SUSTAINOPRENEURSHIP AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT – OPTIMIZING BUSINESS PROBLEMS FOR BUSINESS SOLUTIONS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
This study examined sustainopreneurship as a panacea for national development. Sustainopreneurship seeks to function in a way that can be passed down through the generations without endangering nature's responsiveness. Sustainopreneurs perform their activities in a way that emphasizes the social, and environmental aspects, and sometimes in a way that highlights the economic aspect. National development translates to sustainable economic growth in which resource use aims at meeting human needs while preserving the environment so that these needs are met not only in the present but also for generations to come. Drawing upon relevant literature review, this paper intends to add value to the ongoing discussion on how to optimize business problems for business solutions in Nigeria through sustainopreneurship thereby improving governance and national development.

Keywords: Sustainopreneurship, sustainopreneurs, national development, Nigeria

Introduction

Sustainopreneurship is the concept of organizing a business to solve problems related to social and environmental sustainability while concurrently ensuring the profitability of the business. It is an idea that emerged from the earlier concepts of social entrepreneurship and ecopreneurship, through sustainability entrepreneurship. The concept aims to use creative business organizations to solve problems related to sustainability. With social and environmental sustainability as a strategic objective and purpose, sustainopreneurship aims to respect the boundaries set to maintain the life support systems in the process. In other words, it is a "business with a cause" where ideally the world problems are turned into business opportunities by deploying sustainability innovations. Sustainability cannot be achieved by government alone. The private sector, as the major tools of economic activity on the national development, and a major source for creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship, must be involved in the achievement of sustainability.

Sustainability means the capacity to maintain some entity, outcome, or process over time (Basiago, 1999). Sustainability connotes improving and sustaining a healthy economic, ecological, and social system for human development (Tjarve & Zemite, 2016; Mensah & Enu-Kwesi, 2018). Stoddart et al (2011) define sustainability as the efficient and equitable distribution of resources intra-generationally and inter-generationally with the operation of socio-economic activities within the boundaries of a finite ecosystem. Ben-Eli (2015), on the other hand, sees sustainability as a dynamic equilibrium in the process of interaction between the population and the carrying capacity of its environment such that the population develops to express its full potential without producing irreversible adverse effects on the carrying capacity of the environment upon which it depends. From this viewpoint (Thomas, 2015) opines that sustainability brings into focus human activities and their ability to satisfy human needs and wants without depleting or exhausting the productive resources at their disposal. Sustainable development is a development that can be continued either indefinitely or for a given period (Dernbach, 2003; Stoddart et al, 2011). Although definitions abound with respect to sustainable development, the most often cited definition of the concept is the one proposed by the Brundtland Commission Report (Schaefer & Crane, 2005). The Report defines sustainable development as development that meets the needs of the current generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The concept of sustainopreneurship was first introduced as a term in 2000 where it was predominantly related to the proactive change management approaches associated with process adjustment with increased respect to the environment (Schaltegger, 2000). In general, the entrepreneurial discourse has opened up to move beyond a strictly economic phenomenon, rather than being perceived primarily as a social process at large (Steyaert & Katz, 2004). Preceding the conceptual formation were two traces of social entrepreneurship and ecopreneurship, dealing primarily with the social and ecological dimensions of sustainability. Social entrepreneurship also involves not-for-profit venturing and charities to innovatively address and solve social problems, whereas ecopreneurship has been primarily focused on solving environmental problems (Gerlach, 2003b)

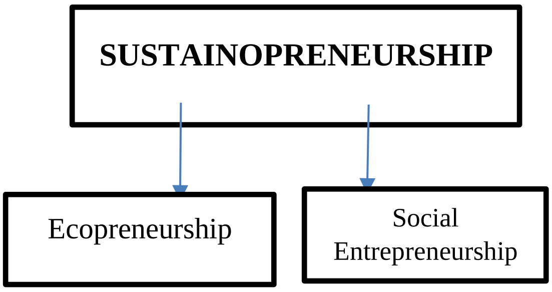

Figure 1: Concept of Sustainopreneurship
Source: Researcher's Desk

John Vaizey defines national development as "the total effect of all citizen forces and addition to the stock of physical, human resources, knowledge and skill." The term national development is very comprehensive. It includes all aspects of the life of an individual and the nation. It is holistic in approach. It is a process of reconstruction and development in various dimensions of a nation and the development of individuals. It includes full growth and expansion of our industries, agriculture, education, social, religious, and cultural institutions. Furthermore, national development implies the development of a nation as a whole including the all-round and balanced development of different aspects and facets of the nation viz. political, economic, social, cultural, scientific, and material.

