

Barriers to the Implementation of Agenda 2030 United Nations Global Goals in the Zimbabwean Higher Education Context

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Abstract: The struggle towards development is not acquiring anticipated progress in Zimbabwe. This study unearthed barriers to a fruitful implementation of Agenda 2030 United Nations goals in the Zimbabwean context. An interpretive paradigm was used for the study and a qualitative approach that embraced a case study was employed. Data was collected through face-to-face interviews with the professional stakeholders. Among the highly ranked barriers towards the implementation of Agenda 2030 are deprived sustainability education in academic organizations, lack of resources to implement the goals, unawareness of development and its cost benefits, low prioritization and resistance to cultural change in academic institutions. The research recommends adequate sustainability education in academic institutions to positively impact the required cultural change in the industry. There is demand for suitable government policies that support implementation of Agenda 2030. The study also advises for the need of the implementation of Agenda 2030 in education through continuing professional development and to improve the thinking and practicability of sustainable practice in Zimbabwe.

Key Words: barriers, implementation, sustainable development, goals, climate change

Introduction

Agenda 2030 has turned out to be a progressively significant subject at global level. It was affirmed as a principal strategy by governments represented at the Earth Summit on Development and Environment (ESDE) (Parkin, Sommer & Uren, 2003). The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development commits to promoting development in balanced educational, economic, social and environmental ways in all countries of the world, leaving no one behind, and paying special attention to those people who are poorest or most excluded (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2019). For Bell (2016), the future of any country depends heavily on its education and economic factors. If there are not clear directions in higher education that will influence its ability to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) then sustainability becomes questionable. Negative trends in several of the other countries pose a significant risk to the realization of the SDGs (UNDP, 2017). The higher education institutions have an essential role in sustainability as they are key agents in the education of future leaders that will contribute to the successful implementation of SDGs. However, the pathway of SDGs implementation is very not clear as to how the higher education institutions contribute decisively to creating a mindset that facilitates the dissemination of SDGs principles. It is also not clear how to establish the required change in education to placing sustainability principles at the heart of higher institutions strategies.

Background and literature

Accomplishing the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) involves action on all fronts by governments, businesses, education sector, civil society, and people in various sectors of life have a role to play. In December 2002, the period from 2005-2014 was declared the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development to emphasise the significance of education to upsurge sustainability worldwide (Wals, 2014). In 2015, the UN General Assembly adopted seventeen (SDGs) to be achieved by 2030. The aim of these seventeen goals is to secure a sustainable, peaceful, prosperous and equitable life on earth for everyone now and in the future (United Nations, 2015). Internationally, for example in the United Kingdom, the sustainable development goals tend to focus on economic growth through education as precedence rather than people's development or welfare or environmental processes and limits (Morales 2014).

Given the prime focus of education as a key instrument to achieving the SDGs, by increasing the drive to acquire knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, critical thinking, and empowerment the future generations can have the capacity to make the necessary transformational change in our world (United Nations, 2015; UNESCO, 2018). However, there are barriers in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in higher education many countries including Zimbabwe.

According to Bell (2016), even though education is essential, sustainability could be perceived as a challenge for humankind, as there are barriers in learning to live more sustainably. Environmental, social, and economic problems are some of the barriers that hinder the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in higher

education. There is a need to make significant changes in the general public and academic communities' attitudes towards global issues covered by SDGs (UNESCO, 2017a). The 193-Member United Nations General Assembly formally adopted the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development on 25 September 2015, along with a set of bold new Sustainable Development Goals. In January 2016, the 17 SDGs of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development came into force and the new goals apply generally. The world countries intensified efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring no one is left behind' (UN, 2018). Some of these Global Goals include ending, poverty, gender equality and quality education amongst others and they were expected to be performed and implemented to fulfill Agenda the 2030 target. In Africa, for example, the 2017 African Sustainable Report states that approximately six out of every ten SDG indicators cannot be tracked in Africa due to severe data limitations (UNESCO, 2018).

