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**LEADERS' STRATEGIES TO ATTAIN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL FOUR AMIDST THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC PERIOD IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS, GWAGWALADA AREA COUNCIL ABUJA, NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

*The paper was on leaders strategies to attain Sustainable Development Goal four (SDG 4) amidst the COVID-19 pandemic period in secondary schools in Gwagwalada, Area Council, Abuja, Nigeria. The researchers used survey design for the study. The population of the study was 18 principals from junior secondary schools and 8 principals from senior secondary schools, a total of 26 principals (FCT EMIS, 2017). These principals were used through purposive sampling technique. Questionnaire on "Leaders Strategies to Attain Sustainable Development Goal 4 amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic period (LSSDGC19P) was used to collect data for analysis. The instrument was validated by experts in the Educational Management Department, University of Abuja, Nigeria. The reliability of the instrument was obtained through split-half method, Pearson Product Moment and Spearman Rho Rank Order Correlation coefficient were used to analyze the data. The coefficient reliability index obtained was 0.73. Simple frequency was used to collate data and mean statistics was used to analyze data got from research questions. The findings were that leaders in secondary schools have the knowledge of the sustainable development goals which they have to achieve but that they did not apply the strategies to attain Sustainable Development Goal 4 amidst COVID-19 pandemic period. Due to the findings, the researchers recommended leaders in secondary schools should ensure that teachers should use online e-learning device to teach*

*students in lockdown situations. They should relate cordially with staff, communicate with them and make them participate effectively in teaching students using the necessary information communication technology (ICT) devices in crisis times such as the COVID-19 pandemic period.*

**Keywords:** *Leaders, Strategies, Sustainable Development Goals, COVID 19 Pandemic period*

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### **Introduction**

Education is a veritable tool to bring positive change in the lives of the people. It has helped to develop individual's personality thereby aiding them to utilize their potentials, be independent and successful in the society. Education help in the impartation of knowledge, skills, good judgment and wisdom to individuals. At the secondary school formative level students are exposed to knowledge and skills which can help them to be relevant in the society, which also prepares them to achieve advancement in knowledge to attend higher institution. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) in their policy defined education as a process of developing an individual physically, mentally, socially, emotionally, culturally and technologically to enable the individual perform creditable where ever he finds himself. The leaders in the education sectors especially the principals in secondary schools must be well equipped with knowledge and experience to handle secondary school education to yield expected results.

Ajuar & Okandej (2009) and Igbe (2013) posited that proper handling of secondary schools will yield good results at the university in terms of character and learning. Proper handling of secondary education to attain sustainable development goals rest solely on the leaders in secondary schools. To achieve this goal 4, the principal as a leader must make sure that quality teaching/learning is carried out. All the resources, facilities and materials needed must be in their rightful perspectives. Njoku, Amadi & Njoku (2018) maintained that all the educational plans to achieve sustainable development goal in Nigeria have been articulated and put in

place, that curriculum implementation has been reviewed to actualize the goal 4. The principal therefore has to harness all these factors, and use some technological learning processes such as: Skype, Zoom, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp etc. to carry out online/e-learning teaching so as to attain the sustainable development goal 4 at the crucial crises or COVID-19 pandemic period.

Attainment of sustainable development goal 4 is indelible in the minds of concerned leaders, be they school administrators, managers, principals, head teachers and so forth. These leaders are striving to realize educational goals so as to achieve equitable quality education to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. The Sustainable Development Goal four (SDG 4) for the education sector is designated as follows:

- All girls and boys should complete free equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and education learning outcomes;
- All girls and boys should have access to quality early childhood development care and pre- primary education so that they will be ready for primary education;
- Equal access should be given to all women and men to afford quality technical, vocational and tertiary education including university education;
- There should be increase in the number of youths and adults who have relevant skills including technical and vocational skills for employment in decent jobs and entrepreneurship;
- There should be elimination of gender disparities in education to ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training should be offered to the vulnerables including persons with disability, indigenous people and children in vulnerable situation;
- That all youths and substantial proportion of adults both men and women should achieve literacy and numeracy;
- All learners should acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable life styles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of culture, peace, non-violence, global citizenship, appreciation of cultural diversity and cultures contribution to sustainable development (UN General Assembly, 2015).

