends that ECE needs to be remodelled in ways that can steer sustainability, while national policies and curriculum on ECE needs to embed sustainable development issues in young children's education.

7.0 Challenges Facing Early Childhood Education (ECE) Development in Sub-Saharan Africa

Despite the increasing significance of ECE, various challenges have continued affecting its effective rollout. They include financial constraints, inadequate learning and teaching resources, a high ratio of children to teachers, socio-economic factors, and poor remuneration; they are discussed in the following sections below.

7.1 Resource Constraints

Many teachers lack sufficient learning and teaching facilities and resources ideal for early learning. They include inappropriately ventilated classrooms, safe, clean water, inadequate play materials, and playgrounds (Donohue & Bornman, 2014). It means that teachers lack the

resources necessary for implementing early childhood education development effectively. This deters the implementation of sustainable learning environments that are needed for helping deprived children to have better academic performance.

7.2 Socio-Economic Constraints

Ill-health and malnutrition are factors linked to the socio-economic factor. Such factors can substantially damage children's cognitive processing capacity. Children whose cognitive development is impacted by malnutrition and ill-health may need more instructional hours to learn several skills. Thus, implementing ECE can be critical, particularly for low-income SSA states. Socio-economic differences affecting ECE development effective implementation also cuts across the region, with some countries having Arid and Semi-Arid Land, ASAL, regions (Mohammed, 2013). Such regional disparities affect access to ECE and care, where enrollment levels in marginalised and rural areas are low compared to those in urban areas. Children from marginalised communities living in ASAL regions grapple with the lack of access to ECE. An example is the nomadic Maasai community in Kenya, which is among the communities that experience the least access to ECE and care due to regional disparities and culture.

7.3 Financial Constraints

Financial challenges can result in the ineffective implementation of ECE. At the macro-level, various SSA states, including Kenya, have grappled with the enormous debt burden owed to the International Monetary Fund and World Bank fiscal policies, including the Structural Adjustment Programs. Debt-servicing programs are heralded as partly responsible for a substantial government funding reduction for subsidised education, school, and healthcare-

related expenses (Souto-Manning, & Rabadi-Raol, 2018). Consequently, families have more responsibilities in implementing ECE programs.

7.4 Inadequate Staff and Poor Remuneration

In the region, the ratio of teachers to children has elicited attention among researchers, particularly factors that affect learning and teaching processes. Early childhood education development has not been left out, and research demonstrates that there has been a rise in the teacher-child ratio (Souto-Manning, & Rabadi-Raol, 2018). The ratio remains quite critical in ensuring quality outcomes and fostering sustainable development. In addition, ECE teachers have poor remuneration terms.

8.0 Using Ubuntu Philosophy to enhance Sustainability of ECE and Holistic Development of Children

Ubuntu is an African belief which implies being human. It talks about gentleness, hospitality, humaneness, personal sacrifice for others, and being vulnerable. Ubuntu appreciates that one's humanity is bound by another person's, for people can only be human together. The world continues to have immense pressure as it grapples with significant political, economic, health, and environmental threats. In SSA, following a protracted period of civil unrests, floods, severe droughts, virus outbreaks, climate crises, and raging bush fires, there is evidence that the region is in a deplorable state. As a matter of fact, the United Nations, UN, environmental chief recently asserted that the natural environment is sending signals through the COVID-19 pandemic (Carrington, 2020). In addition, the media has elicited more awareness of anthropogenic activity that needs to be held accountable for the environmental destruction and damaged link between people and nature. Thus, Lehtonen et al. (2018) aver that people are being mandated to rethink mechanisms of creating sustainable futures for young children.

