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Multinational corporations, education and United Nations Development Goals: a literature review

Abstract

This article reviews works of literature on the intervention of Multinational Corporations (MNCs) in the achievement of education-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Drawing from conceptual and empirical papers published from 2000 to 2020, we identify that education is central to achieving development goals. The lack of requisite knowledge of these goals may hamper their implementation. We focused on interventions of MNCs like Microsoft, Oando, Nestlé, LEGO, ING Bank, Standard Chartered, Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PwC), and Hess Corporation in promoting educational equality and development in line with

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MDGs and SDGs. The findings showed that the MNCs' intervention in education in their respective areas has led to a considerable improvement in areas such as infrastructure development, school enrolment, and quality output, among others. The paper submits that improving education has dual benefits for both society and the MNCs; government should engage MNCs to use their intervention to assist in the achievement of the SDGs. Compared to these corporations' annual revenue and profits, the scope of their intervention is still very small and the impact is not felt in the global South. There is a need to increase financial commitment to achieve this development goal by 2030.

Keywords: Sustainable Development Goals, United Nations, Millennium Development Goals, Education, Multinational Corporations

Introduction

We cannot have young people growing up without the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be productive members of our society. Our societies cannot afford it. Moreover, neither can business. Business needs a creative, skilled, innovative workforce. (...) Moreover, investing in education creates a generation of skilled people who will have rising incomes and demands for products and services – creating new markets and new opportunities for growth. (...) Corporate philanthropy is critical, but we need more companies to think about how their business policies and practices can impact education priorities. You understand investment. You focus on the bottom-line. You know the dividends of education for all (UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon).²

Business is playing a transformative role in elevating education as a political, social and economic priority, and can help ensure the right of every child and youth to receive a quality education by supporting the government in the delivery of education. Business is uniquely positioned to support and create sustainable and scalable solutions to address the world's pressing education needs. We hope these examples help open new doors for investments in education by the business community (Sarah Brown, Executive Chair, GBC-Education & President)³.

The two quotes above allude to the importance of Private Corporations in the development of society and especially educational development. Government and international organisations have at the time had a clearly spelt out role in international development. The role of MNCs was viewed through the lenses of economic growth, tax revenue to the government and job creation, however, that has changed as now MNCs have taken a broader role in the development agenda (Mohileidin & Klimenko, 2017). A survey by Accenture and United Nations Global Compact in 2016 of CEOs of various MNCs shows that business leaders' beliefs solving societal development

² See: (United Nations Global Compact, 2013, p. 4).

³ See: (United Nations Global Compact, 2013, p. 6).

issues are crucial for the elements of competitive advantage and corporate beliefs are essential pillars in the achievement of SDGs. The role of the corporation is not just limited to funding, but also to tackling global, cross-sectional and multi-level development problems in society as their expertise is necessary for that. A known fact is that corporations can only grow when people's purchasing power is high, underprivileged societal members also mean less patronage for markets, a peaceful environment in terms of politics, economics and society foster operations of the business, and quality education creates a qualified workforce for the corporations (Bello et al., 2017). The intervention of corporations in the development discourse is hinged on the fact that states and international organisations alone cannot cater for world problems which are enormous and daunting. On the other hand, corporations with financial power can play a major role in this aspect by integrating societal problems with business goals to achieve needed development. Corporations' intervention in education serves as a stimulus for the development of a skilled workforce as the CEO survey shows that the major problem in most developing countries is the lack of an adequate workforce which is traceable to the nature of countries educational background (Hopkins, 2012). According to Uvalic-Trumbic and Daniel, (2016), the pivotal role of education in the achievement of MDGs and SDGs cannot be underestimated, this is because education is key to human development. It allows more people to grow, be knowledgeable, equal and just. Learning is a guarantee of survival, life, and health for many people across various social groups like teenagers, parents and many more. Thanks to education, more people would work together and think about the future. Education serves as a catalyst for ending chronic poverty because it helps empower people. It gives parents access to knowledge on the best health and hygiene practices for their children. Quality education is also vital for sustainable development and economic growth. As the immediate former UN secretary general Ban Kin-Moon states,

Education is a fundamental right and the basis for progress in every country, parents need information about health and nutrition if they are to give their children the start in life they deserve. Prosperous nations depend on skilled and educated workers. The challenges of conquering poverty, combatting climate change and achieving truly sustainable development in coming decades compel us to work together. With partnership, leadership and wise investments in education, we can transform lives, national economies and our world (Uvalic-Trumbic & Daniel, 2016, p.1).

