Environmental Education and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

By

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The well- being of man and the sustenance of his livelihood are closely associated with the environment. The crux of this study is that the future of the Nigerian environment depends on the care and conservation of the environment. This can only be achieved if individuals and government are enlightened and educated to adopt policies and practices conducive for sustainable development. This paper focuses on environmental education as a tool for sustainable development in Nigeria. It revealed that population growth, industrialization and urbanization have brought man's environment negative factors like loss of biodiversity, global warming, desertification, pollution and accumulation of toxic wastes. The information used were derived from secondary sources. The importance of environmental, education was discussed and recommendations were made on how environmental awareness can be used in enhancing sustainable development in Nigeria

Key Words: Development, Education, Environment, Man, Sustainability

Introduction

Environment is the source of global economy that must be protected and managed sustainably. However, over the years human insensitivity, ignorance and greed has led to indiscriminate exploitation of the environmental resources. Man has utterly destroyed the forests, polluted air, land and seas and substantially decreased the population of wildlife through his various activities. These environmental resources that took nature several billions of years to build have taken man less than a century

to destroy. Davies, (1976) pointed that man's action is as a result of the biblical injunction for man to increase, multiply and exercise dominion over everything on earth (Gen 1:3l). However, the precept 'to replenish the earth' which carries with it responsibility to apply restraint and produce in his harvest of the earth's resources was totally ignored.

In the process of harnessing environmental resources, many damages are done to the environment. In Urban and rural areas, environmental education, management and planning are required. For instance, Ibrahim and Morsy (2016). Opined that environmental education is required in the formation of smart cities and sustainability. They noted furthermore that fostering sustainable cities require ICT infrastructure, innovation diffusion, smart city infrastructural development and monitoring, smart people, smart mobility, intelligent transportation system as well as smart governance. Other criteria are public safety and security, intelligent transportation system, E-health, smart power grid, smart water grid, smart waste management, as well as smart living. Hence, the education about all these components of the environment is a requirement for sustainable development.

Matheaus (2012) noted that environmental management can affect the quality and sustainability of the society in which they live. He noted further that a driving force to environmental management and sustainable development is environmental education. The knowledge about the environment as well as the practical understanding of the negative consequences of the misuse of abuse of the environment are catalysts to sustainable development. To this end, he recommended environmental governance as sustainable consumption policies as well as public participation in environmental decision making as major ingredients of sustainable development.

Today, in Nigeria and in many other nations, development has put the physical and social environment in trouble. This is because most developments are not done within the ambit of sustainability. Most developments have caused considerable damage to the fishes of the sea, the

fowls of the air and every other living thing that inhabits the earth, the survival of the organism is in jeopardy just as the survival of man. Therefore, the task of achieving sustainable development at national as well as global level depends on a thoroughly planned and effectively executed programme of education. The aim of this study is to stimulate, motivate and generate the commitment of the people towards the adoption of habits and lifestyles that are consistent with the practice of sustainable development.

Environment and Education

The quality of environment in which man lives is inextricably linked with the quality of life he enjoys. The global campaign to create a sustainable environment through environmental education has achieved notable success in many industrialized nations of the world Mckechnie (1983) defined environment as the immediate surroundings, all conditions, circumstances or influences surrounding and affecting an organism or group of organisms. This is to say that an environment may be physical, biological or socio- cultural in nature. The physical environment comprises air, water, land and other structures around man. These components of the physical environment are critical natural resources on which man's socio-economic development depends. Thus, man as a unit within an ecosystem interacts with and is dependent on other living things as well as the physical, chemical and socio- cultural factors in the ecosystem.

Pritchard (1975) viewed environment as the sum total of all the external conditions which may influence organizations including man. The environment in this sense comprises two components i.e. the natural environment and the social environment. The natural environment includes all living and non-living components of the earth. It comprises four major constituents i.e. atmosphere, hydrosphere, lithosphere and biosphere. The social environment on the other hand comprises of socio-economic, cultural, political, religious, psychological and physical systems which humans have exploited to satisfy their needs. In order words the

environment refers to the totality of the conditions which surround man at any point in time on the surface of the earth.

According to Rohrs (1979), man is a product of his education. Therefore, the type of citizen desired by a nation at a given time can be attained through a systematic and orderly process of education. Similarly, Ekuban (1980) in his view stressed that the society that would evolve at any period is dependent on the prevailing educational system that has put it in place and the educational goals that guide its operation.

In essence, education is a process of raising individual or groups along mental, physical, moral, spiritual, vocational dimensions through a planned programme of instruction and other forms of relevant experiences (Noibi and Lawal, 1993). Similarly, Lodge (1947) stated in his discussion that education is equivalent to experience that is the experience of a living organism interacting with its normal environment. Thus, both experience and nature constitute the teacher in an educational process.

Adekola, Azuh, Adeloye and Amoo (2019) stressed the importance of environmental education in the process of urban renewal. They posited that the role of environmental education is paramount in the areas of urban planning, urban health, as well as environmental sustainability. On the other hand, Johnson (1979) viewed education as the process and a tool through which society assures itself of self-sustaining existence by the provision and development of social institutions, the extent and nature of knowledge as well as the system of values that affects the behaviour of individuals and community in relation to the environment. The Education is technically concerned, with change in human behaviour. It is concerned with what to teach and as well as whom, where, how and when to teach. The purpose of education is to produce a wholesome, pleasant, and understanding individual who will interact wisely and purposefully within and outside his environment.

In general, education is seen as a powerful tool responsible for an all-round development of the individual to prepare him for life specifics environment that he finds himself as well as adapting himself to a new environment that

he may later find himself in life. Education and environment are concepts that are closely associated together. The relationship between environment and education is that environment provides its body of knowledge in the form of subject matter as a teaching area in education. Thus, environmental education is considered as a dimension of the subject matter and practice of education directed towards the resolution of practical environmental problems.