According to Georgeson (2018), a sustainable future needs that attention should be focused on early childhood and care for sustainable development towards a holistic approach to the society and environment. Quality ECE lies at the heart of sustainable development (MacDonald, 2015). The roles played by early childhood education and care for sustainability (ECECfS) and education for sustainability (EfS) are acknowledged in previous research (Hill et al., 2014; Warwick et al., 2018) as being important building blocks for adult lives. Young children should be provided with experiences to develop their fundamental values, skills, and attitudes and develop behaviours geared towards the preservation of the environment and promotion of social justice and fairness for life (Siraj-Blatchford, 2018). The World Health Organization (WHO) supports this as it states that "if we change the beginning of the story, we change the whole story" (WHO 2018, p.2). To realise quality education, Taylor et al. (2015) believe that it will be crucial to sensitise children on the lifestyle choices they make, develop independent thinking, develop them into responsible citizens, and foster tolerance between individuals and cultural transformation. Such a transformative mindset that develops children to become environmental stewards includes a broader context: a holistic development supported by the school, community, mentors, guardians, parents, and teachers (Mrogan & Waite, 2018).

Mugumbate and Chereni (2019) aver that the Ubuntu philosophy emphasises the way African communities raise children, with the main message being that people need to care for others in the same way they care for themselves. The Ubuntu idea translated as humanness traces back to the pre-colonial ways and is viewed as a cultural strength that constitutes the African culture (Van Breda, 2019). Its philosophical underpinnings can be found in many African expressions. Various examples illustrate this philosophy in SSA. For example, Shumba (2011, p.90) argues that "umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu" isiZulu phrase is translated as "a person is a person through

other people." Such phrases, along with common sayings, such as "it takes a village to raise a child", appreciates the value of humanness in culturally connected SSA societies. Meltz (2016) also contends that harmonious relations between the child, family, and people outside the family circle entrench respect for others and remain indispensable for achieving human excellence. While it has been acknowledged that it can be problematic to successfully use Ubuntu as an ideal framework in EfS (Sheya, 2014), it is worth noting that embracing this approach in early childhood education development can offer opportunities for exploring the way African practices and values can advance the sustainability agenda.

8.1 Relationship between Young Children and the Environment

One of Ubuntu's key elements is the concept of a united relationship, and it is argued that when young children understand the link between people and the environment, they may feel empowered to build sustainable change. According to Davis (2008), sustainable change can only be possible if interactions extend way beyond the child. Mugumbatu and Chereni (2019) agree with the concept of an extended relationship by identifying five levels of relationships, including the community, the family, the environment, the individual, and the spiritual level as Ubuntu integrated framework components. They explain the way children are not considered the central unit of analysis, and this should change by focusing on a child's development in a shared life community. Thus, the focus should be on the "we" instead of the "I". According to Museka and Madondo (2012), despite the focus of Ubuntu being a shared approach, it also appreciates the holistic approach to children education. They contend that holism is an important aspect in ,fine-tuning' development for sustainable development.

The social, physical, cognitive, emotional, and spiritual levels of interdependence (part of Mugumbate and Chereni, 2019 integrated framework) influence a child's holistic development,

and what takes place in a specific layer also impacts the other layers. The young child relies on others, and others rely on the child. Within this model, the young child is viewed as part of a broader system that places value on all people's wellbeing while steering change for sustainable development. In maintaining that sustainable and environmental challenges are usually quite complicated for one person to solve, this view is supported by Shumba (2011). According to him, the concept of ecological intelligence insinuates that children must collaborate with others and share knowledge. Mcunu (2004) emphasises that application of knowledge means exhaustively using inputs from all holistic development facets, thus implying that if one dimension is imbalanced, it may lead to social, emotional, cognitive or physical imbalances.