Education is a public good, important for the empowerment of citizens. Various governments at different times have complained about their inability to provide quality education, especially in the areas of numeracy, literacy, mathematical sciences, and technology. Their role in education development is vital.

This paper hereby situates the intervention of the private sector in the realm of education goal within the MDGs and SDGs; giving an overview of MDG and SDG, the centrality of education to the achievement of both goals and the role the private sector have been playing; the role they can also serve in the advancement of education in a global society.

Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were the eight goals set to stimulate international development from 2000 through 2015. A total of 189 member nations of the UN and 22 international organisations pledged to assist in the achievement of the goals. Its antecedent can be traced to various UN conferences that were held in the 1990s, which focused on the problem of nutrition, children women, and human rights. The precursor to goals can also be traced to the OECD's International Development Goals (IDG) which were because of cut by major donors to Official Development Assistance (ODA). The eight MDGs can be categorised into three major groups, namely, Human Capital, Human Rights and Infrastructure which are all geared towards increasing living standards, combating widespread hunger, disease, poverty, gender inequality, unmet schooling and environmental degradation. The human capital goals include education and healthcare (malaria, HIV/AIDS, reproductive health, nutrition tuberculosis, and child mortality). Human rights goals entail the empowerment of women, ensuring public service equal access, increasing political voice, the security of property rights, and the reduction in violence. Infrastructural objectives involve increasing farm outputs using sustainable practices, improvement in access to safe drinking water, information/communication technology, energy and modern, environment and transportation (McArthur, 2014).

In order to accelerate the achievement of the goals, the group of eight (G8) finance ministers reached a consensus in 2005 for the purpose of providing funds to IMF, WBG and AfDB and also to cancel debt owed by heavily indebted countries in other to facilitate the redirection of such resources for the achievement of the goals, especially the alleviation of poverty and improvement of health and educational facilities. The MDGs was to run from 2000 to 2015.

The shortfall associated with MDGs alludes to some operational failures which were caused by stakeholders from both poor and rich nations, the failure of some

Table 1. Millennium Development Goals

S/N	GOALS
1	Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger
2	Achieve Universal Primary Education
3	Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women
4	Reduce Child Mortality
5	Improve Maternal Health
6	Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria, and other Diseases
7	Ensure Environment Sustainability and
8	Global Partnership for Development

Source: Larionova, (2020)

countries to make any progress with regards to the MDGs, unkept promises of official development assistance and failure of proper implementation by the UN member countries led to the formation of Post-2015 UN Development Agenda for the purpose of working out the sustainable development programme.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of 17 goals with 169 targets with a range of sustainable development issues including the improvement of education and health, ending hunger and poverty, combating climate change, making cities sustainable and protecting forests and oceans. The process leading to its adoption involved 193 UN member nations and inter-governmental bodies participating in negotiations between January and August 2015, which resulted in a document adopted at the UN Sustainable development summit which was held between September 25–27, 2015. The international development commitment by the global community was set to be achieved between 2015–2030 (Le Blanc, 2015; Hák et al., 2016).

Although it is presently serving as a continuation to MDGs, the SDGs precede the MDGs, and their history goes back to 1972, when the “Conference on the Human Environment” was organised in Stockholm. At the meeting, the countries acknowledged that the world economy was exploiting nature, and led to enormous environmental risks, as a result the UN created World Commission on Development and Environment which describes sustainable development as “meeting the needs of present generation without jeopardising the future generation” (Valentine, 2012).

The paper hereby situates the intervention of private sector in the realm of education goal within the MDGs and SGDs, giving an overview of MDGs and SDGs, the centrality of education to the achievement of both goals and the role the private sector has been playing and can play in the advancement of education in global society.