There is slow progress towards poverty reduction in Africa despite accelerated economic growth enjoyed over the past decade. Infrastructure deficits undermine industrial development. The successful implementation of the SDGs and Agenda 2030 require an integrated approach that coordinates the efforts of all sectors of governments in collaboration with the private sector and civil society. Sustainability in some African countries has made as table development by bringing the components for maintenance of resilient societies, however, the pace is slow in Higher education. Access to basic infrastructure such as energy, water and sanitation services though improving, nevertheless, falls well below the global average of sustainable development in education (UN, 2018). The major problem affecting the successful implementation of SDGs in higher education in Africa is funding. Many African countries are not economically capable to fund the implementation of the SDGs framework in their countries (Bell, 2016). Thus, this article aims to find out barriers to a fruitful implementation of Agenda 2030 United Nations goal in higher education in the Zimbabwean context.

Africa has been at the epicentre of the overwhelming effects of the activities that do not enhance SDGs and hence the international corporations operating mainly out of the global North have enjoyed the benefits of educated Africans by abusing them in relation to their global business activities, particularly those in America and Asia. Thus, due to the negative impacts arising from the failure to implement SDGs, many educational institutions in Africa have introduced Cambridge examinations to prepare the learners for the European activities at the expense of their countries' development (Filho, 2019). Langan (2020) postulates that Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and SDGs promote neo-colonialist policies in developing countries. He further argues that one of the barriers in the implementation of SDGs is that they play to economic growth and private sector development that represents a reinforcement of existing donor commitment to free market policies in Africa. Notwithstanding the aforementioned criticisms, SDGs have set a baseline or standards that countries should adhere to. The actualization of the aims and objectives of the SDGs in African education sectors depend on the effective collaborative governance between government, businesses and the private sector (including local communities and civil society) (Filho, 2019). Arguably, the SDGs cannot be achieved without the Sub-Saharan Africa's comparisons of experiences in implementing conscious changes in attempting to build a viable future for generations to come. However, higher education in Africa can only achieve legitimacy by engaging directly with the relevant stakeholders to realize progress on the SDGs. Thus, SDGs can serve as a framework that can support education in enhancing its Agenda 2030 by engaging in a way that contributes to sustainable development (Langan, 2020).

The Zimbabwe Progress Review Report of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (2020) claims that Zimbabwe is a lower middle-income country with a population estimated at 14.8 million in 2020. The majority of people live in rural areas. Unfortunately, the country also recorded deterioration in some socio-economic indicators. These were largely due to prolonged periods of economic downturn Kapungu (2007); political challenges and too many incidences of climate-induced humanitarian crises such as droughts and cyclones (Chatiza, 2019). These disruptive shocks and crises continue to impede the country's progress in achieving the SDGs. There is even a case where there is threat for the reversal of past development gains. The government has in recent years taken steps to accelerate the implementation of Agenda 2030 United Nations Global Goals in higher Education, albeit there still being barriers that are hindering the country's aims of sustainable development (UN, 2020).

Zimbabwe is guided by ideals of unity, freedom, democracy, equal rights, national peace, reconciliation, economic development, and prosperity. Its priorities reflect a comprehensive and overarching framework to push Agenda 2030 for SDGs. Vision 2030 is anchored on the successful implementation of the Transitional Stabilization Programme (TSP) (October 2018-December 2020) and formulation and implementation of two five-year national development strategies, the National Development Strategy NDS1 (2021- 2025) and NDS2 (2026 -2030). However, People living in poverty are among the most vulnerable to political manipulation, social inequity and exclusion. They are often most susceptible to the negative impacts of impeded sustainable development, resource scarcity and environmental degradation. Poverty is relatively high, with rural populations most affected. Although poverty remains largely a rural phenomenon, extreme poverty in urban areas increased

and affected the education system. Poverty reduction has been a key policy priority for the Government of Zimbabwe as evidenced by the development and adoption of an Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper in 2016. However, economic challenges and exposure to more complex, recurring, and intense shocks (including economic, social, and climate change) hampered progress with regard to higher education (Zimbabwe Child Poverty Report, 2019).