8.1.1 Social and Emotional Development

It is an integrative process whereby children begin discovering their identity, expressing and managing emotions, and establishing beneficial relationships with others. Zhou et al. (2016) argue that socio-emotional skills include using various interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. More specifically, they include cooperation, demonstrating and regulating emotions, getting along with other people, and learning to share. Other skills include becoming independent, showing commitment, respecting others, and caring for the individual. It is also about understanding equity and diversity, as well as all cultures. Children are part of the family; families are part of the community, while communities are found in the environment and form part of the wider spiritual community. The issue arises as to how social qualities within the integrated model can be used as a social and emotional catalyst for broader societal changes. Caring and sharing lay a foundation for Ubuntu sociocultural thinking. As a participative process, it offers opportunities for communicative and collaborative involvement where children can talk and learn while interacting in shared experiences. In ECECfS, socioemotional

sustainability includes political, cultural, and social challenges that impact the continuity and quality of the lives of young children. Apart from collaboration, Follari (2019) argues that communities, teachers, and families are under obligation to create opportunities alerting young children to the importance of cultural sensitivity. Embracing sustainability entails the embedment of principles of cultural specificity, inclusivity, and involvement in a multicultural world. Waghid (2018) contends that the objective is to understand the potential offered for education for transforming the society during involvement within reflective practices.

Social literacies, including discrimination, prejudice, and stereotyping influence social understanding. Jansen (2011) calls one of the literacies using the term bitter knowledge, which is the way parents have raised children. These views are supported by cultural insensitivity messages that children may have received from various contexts such as friends, church, and the school (agents of socialisation). Folque (2018) contends that cultural sensitivity entails young children acquiring, modelling, and applying the required knowledge, skills, and attitudes to foster social understanding. Failing to model an ethos of respect, compassion, and empathy can lead to bitter knowledge perceptions. Internationally, this notion of bitter knowledge is evidenced in tragic racial-inequity incidents, including the recent unrest and demonstrations after George Floyd's death in the US. Losavio (2020) provides insight that these protests are not isolated but manifest the frustration from a protracted history permeated by racial inequities and injustices. Until racial inequity is tackled, other sustainable issues will remain perpetual and secondary. According to Msengana (2006), Ubuntu's role is one of compassion and tolerance, a philosophy that values forgiveness. Ubuntu can spur a healing process for building nations afflicted with cultural diversity issues. Since it is a theory that concentrates on

recognising all people despite their skin colour, all societies can become skilled in using Ubuntu's assets.

In light of young children's holistic development, Ubuntu may help impart pro-social knowledge to assist young children meet their social needs and support future generations to become a socially healthy community. If sub-Saharan African societies can use the Ubuntu lens and view all persons as equal, it can play a crucial role in redeveloping relationships in socially divided societies. Ubuntu can provide young children with a chance to be critical thinkers, embrace diverse cultures, and consider repercussions for their actions before taking part in detrimental behaviours towards the environment and others.

8.1.2 Spiritual Development

The spiritual dimension of sustainable and holistic development during the early years is viewed as the maintenance of moral values that the community cherishes (Shepherd & Mhlanga, 2014). A sustainable, holistic living approach includes making value judgments regarding destructive behaviour, altering harmful thinking patterns, and using positive skills. Despite significant work on sustainability education, less scholarly research has been devoted to children's responses to educational and moral messages that feature the environment as an issue of concern. Values and morals can be imparted through shared communal moral teaching at all societal levels. Respect and values for sustainability foster qualities that teach children to become creative reflect, and think. Children need to be accorded responsibility to impart knowledge on how they should behave responsibly. For SSA, spiritual development is often holistic and entails understanding the environment and the self. According to Mugumbate and Chereni (2019), children's spiritual development includes the child's morals and inner self-representation. Children are part of the whole environment, the elders, community, the family,

and ancestors. In this holistic approach, it is worth noting that Ubuntu is perceived to be the glue uniting present communities with descendants and ancestors and future and preceding communities. In other words, Ubuntu is a way of including living individuals and connecting them respectfully by internalising ethics, values, and norms. It signifies that the moral principles of community members are mainly attributed to shared experiences that stem from history.