Methodological framework of literature review

The research has been organised following the planning/conducting/analysis scheme for literature review developed by Christoffersen (2013). The foremost feature of this protocol for selecting the body of literature to be analysed, was based on the articles published in journals, United Nations’ and Corporations’ Reports, written works in English from 2000 till 2020. Academic journals are indexed in SCOPUS and available on Google Scholar and reports are obtainable from corporations’ and the UN’s websites. Data used for this paper consists of articles published in business and management, education and sustainability journals.

First, an identification of relevant articles was performed through an exhaustive keyword search process performed in Scopus and the Google Scholar. Through this search, articles containing in their titles, abstracts, or keywords list a reference to any MDGs, SDGs, Education, CSR and MNCs were selected. Then their abstracts were downloaded. Through the full reading and qualitative interpretation of these articles, the teamwork prepared a workbook. For each individual article we recorded data relative to the educational intervention and features and to which SDG/MDG the article is related.

Table 2. Sustainable Development Goals

S/N	GOALS	TARGET
1	Poverty	End poverty in all its forms everywhere
2	Hunger	End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
3	Health	Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all ages
4	Education	Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
5	Gender Equality	Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
6	Water	Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
7	Sustainable Energy	Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
8	Sustainable Economy	Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all
9	Sustainable Industrialisation	Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive, sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation
10	Reduce Inequalities	Reduce inequality within and among countries
11	Inclusive Cities	Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
12	Sustainable Consumption and Production	Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
13	Urgent Action on Climate Change	Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impact
14	Conserve Sea and Marine Resources	Conserve and sustainably use the ocean, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
15	Protect Environment and Biodiversity	Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystem, sustainable manage forest, combat desertification, halt reverse land degradation and biodiversity loss
16	Inclusive Societies	Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development provide access to justice for all and build effective accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
17	Strengthen Global Partnership	Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development

Source: Sustainable Development Goals, UN (2016)

Education and MDGs – the perspective of developing countries

This paper seeks to understand MNCs' intervention in MDG- and SDG-related education through various Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) models. One of the most popular and frequently referenced models of CSR is that of Carroll (2016) – *Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility*. According to Carroll (2016), CSR is philanthropic in nature. Corporate philanthropy entails all forms of business discretionary and voluntary activities. In literal sense, philanthropy may not be the responsibility of corporations but as they are an important player in the society or public sphere, it is expected of them to be a part of the society where they operate, and most importantly, leave some positive imprints. This is guided by corporation's desire to participate in social activities that are not mandatory and not required by law. Examining the social contract between corporations and society, corporations are expected to display high moral and ethical standards in their interactions with other subjects, meaning they act as good corporate citizens. The public expects that corporations will contribute to the society where they operate. To fulfil the perceived philanthropic responsibilities, corporations engage in various forms of contributing: volunteerism by corporation's management and employees, products and services donations, monetary contributions, discretionary contributions to the stakeholders in the society where they operate. Corporations usually have many altruistic motivations of engaging socially. It is pertinent to note that they engage in philanthropy as a practical way of showing that they are good corporate citizens. CSR also enhances corporation reputation in the host communities (Carroll, 2016; Nalband & Kelabi, 2014).

As Celone, Cammarano, Caputo and Michelino (2021) state, MNCs intervention will be essential to achieve the SDGs due to their internal strategies around CSR, their resources and capabilities available worldwide. To MNCs, improving education related SDGs is key in providing them with the necessary human capital needed to run these corporations. In the same vein, education provides members of the community with needed skills to survive in today's world. As submitted by Filser, Kraus, Roig-Tierno, Kailer, and Fischer (2019), education (SDG 4) is the driving wheel to trigger economic development (SDG 8) and decrease poverty (SDG 1). Hence, the educational intervention by MNCs are for dual benefit to the corporations and the society. No doubt, philanthropy provides both promise and potential threat for the support of SDG 4.