United Nations Decade Report defined "National development as growth plus change. Change in turn is social and cultural as well as economic and qualitative as well as quantitative". Broadly, the development of the nation captures such parameters as:

i. Development through a planned national economy,
ii. Increase in agricultural production through application of modern technical know-how,
iii. harnessing industrial production,
iv. Development of human resource,
v. Application of science and technology in the production sector,
vi. provision of mass education and
vii. Provision of various facilities to meet the needs and aspirations of disadvantaged, deprived, and poorest of the poor segments of the population.

The concept of national development is shown in the figure below.

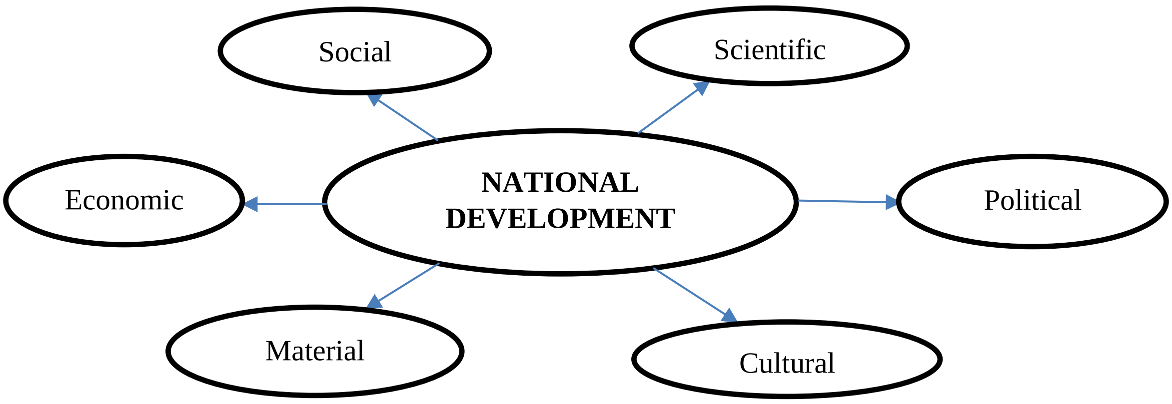

Figure 2: Concept of National Development
Source: Researcher's Desk

Literature Review

Discovery and Opportunity Theory of Entrepreneurship: Schumpeter looks at entrepreneurship as innovation and not imitation. Schumpeter's innovator as an economic and social leader does not care much about economic profits but the joy, he gets from being an innovator and being a server to his society. Schumpeter’s entrepreneur is an innovator in the entrepreneurship arena. In the Schumpeterian theory, the entrepreneur moves the economy out of the static equilibrium. Marz (1991), opines that Schumpeter hardly denied that the process of accumulation is the ladder to social power and social prestige; but he thought the very mainspring of the exercise of the entrepreneurial function is the powerful will to assert economic leadership. The joy of carrying through innovations is the primary motive, the acquisition of social power a subsidiary to it. The entrepreneur is not necessarily the one who invents new combinations but the one who identifies how these new combinations can be applied in production.

This line of reasoning implies that a business owner is considered an entrepreneur only if he is carrying out new combinations. The entrepreneur moves the economic system out of the static equilibrium by creating new products or production methods thereby rendering others obsolete. This is the process of "creative destruction" (creating uncertainty) which Schumpeter saw as the driving force behind economic development (Schumpeter, 1949). Schumpeter’s conception of the entrepreneur focuses attention on the process of technological innovation. A complementary approach concerns the process of uncovering and exploiting all the economic possibilities latent in an existing state of technology or the process of diffusion. Here the emphasis is on the discovery of potential gains to trade and hence, by implication, the move from less to more efficient allocations of resources. Casson (1982) for example, presents a theory that is built on Knightian foundations that sees an entrepreneur as someone who specializes in making judgmental decisions about the coordination of scarce resources.

Innovation is an intentional change or planned change. It connotes revolution as well as originality. Innovation may be seen as imitation which is not original or creative (Godin, 2015c). For Freeman and his associates, innovation excludes simple imitation or adoption by imitators (SPRU, 1972). This view is contested by Carter and Williams who assume a firm “may be highly progressive (innovative) without showing much trace of originality as it may simply copy what is done elsewhere; hence it is meaningless to identify progressiveness with inventiveness” (Carter & Williams, 1958, p.108).