9.0 What Next?

Many sub-Saharan African countries have enacted ECE policies during the last two decades. While various case studies have delved into the policy development process (Neuman, McConnell, & Kholowa, 2014), much less information is available on the effectiveness of such policies, including how to strengthen implementation.

9.1 Importance of Policy Adoption

It is a major concern that 13 states in Sub-Saharan Africa have some ECE policies that are still unadopted. In various states, after completion of the consultation and multiple draft processes, legislative or cabinet approval is still pending. Waiting for approval of a policy has increasingly become an excuse for the delay of implementation planning, financial resource allocation, and scale-up of interventions (Neuman et al., 2014). Notably, such delays can be major impediments that constrain progress in the ECE area. It is crucial for stakeholders in early childhood in these nations to better comprehend and tackle the impediments to policy implementation and adoption.

An example was in Ghana, where the national ECE policy took at least ten years to adopt. In this period, there was a transition in political leadership, resulting in a change in the lead agency with responsibility for coordination of ECE (Naudeau et al., 2012). Ideally, a draft policy can guide the various stakeholders who take part in ECE, but a document does not become important until after formal adoption.

9.2 The Need for a Cost, Implementation Plan

In some states, policy existence is used for proving progress and commitment of government, although very little has changed regarding financial allocations for ECE and levels of coverage for the young children. An implementation plan is a tangible thing to which a government can be held to account. Some states have been reluctant to come up with costed implementation plans due to clearly spelling out the mechanisms and needs for the government's action. Developing a costed implementation plan can also be crucial for identifying the funding gap that should be filled. Vargas-Baron and Schipper (2012) noted that many countries' national templates for policies are quite general, and the operational information is left to strategic plans embraced at ministerial instead of cabinet levels.

9.3 Significance of the “Institutional Anchor”

Selecting an institutional actor or lead agency for coordinating policy development and adoption is quite context-specific. In some states, the choice becomes evident because of long-standing expertise or leadership within areas that relate to ECE. Emerging evidence insinuate that non-sectoral lead agencies can help in the resolution of this competition. Many SSA states have the Ministry of Health responsible for children aged from birth to three years, while the

Ministry of Education is often responsible for children aged four to six years. Various Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) states also tend to have educational ministries responsible for early childhood policies and programs from birth to compulsory school age. According to Bennett and Kaga (2010), this approach may be more applicable or sensible within high- or middle-income states that have strong health systems for their young children. Irrespective of the selected institutional anchor, it should be strong and have the power to ensure that implementation is well-coordinated after adopting the policy. Some of the considerations in determining the strength of institutional anchors include a sufficient number of committed staff that focus on ECE, specific financing allotted for institutional anchors to coordinate ECE at the national level, capacity to monitor ECE quality levels and communication for coordinating across many government agencies.

9.4 Technical Support to support Local Implementation

National policies are usually ambitious and comprehensive documents. Whereas consultations can inform the content at the community level, awareness and technical support could translate policy into action and ensure importance to the local realities. To this extent, some states have developed coordinated mechanisms at the service delivery point to make sure children get integrated services. Such mechanisms may embrace the regular coordination forms between various implementing actors (Neuman & Dervecelli, 2012). Because of the robust role of the private sector within ECD service provision in numerous African states, it can also be instrumental in coming up with mechanisms for collaboration between non-state and state stakeholders, including regular consultation meetings, special task force, and national

coordinating committee. The other recommendations are using legislation to strengthen enforcement and developing special strategies for the nations afflicted and fragile to conflicts.

10.0 Conclusion

In Sub-Saharan, there is increasing recognition of the significance of investing in children. As evidenced in Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Nigeria, these countries grapple with different challenges while enhancing holistic ECE for children. Each of these states has embraced a unique approach to developing ECE policy, while the status of implementation of ECE policies also varies significantly. Although key indicators of the wellbeing of children vary from one country to another, across SSA, the overall levels remain poor. The pattern insinuates that policy implementation and enforcement are important to translating policy into impact. There is a need to further examine the ECE policy implementation in the various states to gain insight from effective implementation arrangements and processes to ensure that states can better enhance the healthy growth, learning, and development of young children.