### **Strategies for Attainment of Sustainable Development Goal Four amidst the Crises Period such the COVID-19 Pandemic Period**

It is imperative that leaders in secondary schools should try their best to ensure that they sustain or put in place the strategies to attain the most valuable sustainable development goal 4, especially those applicable to their various types of educational programmes, during the crises period such as the COVID-19 pandemic period. The sustainable goal mostly applicable to formal secondary school is that “all learners should acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable life styles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of culture, peace, non- violence, global citizenship, appreciation of cultural diversity and cultures contribution to sustainable development”. To this effect, Vidoni & Grasseti (2003) posited that school leaders are actors in the secondary school environment to translate educational policies and programmes into everyday practice. Educational leaders or managers therefore must make sure that all the educational machineries they need are intact and functional in pandemic periods so as to be able to translate the development goal into practical situation for its achievement and to carryout teaching and learning process. These leaders have to apply their leadership expertise and strategies to attain the objectives and goal of the designated educational programmes even in crisis period such as the COVID-19 lockdown period. To achieve their goal some school leaders during the lock down period operated the online/e-learning system creating platforms for students to receive lessons. This promote independent learning, gender equality, non-violence, enhance culture diversity, peace, acquisition of knowledge and skills. The school leaders should make sure that all the students benefit from this online learning. It is a fact that education is the transmission, creation, adaptation of information, knowledge, skills and values to bring positive life changes, hence, it must be disseminated to all involved (Abdulraham, Ihebereme & Njoku (2015), Amanchukwu (2014), UNESCO Thematic Think Piece (2012) and Shukka (2005). Chukwu & Mezieobi (2018) listed the strategies which educational leaders should maintain and execute in order to attain the stated sustainable development goal even in

crisis periods to include: that school leaders should:

1. Carryout continuous staff professional development and training even if it is online. This will help in keeping staff up-to-date with innovations in their various fields of specialty for them to be relevant in the society. This training could be done on line or face to face by adopting the face to face teaching methods during the COVID-19 pandemic period. All the safety rules such as washing of hands with alcoholic sanitizer, applying mouth cover, maintaining social distancing and other rules must be observed. The teachers should be trained on how to teach students during crises period such as covid 19 pandemic period.
2. Maintain teaching ethics which will check mate the activities of teachers and the extent of their relationship with students.
3. Ensure that they have sufficient and adequate staff strength, who are well trained in their areas of specialization. They should be professionals who can deliver services with appropriate pedagogies and methodologies. These teachers should also be motivated to be euthanistic and committed to teaching.
4. Make sure that they have well equipped functional laboratories, libraries with functional innovative equipment and books. All educational and instructional materials must be current, functional and enough for the users.
5. Be prudent and honest in managing finances even when the fund is limited. The leaders must initiate strategies for fund raising through Internally Generated Revenue (ICR). For these leaders to succeed even in crisis period they must utilize the available resources prudently and effectively.
6. Develop and maintain the school infrastructures, this will help them not only to achieve their objectives but also to leave legacies for posterity. These infrastructural structures can contribute to the improvement of teaching and learning. Chukwu & Mezieobi (2018) emphasized that well maintained and kempt school infrastructure, serene environment can beautify the school that this can also attract, gives natural beautification to schools, that this can interest students and draw parents to patronize the schools no matter the period of

time.

7. Maintain discipline among students for effective moral standard to be adhered to.
8. Relate cordially with both staff and students. Leaders should have effective communication skills and have the leadership ability to coordinate the activities of staff, communicate and carry all of them along. He should get the staff inform on current or imminent happenings especially in crisis period such as the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown period. Laila (2015) maintained that for the school leaders to achieve the set objectives and goals they have to administer and manage human materials and educational resources properly as well as perform other administrative functions effectively. Vaillant (2015) submitted that the tasks of the school leaders have increased in the last decades and moreso in crises period hence these leaders must acquire the needed expertise to be committed, undaunted, resilient and tactful to harness all the human materials and financial resources with good will to actualize the educational sustainable development goal 4.
9. Have all Information Communication Technology (ICT) equipment to disseminate online teaching to students during crises period such as COVID-19 pandemic period.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Secondary Education is a challenging level in the educational system especially in crisis times as that of COVID-19 pandemic lock down period. The leaders at this level of education must be equipped with realistic effective strategies in order to be able to attain the valued sustainable development goals. It therefore warrant these leaders to apply their expertise well, utilize their leadership quality of cooperating and relating cordially with staff, students and parents. The principals therefore must have effective measures to maintain the school system, to make sure that they maintain the expected standard which will make it realistic to achieve the stated objectives. This will enable these leaders to attain the designated sustainable development goal four. The question is do leaders in secondary schools have the knowledge of the sustainable development goal four

which they have to achieve amidst COVID-19 pandemic or any crises or any crises periods? Also do they develop strategies to achieve this the sustainable development goal 4 at the COVID-19 pandemic period. The researchers are motivated to find out these in the research study.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The study is on leaders' strategies to attain sustainable development goals amidst the COVID-19 pandemic period, in secondary schools in Gwagwalada Area Council, Abuja. specifically the purpose of the study is to:

1. Find out whether leaders have the knowledge of the sustainable development goal four which they have to achieve in secondary schools in Gwagwalada Area Council, Abuja.
2. Find out what strategies leaders (principals) have applied to attain sustainable development goal 4 amidst the COVID-19 pandemic period in secondary schools in Gwagwalada Area Council, Abuja.