Originality is used to describe innovation from three perspectives:

1) Innovation is different or departure from the original.
2) Innovation is creativity in the sense of combination (recombining ideas or things in a new way).
3) Innovation refers to the origin or being the first to initiate or use a new practice.

Innovative firms often fail to obtain significant economic returns from innovation while customers, imitators, and other industry participants benefit (Teece, 1986). As a consequence, theories of innovation emphasize ways of deterring imitation or keeping imitators at bay to enable innovative firms to reap the benefit of their innovativeness first (Teece, 1986).

Sustainopreneurship

Sustainopreneurship involves voluntary actions for pro-active change in business practices through innovative solutions to problems or exploring opportunities on poverty, health and sanitation, recycling, world peace and justice, and human security issues (Goel & Joshi, 2017). The concept merges entrepreneurship with social and ecological development and to some extent is similar to social entrepreneurship suggested by Dr. Muhammad Yunus (Abrahamsson, 2006). The sustainability concept refers to entrepreneurial or intrapreneurial approaches that aid an integrated development of social, environmental, and economic issues that help an organization to continue its business in the long run (Schaltegger & Burritt, 2005; Whiteman et al., 2013). According to Abrahamsson (2007), the sustainopreneurship concept should work in the areas of health, education, entrepreneurship development, digital unification, and sustainable distribution of energy. The concept of sustainopreneurship is not out of the creative area; here an entrepreneur will exercise innovation for a noble cause mostly for socio-economic development and environmental protection. The most simplified form of the concept is "entrepreneurship and innovation for sustainability - business with a cause" (Abrahamsson, 2006). The key issue here is innovation for sustainable development (Gerlach, 2003).

Entrepreneurship has been associated with profit, risk, and innovation (Filion, 2021). Until recently, it was believed that entrepreneurs are "homo economicus" individuals who only think about profit, evaluate opportunities, and put various types of capital at risk (Van Praag, 1999). However, in recent years, it has been revealed that entrepreneurs cannot be limited to only the economic field and may also have purposes other than economic ones. It is reported that entrepreneurs have started to demonstrate that they have goals to protect the ecosystem, take action against climate change, prevent environmental pollution, not pollute drinking water, and protect biological diversity (Lee & Ahn, 2019). In addition, many new entrepreneurs develop business models that aim to cope with the social challenges of the sustainable development goals (Cukier et. al., n.d.)

The concept of sustainopreneurship involves the type of entrepreneurship that includes all entrepreneurs who adopt sustainability goals (Munoz et.al., 2018). In sustainopreneurship, both classical (commercial) entrepreneurs prioritize making a profit and social entrepreneurs who prioritize social benefit (Gray et. Al., 2014). It has been stated that sustainopreneurship is based on the triple bottom line (TBL), which consists of environmental aspects aimed at long-term protection and mitigation, social aspects that consider all stakeholders, and economic aspects that consider economic performance (Teran-Yepez et.al., 2020). Ecopreneurs or environmental entrepreneurs identify environmental innovations and their market opportunities and successfully implement these innovations resulting in new products or services (Petersen & Schaltegger, 2002a). Two authors (Kyro and Anderson) approached environmental entrepreneurship from a socio-historical perspective. Kyrö (2001) examined the roots of environmental economics and entrepreneurship whereas Anderson (1998) analyzed the roots and essences of environmentalism and enterprise. Both approaches of this category state that entrepreneurship can be used as an instrument for changing society (Anderson 1998, Kyrö 2001).

National Development

National development may lead to sustainable economic growth in which resource use aims at meeting human needs while preserving the environment so that these needs are met not only in the present but also for generations to come. It leads to the meeting of the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This implies that national development aims at meeting the needs of the present while contributing to the future generations' needs. National development is often broken out into three constituent parts namely, environmental sustainability, economic sustainability, and socio-political sustainability. United Nations Development Programme (1997) stated that the level of development of a nation is reflected in the well-being, life expectancy, access to health, child welfare, income inequality, standards of living measured with per capita income, and combined gross primary, secondary, and tertiary enrolment ratio. World Bank (2011) emphasized that development is nothing but improving quality of life.