Hunger has increased in Zimbabwe arising mainly on account of recurring droughts leading to a decline in agricultural performance. Economic hardships and low agricultural productivity have collectively impeded the availability of and access to adequate supplies of food. The agricultural sector, which provides a source of livelihood for rest of the population continues to face challenges relating to low production, limited access to markets and market information, problematic land rights and insecure land tenure. There also worse negative impact from poor land management practices, limited access to finance and credit by communal farmers, climate change-induced disruptions and weak extension support systems that have become barriers of sustainable development in this country (GNR, 2020).

Given that the underfunding, which in turn impacts farmers' ability to adopt innovative and sustainable agricultural practices has impeded the development of Zimbabwe, making nutrition security a huge challenge for the country's critical areas it is not surprising that sustainable development in higher education has been negatively affected. Zimbabwe has some of the largest gaps on geographical location that are also associated with major disparities in social status of people that affect their affordability of fees payment to their school going children. The impact of this and other multiple, overlapping poverty related shortcomings directly associated with the humanitarian crises experienced by the country have derailed the focus on sustainable development.

Deforestation in Zimbabwe has left some areas with lesser than expected natural vegetation. If this trend continues, there might be little or nothing left to pass to the future generations. Deforestation has a resultant negative effect on protection of soils, as the land is more exposed to adverse conditions like erosion and evaporation, while the quality of water is affected by deforestation. All these invariably have a negative impact on the production and economy of countries involved (Africare speech, 2008).

Urban areas in developing countries including Zimbabwe are expected to be more populated because of migration. However, this comes with a great environmental challenge. A good number of urban dwellers either inhabit un-serviced land or slum areas because they do not have legal rights to own properties. Slum conditions lack good, tap delivered water, electricity and other basic amenities of life. The issue of waste disposal in slum areas is usually carelessly handled, this poses a threat to health to the safety of slum dwellers (Zimbabwe Child Poverty Report, 2019).

Poor environmental management in cities combined with deforestation in the countryside enhance reversal of sustainability efforts. All these are perpetually affecting the manufacturing industries and economy of country, hence, its unsustainability. Urbanisation in Zimbabwe has left some people living in places without water, sewages and electricity, which is an unhealthy and unsafe situation to the society. This also affects the sustainable development of the city and the country as a whole.

The current environmental policy is mainly oriented towards addressing under nutrition, with limited emphasis on the emerging issue of sustainable development, which has additional consequences on economic development of the country. The country has recently not benefitted enough from strategic cooperation and partnership with several bilateral and multilateral agricultural development programmes, including the Zimbabwe Agricultural Growth Programme (ZAGP), the Zimbabwe Livelihoods and Food Security Programme (LFSP), the Feed the Future, Smallholder Irrigation Programme (SIP) and the Zimbabwe Resilience Building Fund (ZRBF) (Filho, 2021). These efforts have been insignificant and only went a little way in improving resilience and productivity in the target communities as most of them have not benefited from it.

Apart from the loss of lives, COVID-19 elevated vulnerabilities and presented risks for the short, medium and long-term of the country's citizenry. The pandemic increased pressure on already stretched health systems and to Zimbabwe's economy. Other essential services such as maternal and child health services were disrupted as Governments prioritised the COVID-19 response. Therefore, urban areas were unable to access medical treatment when needed due to, non-availability of medical personnel at the health centres. Basic hygiene practices such as hand washing under running water was the only identified way for preventing the spread of COVID-19. However, face masks were expensive and the pandemic amplified the perennial challenges of urban water shortages (Lawrence, 2020).