### **Research Questions**

1. Do leaders have the knowledge of the sustainable development goal 4 which they have to achieve in secondary schools in Gwagwalada Area Council, Abuja?
2. What are the strategies applied by leaders to attain sustainable development goal 4 amidst the COVID-19 pandemic period in secondary schools in Gwagwalada Area Council, Abuja?

### **Methodology**

The researchers used survey design for the study. The design helped these researchers to select representatives from the study population. (Nakpodia 2010). Information given by the respondents was used for data analysis. The population of the study was 18 and 8 principals from both junior and senior government secondary schools respectively (FCT EMIS, 2017). The total number of respondents for the population were 26 principals. Purposive sampling technique was applied to consider all the 26 principals as sample for the study. Questionnaire on "Leaders' Strategies to Attain Sustainable Development Goal 4 amidst the COVID-19

Pandemic Period” (LSASDGC19P) was used to collect data. Validation of the instrument was carried out by giving the questionnaire to experts in the Department of Educational Management, University of Abuja. Instrument reliability was obtained by carrying out a pilot study, ten questionnaire were filled by the respondents in the study population. Split-half method was applied to retrieve data from two sets of questionnaire (divided from the 10 questionnaire). Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Spearman Rho Rank Order Correlation coefficient statistics were used to analyze the data. The reliability coefficient index was 0.73, frequency was used to collate data from the questionnaire while mean statistics was used to analyze research questions data. The mean score of 2.50 and above were adjudged as agreed and accepted (in the case of sectional mean) whereas the mean score of 2.49 and below were adjudged as disagreed and rejected (for sectional mean).

### Data Analysis

1. **Research Question One:** Do leaders have the knowledge of the sustainable development goals which they have to achieve in secondary schools in Gwagwalada Area Council, Abuja?

**Table 1: Leaders Knowledge on the Sustainable Development Goals**

**N=26**

S/N	Items on Leaders Knowledge on the Sustainable Development Goals	SA	A	D	SA	$\bar{X}$	Decision
	You have knowledge of the sustainable development goals which are to:						
1	Make all learners acquire the knowledge and skills to promote their life style, culture peace, and be non-violent	12	8	2	4	3.07	Agreed
2	Make girls and boys complete free equitable, quality primary, secondary school and obtain effective learning outcomes	14	6	2	3	3.11	Agreed
3	Promote quality early childhood development and pre-primary education	5	15	4	2	2.88	Agreed
4	Give equal access to men and women to afford technical vocation and tertiary education up to university level	13	4	5	4	3.00	Agreed

5	Increase the number of youths and adults with relevant technical vocational skills to gain jobs and entrepreneurship	8	13	2	3	3.00	Agreed
6	Eliminate gender disparity in education and give equal access to individuals at all levels of education	13	7	3	3	3.15	Agreed
7	Provide vocational training for the vulnerable, disabled and indigenous people	11	6	3	6	2.84	Agreed
8	Help youths and adults, men and women to be literate	14	6	1	5	3.11	Agreed
9	Acquire knowledge to promote human right	12	9	2	3	3.15	Agreed
10	Acquire knowledge to promote gender equality and appreciate cultural diversity	14	7	3	2	3.26	Agreed
<b>Sectional Mean</b>						<b>3.06</b>	<b>Accepted</b>

From table 1 all the respondents agreed with the mean scores of 3.07, 3.11, 2.88, 3.00, 3.00, 3.15, 2.84, 3.11, 3.15 and 3.26 respectively that they have the knowledge of sustainable development goals such as to: make all learners acquire the knowledge and skills to promote their life style, culture, peace and to be non-violent; make girls and boys complete free equitable, quality primary, secondary school and obtain effective learning outcomes; promote quality early childhood development and pre-primary education; give equal access to men and women to afford technical vocation and tertiary education up to the university level; increase the number of youths and adults with relevant technical, vocational skills to gain jobs and entrepreneurship; eliminate gender disparity in education and give equal access to individuals at all levels of education; provide vocational training for the vulnerable, disabled and indigenous people; help youths and adults, men and women to be literate; acquire knowledge to promote human right; acquire knowledge to promote gender equality and appreciate cultural diversity. All the respondents accepted that leaders in secondary schools have the knowledge of the sustainable development goals which they have to achieve with the sectional mean score of 3.06.