Literature review

Education and achievement of MDG

In the analysed publications there is a salient theme which underlines that education provides the necessary skills and knowledge people need in other to live better lives. It serves as an avenue to boost productivity, open doors to credit and jobs. Poverty is the major factor influencing out-of-school children. If children from low-income countries have an opportunity to attend school and graduate with at least basic literacy and numeracy skills, it would enable 171 million people leave the poverty line (Awan et al., 2011; Kulild, 2014). Similarly, King and Winthrop (2015) believe that education

is central to addressing the problem of gender-based exclusion and inequalities. Women and girls have been found to receive less education than boys, have fewer opportunities, and enjoy less freedom. The majority of women and girls who speak minority languages or live in rural areas receive less education or, in some cases, no education at all. Education is also key to addressing the challenges the women folks are facing because of illiteracy. Women constitute two thirds of the world's illiterate population, namely, 759 million. Because of that women have a limited access to decision-making and are paid less at work. In 2010, women were appointed as 11 of 192 heads of government across the world, while only 9 out of 151 elected heads of states were women. In Latin America, children whose mothers have secondary school education remain in school for two to three more years than children whose mothers do not attend school.

The UN states that children whose mothers have a secondary school education are likely to survive beyond the age of five compared to those mothers without basic education. Each extra year of a mother's schooling reduces the chances of infant mortality by between 5% through 10%. This view is strengthened by Fuchs, Pamuk and Lutz (2010) as well as Veneman (2007) who argue that children of educated mothers are likely to be vaccinated thereby reducing their death risk at infancy which is caused by neonatal causes, diarrhoea, pneumonia and child malnutrition. In Sub-Saharan Africa it is said that about 1.8 million children could be saved if their mothers possessed at least secondary school education. In the same vein, Smith Greenaway, Leon and Baker (2012) argue that educational empowerment is one of the strongest remedies to maternal risk because women with higher level of education are more likely to seek medical advice when they are pregnant to check their well-being and seek health-care support. Thanks to education, pregnant women are likely to give birth at medical facilities than women without schooling.

The role education plays in creating awareness on HIV/AIDS, malaria and other life-threatening disease can never be underestimated, as education aids access to treatment and helps combat discrimination and stigma. Women with post-basic school education are more likely to be taught about the effects of (possibly) fatal disease than illiterate women. The effect of HIV/AIDS on education is grave because, in Tanzania in 2006, 45,000 teachers had to be hired to replace educators who died in the epidemic (Godwyll & Ngumbi, 2009). Education and information reduce the risk of contracting the disease. For example, in Zambia, the recruitment and education of community workers contribute to reducing malaria deaths by 66% (Chanda et al., 2013; Eshete & Sahlul, 1996; Krishanani et al., 2014).

On environmental sustainability, Alexandar and Poyyamoli, (2014) state that education supports individual decision-making that meets present needs without jeopardising the future, because the world is faced with critical challenges of rapid depletion of natural resources, climate change, natural disasters, and loss of biodiversity. Education helps leaders and fellow decision-makers reverse this ugly trend, having in mind present and future generations. Not sustaining the environment results, among others, in the lack of such basic amenities as water. Children would have to go a long distance to get water thereby affecting the possibility of enrolling in schools. As countries from the global South pledge to achieve the first seven goals, it is vital for the global North and the agents to keep to their side of the agreement, which includes more effective

aids, fairer trade rules with the South, access to technology and, most importantly, debt relief. Education is also key to the achievement of the first seven goals because it is the bedrock of development, especially, through personal and human growth, democracy, social justice, and prosperity (Türkkahraman, 2012).