Objectives of the study

- Examining barriers towards the implementation of agenda 2030 United Nations global goals in the Zimbabwean higher education context.

- Establishing strategies to eradicate barriers of the implementation of agenda 2030 United Nations global goals in the Zimbabwean higher education context.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of ESD Integration guided this study. ESD Integration is an all-embracing systemic concept and objective (Hopkins and McKeown, 2002). The view point of ESD Integration and specifically mainstreaming ESD, resonates with thoughts by Hopkins and McKeown (2005), who identified the need for a more holistic approach to integrating ESD into the curriculum during the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) of 2005-2014 (Miura, 2018). In other words, they suggest a holistic approach that would embrace both curriculum and institutional change, to contribute to the overall re-orientation of education towards sustainability. The ESD Integration Framework recognises that at the core of any attempt at ESD integration is the basic understanding of ESD as a holistic and integrated vision of education that draws on the evolving concept of sustainable development. It acknowledges the inter-relatedness of the social, economic and environmental dimensions. It also recognises that these three dimensions are embedded in culture and are influenced by the prevailing political context. These contextual realities are further informed and advanced by multi-disciplinary or cross-disciplinary thinking which recognises that sustainability is by nature holistic and interconnected. It is important to note that, the ESD Integration Framework may be influenced by the following six interrelated elements that surround it: Content, Methods, Curriculum, Policy, Community and Institution (Manokore, Tlou, Mkwelie, Phuthi, Shava, Mhlanga, Mangena, Sibanda & Chasokela, 2022).

Methodology

This study followed the qualitative approach and an interpretive paradigm underpinned it, such that the central part of understanding is learning what people make of the world around them, how people interpret what they encounter and how they attach meanings and values to events or objects. The design is also idiographic as it is committed to understanding how particular experiential phenomena have been understood from the perspective of particular people, in a particular context, regarding the idea of Education for Sustainable Development. In-depth interviews and document analysis techniques were employed in data collection. Official and applicable data for this inquiry was collected from existing literature on Agenda 2030 Global Goals (Smith, Flowers and Larki, 2009). For relative analysis of their reaction to sustainable development goals, the researchers purposively sampled 5 participants from each of the following institutions; Great Zimbabwe University, National University of Science and Technology, Masvingo Polytechnic and Joshua Mqabuko Nkomo Polytechnic. As a consequence, the interpretive the paradigm utilises small, purposively-selected and situated samples, so that a single case is analysed and very effectively put to use.

Ethical Issues

Clearance and consent were sought from NUST and participating institutions and individuals. Participants were accorded rights for informed consent, confidentiality and protection from harm.

Findings on the barriers to sustainable developments

The study revealed that the country is facing several challenges in terms of implementation of the SDGs. Currently it has an underperforming macro-economy with the economy shrinking and projected to weaken again in the coming year and presenting a huge challenge (Tlou, 2022; Mutambara & Chinyoka, 2016). The country continues to suffer from limited fiscal space on account of negative economic growth over the past 2 years, sub-optimal investment levels as well as high levels of informality. The limited fiscal performance coupled with the unsustainably high levels of public indebtedness have exacerbated the huge financing gap. One of the participants commented that:

“Sustainable development of the country has been disturbed by lack of adequate and critical infrastructure such as energy, transport, water and sanitation as well as ICT that have inhibited private and public sectors’ investments in the country.”

This suggests that the country economy is dwindling and deteriorating. The country is suffering from inadequate monetary resources hence a negative economic stretching from previous years having no investments done for the country to able to sustain it. This is in line with Bell (2016) who argued that the major problems affecting the successful implementation of SDGs in higher education in Africa is funding. Many African countries are not economically capable to fund the implementation of the SDGs framework in their countries.