National development is the transformation of the socio-cultural, economic, and political systems of a country as a whole (Kabir, 2012). According to Lukpata (2013), national development may be seen as the state of maturity that transforms the diverse people of a country arising from the interplay of modern political, economic, and social forces. Other studies have defined national development as continued improvement in the lives of national citizens (Payne & Raiborn, 2001; Nafziger, 2006). Measures of improvement can be seen from the viewpoint of an increase in the gross domestic product, or social, such as life expectancy, literacy rates, elimination of hunger, and availability of healthcare (Nafziger, 2006). Kane and Peggy (1988) opined national development is a progressive and gradual reduction in income inequality and an increase in the real per-capital income, while Nafziger (2006) thinks that national development is the sustained increase in the standard of life that involves high incomes, low unemployment rate, access to education, improved health care and social justice. Similarly, Alina (2012) inferred that an increase in material and spiritual wealth of the populace through better redistribution of income, improvement in health care, and educational system are the indices of national development.

Sustainopreneurship and National Development in Nigeria

Sustainopreneurship seeks economic growth to achieve social progress without harming the environment through the principal support of institutions (Diaz-Sarachaga, 2021). Diverse global endeavours have been hitherto performed by the international community to this end (Sullivan et al., 2018). In this vein, 193 countries adopted the 2030 Agenda in September 2015 as a framework that encompasses 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be reached by 2030 to move social, economic, environmental, and governance dimensions forward (UN, United Nations, 2015). Nevertheless, this prominent initiative also entails the involvement of non-public actors and more specifically private companies (Morioka & Car valho, 2016). Under this principle, the multidimensional approach of social entrepreneurship helps to incorporate business activities into the road map towards sustainability (Mort, & Weerawardena, 2006; Rahdari et al., 2016). Social entrepreneurship is defined as the joint creation of value in social and environmental terms beyond the mere profit maximization (Haugh & Talwar, 2016; Del Gesso, 2020) that enables to address of some key issues, viz; poverty, unemployment, and gender inequalities, social exclusion, and environmental protection (Zhang &Swanson, 2013; ˇSimundˇza et al., 2016). The contribution of social enterprises towards current economic and environmental challenges is on the rise (Dwivedi & Weerawardena, 2018; Hota et al., 2020).

Notwithstanding the attractive features of the developmental plans in Nigeria, the huge money generated from oil export before the sudden clash of oil prices in the international market and consistent support from international bodies to halve poverty, reduce hunger, and eliminate mortality death by the year 2015, the country still recorded a minimum achievement in national development (Andrew, 2013). The poor commitment to the national development plans is evidenced in the incidence of rising poverty, hunger, and unemployment as well as underdeveloped transport infrastructure, poor quality health care delivery, and low standard of education which has historically persisted in Nigeria over the past decades. Statistics revealed that Nigeria had consistently scored low on the Human Development Index (World Bank, 2015). The human development index is measured with life expectancy, access to health, and combined gross primary, secondary, and tertiary enrolment ratio (level of illiteracy) of a country. Nigeria is among the developing countries. Experts consider the country to be quite promising and have enough resources and talented people to achieve impressive results. One of the most important tasks that should be solved to improve the economy of Nigeria is the unification of progressive technologies through sustainopreneurship to improve governance and national development for the citizens. The following problems listed below have been identified that require the expertise of sustainopreneurs to resolve and move Nigeria forward.

- Every year, more than 6 billion kg of waste is dumped in the Atlantic Ocean and Nigerian waterways. Most of it is plastic and is toxic to marine life.
- About 80% of items buried in landfill sites in Nigeria could be recycled.
- If the newspaper publishers in Nigeria used recycled paper for one day, they would save approximately 75,000 trees.
- For every million tonnes of oil shipped, there is one tonne of oil spilled, with attendant consequences.
- Breathing the polluted air in Port Harcourt and its environ increases the risk of lung cancer in the same way smoking 21 cigarettes a day would.
- The Average global sea level increase in the next century is expected to be 0.18-0.58 meters.
- Millions of plastic bags are made each year in Nigeria and less than 1% of these are recycled.
- About a third of the fish in the Niger Delta Nigerian rivers are said to be in the process of extinction due to crude oil spillage contaminating the water.
- In the Niger Delta area of Nigeria many people die from diseases caused by extreme water pollution.
- In Northern Nigeria most people live without electricity while the environment is polluted with power generator fumes. Solar energy that can be converted to electricity is wasted daily.
- One in eight deaths that occur in the world is somehow associated with air pollution
- Recycling and composting prevented 85 million tonnes of material from being disposed of each year. However, humans

produce tens of billions of tonnes of waste annually.