Education and Sustainable Development Goals

The centrality of education to the achievement of SDGs cannot be overemphasised. Education is a factor that reduces poverty and increases income (goals 1, 4 and 8): if children left schools with basic reading skills, 171 million people could have been lifted out of poverty because they would have the basic skills required to get employment. This would lead to a 12% reduction in the global poverty rate, also one extra year of school increases individual earnings by 10% and in the case of women by 20% (Bello & Othman, 2020). Education leads to better health (goals 2, 3 and 6): mother's education improves her children's nutrition, especially as she seeks a higher level of schooling. Also, four million child deaths have been prevented thanks to improved women's education. Education helps us protect the planet (goals 7, 12, 13, 14 and 15) as educated citizens are more motivated towards building and maintaining clean energy infrastructure. Such people show greater concern about the well-being of the environment, use energy and water more efficiently and recycle. Also, a study of 29 countries shows the percentage of people's concern about climate change and environmental sustainability increases with education: 25% with less than secondary education, 37% with secondary education and 46% with tertiary education (Alexandar & Poyyamoli, 2014; Smith Greenaway et al., 2012; Veneman, 2007). Education drives sustainable growth (goals 9 and 11) as a country's inhabitants become better educated, they are more likely to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe resilient and sustainable. Education prevents inequality and injustice (goals 5, 10 and 16). An improvement in countries' education equality can increase their per capita income by 23% over 40 years. Each year, one billion American dollars are lost by some countries by failing to educate girls at the same level as boys. If the secondary school enrolment rate is 10% higher than average, the risk of war drops by 3%. Literate people are more likely to participate in the democratic process and exercise civil rights (GPE, 2015).

The role of corporations in achieving universality of education as enshrined in MDG'S and SDG'S

The UN initiated the participation of corporation in the achievement of MDG and SDGs to encourage corporations to incorporate socially responsible and sustainable policies into their action as market players. It was given legal backing with the formation of United Nations Global Compact. The Global Compact is the largest CSR initiative in the world with 13,000 corporate participants in 170 countries of the world, mainly for the purpose of "Mainstreaming ten values in corporation activities around the world and Support UN goals of MDG and SDG" (Godwyll & Ngumbi, 2009).

The private corporations have been signatories to UN action plan, and they have supported various initiatives (Helen, 2012).

Problems that education is facing globally have made it imperative for an improved role of the private sector. Despite the concerted efforts of governments and international organisations towards education development, over 57 million kids are out of school despite being school-going age. About 69 million teenagers do not attend primary or secondary school, and even children who go to school do not learn due to their learning environment, as 250 million primary school students can barely read or write after having spent four years in school (UNESCO, 2012). About 774 million adults, the majority of whom are women, cannot read or write (UNESCO, 2012; UNESCO, 2013). The population of people aged from 15 to 25 is about a billion persons. Unless serious investments are directed towards education, there is a possibility of leaving about one-sixth of the world's population without learning. The lack of educational opportunities truly impedes economic development and social stability, because education equips people with requisite knowledge which is germane to sustainable development.

Corporations have the potential to improve educational quality. Such organisations have recognised education as the most urgent challenge to sustainability, thereby giving rise to the need for investments in education in order to complement the effort of the government towards educational development, especially the provision of opportunity and delivery of quality education. Social investments in education by corporations result in a skilled workforce, drive corporation growth, and increase productivity.

Corporations invest mostly in education by incorporating it into their CSR programme, through technology transfer and support for multilateral international bodies who work in the education sector. Corporations' investment in education takes different forms which include direct programming, educational training, product development, infrastructure and policy change. The desired impact of this intervention is always aimed at increasing access to educational opportunities, improving learning outcomes, strengthening the education system, developing a skilled workforce, community, economic and social development. The targeted beneficiaries are usually children, youth, adult learners, and educators (Bello & Othman, 2020). The intervention of the private sector in education can be classified into the following areas.

MNCs foster innovation in education through piloting open, new sources of technology in order to improve the provision of education for less developed communities, application of design-thinking for the purpose of developing low-cost materials for under-resourced schools, and recognition of state-of-the-art products by sponsoring the competition for education entrepreneurs. In partnership with governments, they develop skill certification opportunities to provide corporate training and create an atmosphere to promote creative and innovative thinking through the improvement of teaching methods (Hidalgo & Albors, 2008).