The findings made known that rapid urbanisation, de-industrialisation and rising informality which have resulted in heightened incidence of urban poverty, inadequate provision of services, growing incidence of informal settlements and environmental degradation are a cause of failure in achieving Sustainability goals. It is proven that the country has challenges in rapid urbanisation that lead to informal settlements where people have challenges of getting clean water, electricity and sewer systems, hence, its sustainable development is negatively affected. According to Zimbabwe Child Poverty Report (2019), urban areas in developing countries including Zimbabwe are expected to be more populated mainly because of migration. However, this comes with great educational and environmental challenges as learners are expected to share scanty resources. A good number of urban dwellers either inhabit un-serviced or slum areas because they do not have legal rights to own their properties. Slum conditions lack good, portable water, electricity and other basic amenities of life. The issue of waste disposal in slum areas is usually carelessly handled, this poses a threat to health and safety of slum dwellers.

The study further revealed that climate change has exposed the country to natural disasters with adverse effects and impact on agriculture, food security, education and health. This has negatively affected the sustainable development of the country. Reacting to this issue, one participant remarked:

“Climate change, paired with unsustainable consumption and production patterns among the wealthy, are the biggest social challenges to achieving sustainable development in country’s education system since the little resources are channeled to food security.”

It is clear that in Zimbabwe there is climate change that has affected the agricultural industry such that the government and its nation now focus on acquisition of food instead of education. Agriculture used to be the backbone of the Zimbabwean economy. In fact, Zimbabwe was once known as the bread basket of southern Africa. However, over the last decade, the country has experienced the effects of climate change that have negative impact number of economic and agricultural products (Kurukulauriya & Mendelsohn, 2008). In addition, the ongoing climate change has significantly reduced crop production and access to food in all 60 districts of the country (Nhemachena, 2014).

The findings also revealed that, while the prevalence of poverty has declined, the COVID-19 pandemic has unexpectedly pushed many areas of the Zimbabwean country into extreme poverty in view of the limited resource provision. Another participant commented on that saying:

“Supply chains have been disrupted by this global pandemic, as countries are closing their borders and going into national lockdowns in a bid to try and contain the COVID19 pandemic which has resulted in more than 6,000,000 deaths globally. The local industry was not spared as it experienced supply chain disruptions. This has affected raw materials supply which was needed to keep industry rolling and the sustainable development of the country became vulnerable to the pandemic disruptions.”

In addition, it was established from the results that the impact of COVID-19 lockdown restrictions when the country and the borders were closed, business not running efficiently and the schools closed resulted in poverty that was almost eradicated resurfacing. This is in line with Lawrence (2020) who alluded that apart from the loss of lives, COVID-19 elevated vulnerabilities, poverty and presented risks for the short, medium and long-term. The pandemic increased pressure on already stretched health systems and to the country of Zimbabwe’s economy. Other essential services such as reduced access to local and international markets, shops not meeting local demand because of shortage of raw materials since source markets were closed, reduced demand due to closure of schools, negative effect to revenue streams, enhanced companies’ delivery risks and other corporate operational challenges served to reverse the gains of sustainable development. According to the ZIMSTATS PICES report (2020), a majority of children as of July 2020 were not able to engage in online or distance learning and the worst affected were those in rural areas where only one quarter of children engaged in distance learning.

The findings also revealed that environmental issues among both politicians and the wider public fragmented civil society because of inadequate interaction between civil society and government becoming one of the barriers. In addition, insufficient incentives for the private sector to pursue sustainable development were the other barriers that were highlighted. It was further observed that social factors among both government and the nation, both civil society and private sector, and inadequate economic, and poor environmental policies, plans and projects were the major barriers inhibiting the implementation of sustainable development.

Blair and Wrigh (2012) identified lack of senior management support as a barrier to sustainable procurement. Organisational culture, structures, and processes that are supportive and conducive towards sustainable solutions, as well as senior management support are considered key in sustainable procurement. The

Sustainable Procurement Task Force reiterated that there was a lack of clear direction from top management to make delivering sustainable development objectives through procurement a priority (Defra, 2006).