Optimizing Business Problems for Business Solutions in Nigeria

Despite the various efforts to sustain development in Nigeria by the government, little or no impact can be felt by the citizens. It all seems pretty bleak as if Nigeria is at a place where it is very difficult for us as individuals to make a change, but there are people out there who see these problems as possibilities. They see these obstacles as opportunities and resistance as a resource to improve national development. These people are sustainopreneurs who practice the concept called 'Sustainopreneurship'. The list below is not exhaustive as more Nigerians are thinking sustainopreneurially.

1. **WECYCLERS**
   Founder: Bilikiss Adebiyi-Abiola
   Description: Wecyclers is a Lagos-based social enterprise founded by Bilikis Adebiyi-Abiola in 2012. The project aims to tackle the waste management challenge in urban areas by encouraging recycling. Wecyclers operates a mobile-based platform that collects recyclable waste from households and rewards them with points via SMS. These points can be redeemed for household goods or other benefits. By incentivizing recycling, Wecyclers promotes environmental sustainability and helps reduce the amount of waste that ends up in landfills.

2. **RENSOURCE**:
   Founder: Ademola Adesina
   Description: Rensource is a Nigerian renewable energy company founded by Ademola Adesina. The company focuses on providing solar-powered energy solutions to small businesses and communities in Nigeria. Rensource offers solar installations with a pay-as-you-go model, making clean energy more affordable and accessible for businesses that may have difficulty accessing reliable electricity from the grid. By empowering businesses with renewable energy, Rensource contributes to sustainable development and reduces the environmental impact of traditional energy sources.

3. **RECYCLEPOINTS**:
   Founder: Mazi Ukonu
   Description: RecyclePoints is a Lagos-based sustainopreneurship project founded by Mazi Ukonu. The initiative incentivizes waste recycling by offering a reward program to individuals and businesses. Participants earn points for recycling waste materials such as plastic, paper, and metal, which can be redeemed for cash or other benefits. RecyclePoints' innovative approach encourages people to take an active role in waste management and contributes to a cleaner and more sustainable environment.

4. **FARMCROWDY:**
   Founder: Onyeka Akumah
   Description: Farmcrowdy is a Nigerian agritech startup founded by Onyeka Akumah in 2016. The platform connects small-scale farmers with investors willing to fund agricultural projects. Investors can sponsor a farm and earn returns on their investment after the harvest. Through Farmcrowdy, small-scale farmers receive the necessary funding and technical support to improve their productivity and livelihoods. This sustainopreneurship model supports sustainable farming practices, empowers farmers, and contributes to food security in Nigeria.

5. **GREENHILL RECYCLING**:
   Founder: Olaoluwa Osuntokunbo Ogunbanjo
   Description: Greenhill Recycling is a Nigerian waste management and recycling company founded by Olaoluwa Osuntokunbo Ogunbanjo. The company operates recycling centers and transforms waste materials into useful products, contributing to the circular economy. Greenhill Recycling also provides training and education on waste management and recycling practices, raising awareness about environmental sustainability and responsible waste disposal.

6. **SUSTYVIBES:**
   Founder: Jennifer Uchendu
   Description: SustyVibes is a Nigerian media platform and sustainopreneurship project founded by Jennifer Uchendu. The platform focuses on promoting sustainable living and environmentally friendly practices, particularly among young people. SustyVibes creates and disseminates content through various channels, including social

media, to raise awareness about environmental issues and advocate for positive changes in behavior and lifestyle choices that benefit the environment.

7. **AACE FOODS**:
Founder: Ndidi Nwuneli
Description: AACE Foods is a Nigerian agribusiness company founded by Ndidi Nwuneli. The company produces and sells organic food products sourced from local farmers. AACE Foods focuses on value addition and supply chain development, supporting rural livelihoods and sustainable agriculture practices. By promoting locally sourced and organic food products, AACE Foods contributes to sustainable development and food security in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Sustainopreneurship is all about optimizing ecological and social business problems for business solutions to aid national development. This represents a structure that handles economic, social, and environmental components together to ensure the welfare of Nigerian citizens. Sustainopreneurs use resources rationally and contribute to economic growth with an awareness of not harming the environment. There are two subdivisions of sustainopreneurship covering mainly social and economic aspects. Ecopreneurship and Social entrepreneurship are concepts strongly recommended to be adopted in Nigeria for improved governance and national development for the benefit of Nigerian citizens.

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