8.0 References

- Agbenyega, J. S., (2013). Early childhood education in sub-Saharan Africa. In *Oxford Bibliographies* (pp. 1-19). Oxford University Press.
- Beckerman, W. (2017). 'Sustainable development: is it a useful concept?'. In *The Economics of Sustainability* (pp. 161-179). Routledge.
- Bennett, J., & Kaga, Y. (2010). The integration of early childhood systems within education. *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy*, 4(1), 35-43.

Carrington, D. (2020, March 25). Coronavirus: Nature is sending us a message, says UN Environment chief. *The Guardian*.
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/25/coronavirus-nature-is-sending-us-a-message-says-un-environment-chief>

Chan, M. (2013). Linking child survival and child development for health, equity, and sustainable development. *The Lancet*, 381 (9877), 1514.

Davis, J. (2008). What might education for sustainability look like in early childhood? A case for participatory, whole-setting approaches. *The role of early childhood education for a sustainable society*, 18-24.

DeGhetto, K., Gray, J. R., & Kiggundu, M. N. (2016). The African Union's Agenda 2063: Aspirations, challenges, and opportunities for management research. *Africa Journal of Management*, 2(1), 93-116.

Donohue, D., & Bornman, J. (2014). The challenges of realising inclusive education in South Africa. *South African Journal of education*, 34(2).

Emas, R. (2015). The concept of sustainable development: definition and defining principles. *Brief for GSDR, 2015*.

Engle, P. L., Fernald, L. C., Alderman, H., Behrman, J., O'Gara, C., Yousafzai, A., ... & Global Child Development Steering Group. (2011). Strategies for reducing inequalities and improving developmental outcomes for young children in low-income and middle-income countries. *The Lancet*, 378(9799), 1339-1353.

Follari, L. (2015). *Foundations and best practices in early childhood education: History, theories, and approaches to learning*. Pearson Higher Education AU.

Georgeson, J. (2017). Sustainable leadership in the early years. In *Early Childhood Education and Care for Sustainability* (pp. 124-136). Routledge.

Hedefalk, M., Almqvist, J., & Östman, L. (2015). Education for sustainable development in early childhood education: A review of the research literature. *Environmental Education Research*, 21(7), 975-990.

Hill, A., Emery, S., Nailon, D., Dymont, J., Getenet, S., McCrea, N., & Davis, J. M. (2014). Exploring how adults who work with young children conceptualise sustainability and describe their practice initiatives. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 39(3), 14-22.

Jansen, D. (2011). *Knowledge in the blood: confronting race and apartheid past*. Stanford University Press: Stanford.

Lehtonen, A., Salonen, A. O., & Cantell, H. (2019). Climate change education: A new approach for a world of wicked problems. In *sustainability, human wellbeing, and the future of education* (pp. 339-374). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

Losavio, J. (2020, June 5). George Floyd: these are the injustices that led to the protests in the United States. *World Economic Forum*.

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/06/this-is-what-has-led-to-george-floyd-protests-in-the-united-states/>