The findings also indicated that known poor monitoring of funds and evaluation systems were basically a problem that lacked specific targets (globally, nationally and at local level), resulting in a lack of information being available to account for the budgets and decision-making as a result of lack of evaluation. The lack of monitoring of all the monetary resources in a democratic system has been frustrating sustainable development targeted by this country. It appears that the status of the purchasing function tends to be lower than in other operational areas, particularly in the public sector which has been frustrating the development of the country (Uyarra, 2010). This relatively low influence is aggravated by a general lack of commitment and ownership of procurement strategies by senior management and political leaders, as suggested by Morgan (2008) and the Sustainable Procurement Task Force (Defra, 2006).END

The results also revealed that migration on the other hand is a barrier to sustainable development as migrants leave their home countries to seek better opportunities and to escape poverty. The study also found out that in recent years, migration and displacement flows have exponentially increased. In fact, the number of displaced people has risen over the last decade. On this issue one participant commented that:

“People flee their homes every day in search of monetary resources to sustain their families. All of these people on the move can be a great global resource, spurring economic growth in their counties of origin, and aiding in the resolution of long-standing conflicts.”

The above sentiments suggest that the problem is that many countries have positively responded to migration trends by opening their borders, encouraging migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and election politicians that seek to be housed in other states. As a result, many of the driving factors of displacement and migration are being exacerbated in ways that threaten the Global Goals as such accommodation of migrants drains resources and affects sustainability (UNESCO, 2020).

Findings on strategies of eradicating barriers of sustainable development

The results revealed that education institutions can take on the role of including SDGs in their curriculum and engineer liaison between different stakeholder groups. Higher education institutions have a particular responsibility to form future professionals and implement their knowledge and ideas. Making observations on this, one of the participants remarked:

“The universities have to consider sustainability as part of their responsibilities, since they have increased in numbers and their enrolment has grown, making the sustainability strategy an easy task for them. Universities could aim to adopt sustainable development strategies in order to establish a dynamic improvement process, with an objective of increasing their effectiveness in reversing environmental degradation and human empowerment in the country.”

It is possible to engineer that the government become proactive in assessing the socio-economic impacts of developmental projects. There is a need for including SDGs in the universities' curriculum which connects well with global responsibility. This must be formed both amongst the students and the education staff as projects that help for the universities to meet their sustainability commitments.(Filho et al., 2019). However, for this to be a reality, all stakeholders including governments, the private sector, civil society and every human being across the world must do their part (UNESCO, 2017a). Irrespective of the differences, many higher education institutions promote sustainability and are deeply engaged in preparing students who are ready to understand the global challenges and be active actors who are exemplary in implementing sustainability principles. This can be achieved by increasing the institution's environmental footprint, engaging strongly with the communities, and having good governance (Corcoran, Walker & Wals, 2004). However, the implementation of sustainability principles is not the same across the world and some regions are more advanced than others, for example Europe is steps ahead compared to Africa (Bizerril et al., 2018). A growing body of knowledge has been developed towards higher education to implement a sustainability curriculum in and incorporate it in campus practices and outreach activities (Weiss & Barth, 2019; Menon & Suresh, 2020). Other works developed focused on the pedagogical barriers associated with this implementation Blanco-Portela et al.(2017), the pedagogical approach towards teaching sustainability in higher education (Seatter & Ceulemans, 2017), the impact of higher education institutions in sustainability development (Hallinger & Chatpinyakoop, 2019) and the management of education (Figueiró & Raufflet, 2015).

It was established from the study that the key to achieve national, regional and global SDG targets, it is paramount that there has to be incorporation sustainability principles to at university level and that these be ranked according to their sustainability activities. This is a key aspect to improve the university image, reputation and quality of studies. The universities with the best rankings would be the ones that have a sustainable vision towards the development of their students and establishment of a culture of sustainability. Thus, their relevance to achieving SDGs and the challenges and barriers associated with such endeavour would be eradicated (Salvioni et al., 2017).