Ingram (2017) argues that MNCs can align the brand with education, by using marketing campaigns which highlight the importance of education, offering cash donations to an educational organisation that mirrors the corporation's values, and partnering with business schools to prepare socially responsible leaders through research, internship,

and coursework. As van Fleet (2012) remarks, corporations can help by providing opportunities for employees to upgrade their skills through training and learning opportunities, and providing childhood development services for children of employees in areas where they lack such opportunities. What is more, employees should be encouraged to participate in volunteering work to advance education development, in order to eliminate cost barriers to educational access. Corporations should encourage their employees to provide subsidies on school fees, uniforms, and textbooks. In addition to their current employees, they could develop the capacity of future employees through collaboration with governments and educational experts. Corporations can define competencies to improve the importance of secondary and post-secondary education, design and implement a suitable workplace training programme, invest in basic education to improve the future talent pool and expand internship opportunities for disadvantaged youth who completed secondary school (Rama et al., 2009). Finally, regarding the centrality of teachers to learning outcomes, corporations should sponsor teachers in marginalised communities to avail themselves of teacher training courses, and provide time for corporations' staff to volunteer in classrooms. Teachers of core subjects should be availed the opportunities to attend leadership development programmes, and provide teachers opportunities to get practical insights into business operations in order to merge theoretical knowledge with practical (van Fleet & Zinny, 2012).

Education empowers, and knowledge is power. Education is central to the human development paradigm. This is because it has a basic value which exceeds economic. Development is more than just GDP growth per capita – it entails the ability to live a happier and healthier life; to live with dignity and to be educated. These three elements have been part of the human development index. It, therefore, goes to show the importance of education in development because the role of knowledge is central to the provision of opportunities. No doubt education has an indispensable role in the achievement of equitable and sustainable development as enshrined in MDGs and lately, SDGs. However, due to the enormity of education and the prospect of funding, government and international organisations have often called on corporations to partner in the achievement of this goal. During the 2002 Monterrey Consensus on MDGs, specific references were made to private sector participation in achieving the set goals in collaboration with the Government. In spite of this consensus, corporations' financial intervention in the global South is not enough:

23. While Governments provide the framework for their operation, businesses, for their part, are expected to engage as reliable and consistent partners in the development process. We urge businesses to consider not only the economic and financial but also the developmental, social, gender and environmental implications of their undertakings. In that spirit, we invite banks and other financial institutions, in developing countries as well as developed countries, to foster innovative developmental financing approaches. We welcome all efforts to encourage good corporate citizenship and note the initiative undertaken in the United Nations to promote global partnerships.

24. We will support new public/private sector financing mechanisms, both debt, and equity, for developing countries and countries with economies in transition, to benefit

small entrepreneurs and small and medium-sized enterprises and infrastructure. Those public/private initiatives could include the development of consultation mechanisms between international and regional financial organisations and national Governments with the private sector in both source and recipient countries as a means of creating business-enabling environments (Haque & Burdescu, 2004).

Standard Chartered

Standard Chartered is a UK-based MNC with an interest in financial services. The corporation intervention in education was aimed at empowering girls' education through its programme called *Goal*. The pilot scheme was in India where 70 school-going girls were picked and taught life skills using sports. The initiative has so far benefited more than 145,000 girls in 24 countries with the company's target of reaching 600,000 girls by the end of 2018. Generally, girls are more likely to be out-of-school than boys because of gender disparity and cultural issues in most of the world (Sekine & Hodgkin, 2017).

In order to arrest the situation whereby women or girls are completely phased out of school and – to a large extent – the workforce. The company in collaboration with different partners in the countries use life skill education through sports to empower young girls from low-income backgrounds with the abilities and knowledge needed to make decisions for the betterment of their lives. The empowerment scheme runs through nine months of training which includes lessons on hygiene and health, communication, and financial literacy to enable them to have an impact on their lives and those of their families. Young girls with leadership potential are then selected to train other girls around the world. They also have an opportunity to get an internship placement with potential employers. The ultimate goal of the scheme was to promote equality and equity in education. It enables girls to appreciate the immense opportunities associated with schooling instead of dropping out. A survey carried out shows that beneficiaries felt empowered economically and expressed confidence in their ability to manage finance and employability. About 65% expressed confidence in their capacity to become leaders. The goals also help girls feel more confident and knowledgeable as they have the requisite knowledge to contribute to the future skilled workforce in the communities (United Nations Global Compact, 2013).