- Mcunu, T. N. (2004). *The dignity of the human person: a contribution of the human person; a contribution of the theology of Ubuntu* (Doctoral dissertation, Master's dissertation, University of South Africa, Pretoria).
- Metz, T. (2016). Recent philosophical approaches to social protection: From capability to Ubuntu. *Global Social Policy, 16*(2), 132-150.
- Mohammed, U. (2013). Corruption in Nigeria: A challenge to sustainable development in the fourth republic. *European Scientific Journal, 9*(4).
- Morgan, A., & Waite, S. (2017). Nestling into the world: The importance of place and mutuality in the early years. In *Early childhood education and care for sustainability* (pp. 51-66). Routledge.
- Msengana, N. W. (2006). *The significance of the concept" Ubuntu" for educational management and leadership during democratic transformation in South Africa* (Doctoral dissertation, Stellenbosch: University of Stellenbosch).
- Mugumbate, J., & Chereni, A. (2019). Using African Ubuntu theory in social work with children in Zimbabwe. *African Journal of Social Work, 9*(1), 27-34.
- Museka, G., & Madondo, M. M. (2012). The quest for a relevant environmental pedagogy in the African context: Insights from unhu/ubuntu philosophy. *Journal of Ecology and the Natural Environment, 4*(10), 258-265.
- Naudeau, S., Kataoka, N., Valerio, A., Neuman, M. J., & Elder, L. K. (2012). *Investing in young children: An early childhood development guide for policy dialogue and project preparation*. World Bank Publications.

- Neuman, M. J., & Devercelli, A. E. (2012). Early childhood policies in sub-Saharan Africa: challenges and opportunities. *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy*, 6(2), 21-34.
- Neuman, M. J., McConnell, C., & Kholowa, F. (2014). From early childhood development policy to sustainability: the fragility of community-based childcare services in Malawi. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 46(1), 81-99.
- Richter, L. M., Daelmans, B., Lombardi, J., Heymann, J., Boo, F. L., Behrman, J. R., ... & Lancet Early Childhood Development Series Steering Committee. (2017). Investing in the foundation of sustainable development: pathways to scale up for early childhood development. *The lancet*, 389(10064), 103-118.
- Samuelsson, I. P., Li, M., & Hu, A. (2019). Early Childhood Education for Sustainability: A Driver for Quality. *ECNU Review of Education*, 2 (4), 369–373.
- Shepherd, N., & Mhlanga, D. (2014). Philosophy for Children: A Model for Unhu/Ubuntu Philosophy. *International Journal of Science Research Publication*, 4(2), 1-5.
- Sheya, E. (2014). *Indigenous knowledge and Environmental Education: A case study of selected schools in Namibia* (Doctoral dissertation, Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University).
- Shumba, O. (2011). Commons thinking, ecological intelligence and the ethical and moral framework of Ubuntu: An imperative for sustainable development. *Journal of Media and Communication Studies*, 3(3), 84-96.

- Siraj-Blatchford, J. (2018). Preface. In Huggins, V. Evans, D. (eds) *Early Childhood Education and Care for Sustainability: International Perspectives*. Routledge: London.
- Souto-Manning, M., & Rabadi-Raol, A. (2018). (Re) Centering quality in early childhood education: Toward intersectional justice for minoritised children. *Review of Research in Education*, 42(1), 203-225.
- Taylor, N., Quinn, F., & Eames, C. (Eds.). (2015). *Educating for Sustainability in Primary Schools: Teaching for the future*. Springer.
- van Breda, A. D. (2019). Developing the notion of Ubuntu as African theory for social work practice. *Social Work*, 55(4), 439-450.
- Vargas-Baron, E., & Schipper, J. (2012). Review of policy and planning indicators in early childhood. *RISE Institute (commissioned by UNESCO, Paris)*.
- Waghid, Y. (2018). On the educational potential of Ubuntu. In *Re-visioning education in Africa* (pp. 55-65). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.
- Warwick, P., Warwick, A., & Nash, K. (2017). Towards a pedagogy of hope: Sustainability education in the early years. In *Early Childhood Education and Care for Sustainability* (pp. 28-39). Routledge.
- World Health Organization (2018). Nurturing care for early childhood development: a framework for helping children survive and thrive to transform health and human potential. Geneva: WHO.
- Young, M. E. (2014). Addressing and mitigating vulnerability across the life cycle: the case for investing in early childhood. *UNDP Human Development Report Office*.

Zhou, X., Liu, Z., Han, C., & Wang, G. (2016). Early childhood education for sustainable development in China. In *International research on education for sustainable development in early childhood* (pp. 43-57). Springer, Cham.