**Research Question Two:** What are the strategies applied by leaders in secondary schools to attain sustainable development goal 4 amidst COVID-19 pandemic period?

**Table 2: Strategies Applied to Attain SDG 4  
N=26**

S/N	Items on Strategies Applied to Attain SDG 4	SA	A	D	SD	X	Decision
	You have applied these strategies to attain SDG 4 during COVID-19 pandemic period:						
1	Embark on staff professional development	4	3	6	12	1.69	Disagreed
2	Teaching the students online using ICT devies	3	1	13	9	1.92	Disagreed
3	Have functional and enough educational resources	2	3	9	12	1.80	Disagreed
4	Help teachers adopt appropriate teaching pedagogies and methodologies at the COVID-19 pandemic period	6	3	11	6	2.34	Disagreed
5	Involve in prudent financial management to help the staff	2	3	14	7	2.00	Disagreed
6	Motivate the staff	3	4	11	8	2.07	Disagreed
7	Maintain infrastructures	2	4	8	12	1.84	Disagreed
8	Generating revenue/fund i.e carry out fundraising exercise	7	3	5	13	2.30	Disagreed
9	Maintain teaching ethics and discipline	6	2	11	7	2.26	Disagreed
10	Relate cordially and communicate with all staff during COVID-19 pandemic period	3	3	13	7	2.07	Disagreed
	<b>Sectional Mean</b>					<b>2.03</b>	<b>Rejected</b>

From table two all the respondents disagreed with the mean scores of 1.69, 1.92, 1.80, 2.34, 2.00, 2.07, 1.84, 2.30, 2.26 and 2.07 respectively that they have applied those strategies to attain SDG 4 during the COVID-19 pandemic period: embark on staff professional development; teaching the students online using the necessary ICT device; have functional and enough educational resources/human; help teachers adopt appropriate teaching pedagogies and methodologies; involve in prudent financial management; motivate the staff; maintain infrastructures; generating revenue/fund i.e carry out fundraising exercise; maintain teaching ethics and discipline and relate cordially and communicate with all the staff during COVID-19 pandemic period. All the respondents rejected that leaders in secondary schools applied strategies to attain sustainable development goal 4 amidst COVID-19 pandemic period with sectional mean score of 2.03.

### Discussion of Findings

The finding of the research question one showed that the leaders in secondary schools have the knowledge of educational sustainable development goals. Njoku, Amadi and Njokwe (2018) agreed that the principals in secondary schools have the knowledge of the sustainable development goals because the attainment of these goals rest solely on them. Igbe (2013) maintained that the leaders in secondary schools have to obtain the knowledge and achieve the designated

education goals so as to yield good results in terms of students' character and learning. These leaders have to be well informed during the principals meeting /forum so to strive to achieve the goals.

The finding of research question two proved that principals in secondary schools did not apply any strategies to attain sustainable development goal 4 amidst COVID-19 pandemic period. Vaillant (2015) submitted that the task of school leaders have increased in the last decade that except they are experts on their jobs they will not be able to achieve the expected goals. These leaders have to be committed, be resilient and tactful to harness all the human materials, financial resource to attain the sustainable educational goal 4 even during the COVID-19 pandemic period. Laila (2015) maintained that for leaders to attain the expected goal in secondary schools, they have to apply effective leadership strategies which can give them expected results.

### **Conclusion**

The researchers concluded from the findings of the study that the leaders in secondary schools have the knowledge of the sustainable development goals they are expected to achieve but that they did not apply the strategies to attain these goals amidst the COVID-19 pandemic period in secondary schools in Gwagwalada Area Council, Abuja, Nigeria.

### **Recommendations**

Due to the findings of the study, the researchers recommended that:

1. The leaders in secondary schools should make sure that they have a means to communicate with all the staff during crisis period. This will make the staff to have ideas on what is going on and on what they are expected to do at such period, this will keep them united as one and be functional.
2. The leaders should make sure that in pandemic periods there are avenues to reach out to students, like using online/e-learning devices to teach. They should make sure that all the students benefit from such lessons.
3. The Federal and the State government should support schools with funds to buy Information Communication Technology (ICT) and e-learning devices needed to carry out instructions.
4. The leaders in secondary schools should ensure that they do their very best to carry indigent students in their schools along.
5. Leaders in secondary schools should ensure that they relate cordially with staff in the school. They should realize that this is not the time to disengage staff from their jobs but rather to find best ways to carry their staff along during hazardous periods like the COVID-19 pandemic and lock down period.
6. They should try to render help to staff if they have the capacity to do so.

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