LEGO

LEGO is a Denmark-based MNC operating in a remarkable number of countries. The company is involved in some trades which include educational solutions. Although the activities of a corporation can be classified as either philanthropic or commercial, LEGO falls into two of these categories. It has created tools to aid teaching and learning as part of its commitment towards ensuring the universality of education, in particular, through the provision of a low-cost solution to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) education, also by helping children learn better and improving their cognitive and creative skills via literacy-focused products. The corporation,

in partnership with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), developed a computer-enabled LEGO product to aid STEM learning (United Nations Global Compact, 2013). Other LEGO educational tools help in developing language and literacy skills, and creativity. Such products help teachers in increasing their pedagogical skills and thanks to them educators are provided with easy-to-use materials that facilitate learning in the classroom. What is more, LEGO is a source of inspiration for future scientists, engineers, and other STEM careers. Governments around the world such as Singapore and Peru as well as some US-based governmental agencies use LEGO educational solutions. This is simply because the products aid computational and mathematical skills which are relevant to jobs nowadays (Junec, 2017).

Oando Foundation

Oando Foundation was launched and financed by Oando petroleum, with the aim of providing access to education, in particular, quality basic education. Oando Foundation focuses primarily on Nigeria, according to United Nations Global Compact (2013). Nigeria has the largest number of out-of-school children in sub-Saharan Africa, in spite of the fact that primary education is supposed to be free. There are often other factors that may inhibit a child from attending school. The core of Oando Foundation's work is through school infrastructure in the country. The corporation through its Adopt-A-School initiative, in collaboration with the Nigerian Ministry of Education and the state's basic education boards, focuses on the improvement of education and learning outcomes. Particularly in the areas of retention enrollment, and transition through the following seven key areas:

- 1) provision of instructional aids and teachers' training;
- 2) increasing capacity of government education officials, especially at local levels;
- 3) construction and renovation of facilities and school buildings;
- 4) strengthening and establishing school-based management committees,
- 5) establishment of early childhood care and development centres;
- 6) provision of scholarships through the Oando Scholars Program;
- 7) establishment of an information and communication technology creative centre.

Oando's investment in education is aimed to provide a skilled workforce for the country. Various interventions have also helped to increase access to educational opportunities. The provision of the early childhood development centre has helped increase the enrollment rate in the areas. So far the foundation has adopted some schools in 23 states, trained teachers and awarded scholarships to students (Ramperasad & Skinner, 2014).

Nestlé

Nestlé is a Switzerland-based MNC interested in nutrition, wellness, and health. The corporation is committed to promoting education in the realms of health and nutrition, especially by combating malnutrition and obesity. The nexus between education and health cannot be overemphasised because the levels of children's educational

outcomes are determined – to a great extent – by their nutrition as poor health could negatively affect brain development. Therefore, educating children and parents about obesity and nutrition can help improve educational outcomes (Duprez-Naudy & Casas, 2014). The genesis of the programme was said to have started in communities where malnutrition and obesity were rife. It started with countries such as Russia, Brazil, and Portugal, but soon expanded to over 20 countries. With success achieved the programme was given a global outlook through the Nestlé Healthy Kids Global Programme which was aimed at changing pupils' behaviour around health and nutrition, with the desired impact of improvement in learning outcomes as well as economic and social development of societies. As of 2014, the programme is currently active in 73 countries. In developed countries Nestlé partners with local development partners in schools to address the issue of obesity among schoolchildren, whereas in developing or underdeveloped countries they focused on malnutrition (Johnson et al., 2013). The Healthy Kid's partners include governments, research organisations, and universities, civil societies which work with schools to teach teachers and cafeteria workers about health and nutrition both in practice and theory. The corporation also supports the UNSG Global Education First Initiatives which aims to improve youth and children's education, through the partnership of business-related support for the initiative. The impact of these on education is that the partnership with local education authorities and other stakeholders it has helped build capacity in schools thereby improving the efficiency of education (Powell, 2014).

Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PwC)

PwC is a global corporation offering audit, assurance, consulting and tax services. Its intervention in education was hinged on combining financial resources and skills-based volunteering. PwC leverages the skill of its employees to address issues in the US education system. Through the Earn Your Future commitments which include helping in developing critical financial skills, and providing educators with training and resources to teach those skills. The EYF by PwC increased the investment by 190 million USD towards achieving the goal. By investing in improving financial skills education PwC will help develop the skilled workforce in the country. PwC collaborated with Wharton High School to conduct a seminar on financial and business responsibility. PwC has also sponsored 500 secondary school administrators and educators to help bridge the problem of the financial knowledge literacy gap. PwC has also helped in developing financial literacy curriculum which includes JA Build your future App. Their employees receive training and collaborate with educators and impart financial literacy knowledge to students. So far, about 47,000 educators have received educational resources concerning financial literacy training (United Nations Global Compact, 2013).

Hess Corporation

Hess Corporation is an American energy corporation involved in the production of oil and gas operating in partnership with the government of Equatorial Guinea. As

the corporation's scope expands, it aims at making sustainable development through the betterment of basic education in the country. The establishment of the PRODEGE initiative (Eng. *Program for Education Development of Equatorial Guinea*) was designed to improve access to quality primary education in the country. So far, they have committed 40 million USD to training teachers, building primary schools and collecting data to aid educational policies and planning. The PRODEGE initiative has so far led to the certification of more than 900 teachers, and the provision of educational infrastructure for over 3,200 teachers in 54 schools. Also, a nationwide network called teachers circles was created to enable peer-to-peer support for teachers. (Kraus, 2010)

ING Bank

ING Bank is a Dutch MNC that partners with UNICEF with an aim to provide an access to education to children all over the world, through its ING Chances for Children. It is one of the employee initiatives aimed at fundraising and supporting children's rights to education. Apart from fundraising, the employees also volunteer for NGO operations for child rights and education. Since 2005, the total donation has stood at 31 million USD, and 800,000 children have benefitted from the scheme which has provided quality education and safer and healthier living conditions (ING, 2015).

Microsoft

Microsoft is a technology-based MNC with headquarters in the US. The corporation has incorporated SDG into its mission. Through a partnership with British Council, Project Badiliko was launched with the aim of improving digital literacy in sub-Saharan Africa. Microsoft sees educational initiatives as means of developing the world and opening new frontiers for the company to grow. The scheme was launched in 2011 to build 100 digital hubs across the following countries of the sub-Saharan region: Nigeria, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Ghana, and Kenya. The scheme introduces teachers and students to the basics of ICT to aid learning. Teachers also receive training in global citizenship curriculum, leadership and ICT teaching modules. They, in turn, train other teachers. So far, about 13,000 teachers have been trained, and 600,000 ICT learners have been impacted. The partnership was established, based on the fact that technology can be used to educate further through teachers' professional development, curriculum and content development. British Council liaises with government departments, teachers, and students to offer a global citizenship curriculum (Flanagan, 2016).

Apart from social development, access to educational opportunities is the central contribution towards an individual's welfare, community and national development. Corporations as an agent of globalisation can guarantee the advancement of commerce, markets, and technology to benefit societies and ultimately contribute to development. A lack of adequate skills and workforce could impede the activities of corporations in host countries. Low education levels make it difficult for a corporation to operate optimally thereby making it imperative for MNCs to engage in capacity-building for its workers and educational training for groups in the community to have a skilled population.

Conclusion

Corporations now play a complementary role in societal development, especially, in the realm of education. There is a need to increase financial commitment on their part in order to ensure the achievement of this development goal by 2030. The paper discussed the centrality of education to the achievement of the other seven goals of MDG which are: the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger; the promotion of gender equality and empowering women; reducing child mortality; improving maternal health; combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; ensuring environment sustainability and, global partnership for development arguing. If the remaining seven goals are achieved, there is a need for investment in education which will propel another goal. The article explains the centrality of education to the achievement of other 16 SDG goals. Subsequently, the role of such corporations as Microsoft, Oando, Nestlé, LEGO, ING Bank, Standard Chartered, Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PwC), and Hess Corporation is identified. They have played towards sustaining education development around the world, especially in developing countries. Their intervention can be understood within the CSR theory which argues that philanthropy may not be the responsibility of corporations but it has been an important player in the society or public sphere. It is expected of corporations to be the part of the society where they operate and, most importantly, leave some positive imprints.

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