The findings revealed that since education is the driving force to establishing sustainability, it is one of the main communication vehicles and the basis for the sustainability mindset. Education has to include a systemic approach to understanding socio-economic harmony, which goes beyond technical knowledge enhances understanding the basics of a healthy ecosystem and a thriving society. By emphasising management ethics, entrepreneurship, environmental studies, systems thinking and self-awareness, the sustainability mindset encourages us to break away from traditional management disciplinary silos. System thinking for instance is often mentioned as one of the skills necessary to better understand the meaning of sustainability. This is because sustainability integrates three equally important dimensions which are the environmental, social and economic (Kassel, Rimanoczy & Mitchell, 2016). According to UNESCAP (2015), people and the nature of the society in which they live are shaped by and, in turn, shape the economies that support their livelihoods and enhance their overall quality of life. Environments provide life-giving and economically important services to economies and people. In this case, system thinking is the key to promote a holistic approach to problem analysis (UNESCAP, 2015).

Conclusions

The study concluded that in Zimbabwe there is an underperforming macro-economy and its shrinking is projected to weaken even more presenting, a huge challenge. The limited fiscal spaces coupled with the unsustainably high levels of public indebtedness have exacerbated a huge financing gap. Thus, funding is the major problem negatively affecting the successful implementation of SDGs in higher education in Zimbabwe and in many African countries (Bell, 2016). The rapid urbanisation, de-industrialisation and rising informality, which have resulted in rising incidence of urban poverty, inadequate provision of services, growing incidence of informal settlements and environmental degradation among others are other barriers to sustainable development in the country (Zimbabwe Child Poverty Report, 2019). It was also noted that poverty in the country, climate change (Kurukulasuriya & Mendelsohn(2008) and COVID-19 were other barriers to sustainable development in the country(Lawrence, 2020).

It has been deduced that to eradicate barriers to sustainable development in higher education institutions, there is need to include SDGs in their curriculum and link with different stakeholder groups. Higher education institutions to implement the knowledge and ideas key to achieve national, regional and global (SDGs) targets, incorporate sustainability principles to the universities, rank them according to their sustainability activities and award. (Salvioni et al., 2017).

Education as a vehicle of sustainable development has to include a systemic approach of understanding the concept, which goes beyond technical knowledge, the basics of a healthy ecosystem and a thriving society. By emphasising management ethics, entrepreneurship, environmental studies, systems thinking and self-awareness, the sustainability mindset encourages the nation to break away from traditional management disciplinary silos(Kassel et al., 2016). The system thinking is frequently declared as one of the skills necessary to better understand the meaning of sustainability, which integrates three dimensions which are the environmental, social and economic. People and the nature of the society in which they live are shaped by the economies that support their livelihoods and enhance their overall quality of life. Hence, environments provide life-giving and highly important services to economies and to people. In this case, system thinking, environments and economies are the key to promote a holistic approach to problem solving and sustainable development (UNESCAP, 2015).

Recommendations

- The Zimbabwean Government must improve universities' images, reputation and quality by ranking them according to their sustainable development.
- There is a need for including SDGs in the universities' curriculum in education as a global responsibility in order to have a vision towards the development of their students and establish a culture of sustainability.
- The Zimbabwean higher education must have a system thinking as one of the skills necessary to better understand the meaning of sustainability.
- Zimbabweans and the nature of their society must be shaped by economies that support their livelihoods to enhance their overall quality of life and their sustainable development.

- The Zimbabwean Government has to reduce poverty of skilled personnel by providing better working conditions and better remuneration for the country to develop sustainably.
- The Zimbabwean Government has to improve rural areas by urbanizing and electrifying as well as, building shopping malls, increasing colleges and universities and industries to reduce the rising informality which has resulted in urban poverty, inadequate provision of services, growing informal settlements and environmental degradation in other places in towns

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