Martins (1990) defined environmental education as education that helps people to understand the forces that determine human behavior in relation to the environment. A more comprehensive definition of Environmental Education (EE) was provided by Schmeider (1977). He defined EE as:

- Education from the environment: This relates to experience gleaned from the environment.
- Education from the environment: This relates to the teaching we receive about the working of the environments, nature and composition, working and utility by man.
- Education for the environment:- This relates to man's commitment to environmental protection and conservation for sustainable development.

Also, United States 1970 Environmental Education Act gave the definition of Environmental Education (EE) as "an integrated process which deals with man's interrelationship with his natural and man- made surroundings. It is seen as the study of factors influencing ecosystems, mental and physical growth, living conditions, the decay of cities and population problems. It is intended to promote among citizens the awareness and understanding of environment, our relationship to it and the responsible action necessary to assure our survival while improving the quality of life". This definition however viewed environmental education as being saddled with providing the people with environmental awareness and how resources could be utilized in sustainable way.

Specific objectives aimed at meeting the goals of environmental education include developing an awareness of and appreciation for our natural and social/cultural environment, knowledge of basic ecological concepts, an acquaintance with a broad range of current environmental issues, and experience in using investigative, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills in solving environmental problems (Cunningham and Cunningham, 2006). Accordingly, environmental education deals with knowledge, attitude change and participation in finding better ways of caring for our environment. In all, it is concerned with the improvement and modification of human interaction with his environment in a way that accrue benefits to all participants.

Environmental education considers the global and local environment, the challenges and way forward. It is concerned majorly with the improvement of environmental quality. Also, it deals with the present environmental condition and lays more emphasis on future environmental conditions. Environmental education places more emphasis on preventive measures of environmental problems than the curative values. Hence, environmental education is a strategy towards ecologically and socially sustainable environment. It develops awareness of the importance and beauty of the environment, vis-à-vis the necessity to preserve it. Above all, it pays more attention to the local environment.

The Issue of Sustainable Development in Nigeria

Hengsky (2020) investigated the strategies of achieving environmental sustainability through the meticulous use of natural tourism attractions in Cianjur District. He opined that tourism development can create income, employment as well as promotion of regional development. In his study, he identified the problems of tourism development as coordination, planning, as well as technical hitches. Subsequently, he recommended strategic planning, public awareness, conservation as well as provision of public utilities and amenities for the achievement of environmental sustainability through tourism development.

In the years that followed independence in Nigeria as a nation, national emphases were on economic growth and higher national income (Risiro, et.al). In spite of the successes recorded during this decades, the rising population explosion, the deteriorating social services, the moral decay and social dislocation that accompanied the development brought to focus the gradual but steady degeneration of the Nigeria environment. Development at this time was conceived in terms of capacity of a nation to apply technology for the exploitation of the resources of nature. Such exploitation was often done without due regard for environmental protection and conservation.

Haphazard development, rapid urbanization, industrialization, uncontrolled population growth rate, deforestation, poverty, soil erosion, poor municipal solid waste management, lack of basic sanitation, inadequate potable water supply, negative socio-cultural values are few examples of human activities or conditions that degrade the Nigerian environment and pose threat to human well-being and sustainable development. Therefore, sustainable development; that is development that meets the needs of the present generation while guaranteeing the future needs of the unborn is a difficult concept in Nigeria since current emphasis is still on rapid and haphazard industrialization with no regard for environmental degradation and its adverse impact on sustainable development, Thus, today the level of environmental awareness through environmental education is relatively low in Nigeria. However, development should focus on issues of environmental concern as well as the need to integrate national growth and development within human needs, and rights through sustainable development. (Izeogu, et.al, (1992) Sustainable development in this case is a socio-economic and political movement or strategy that has a global appeal. Its major focus is on the dual issues of environmental protection through a conservation process and economic development that would make life pleasant for inhabitants (Ezeogu, et-al, (1992)

The term sustainable development was brought into common use by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) the Brundtland Commission in 1987 and calls for development that meets the present generations without compromising those of future generations (Francis and Pand, 2003:31). According to Noibi and Lawal (1993), it is a development strategy that manages the physical assets, natural and human resources as well as available funds in a manner that ensures increasing wealth and health for both the present and future generation on earth. Its objective is to meet the needs and aspirations of the present generation of man and other living creatures without also compromising the capacity to meet those of the future.

As a movement, it rejects policies and practices that support living standards fostered through a depletion of natural resources with a positive impoverishment of future generations. Rather, it supports wisely planned systematic exploitation of natural resources. The world conservation strategy of 1980 stressed the great need for man to exist as part of nature while also warning that there would be no future for humanity if nature and natural resources are not adequately conserved.

Ana, Claudimar and Renalo (2017). Investigated the measurement of consumer-oriented sustainability in Brazil. They considered the environmental, social and economic impacts of consumption. They suggested sustainable consumption, communication, ecological awareness, as well as socially and socially and environmentally responsible behaviours as strategies for environmental education, and attainment of sustainable development.

For any development to be sustainable, therefore, it must seek to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs (WCED, 1987). Therefore, if human want to live a satisfactory life, if nations would accept their dependence on resources of the earth for the purpose of meeting their various needs and if they can read the danger signs all over the globe, the

only path to reason and safety are environmental awareness, conservation and sustainable development through proper environmental education.

Conclusion

The physical and social environment is in jeopardy. The environment has been poisoned, devasted and stripped bare by man through his various activities. The resultant impact of these developments on physical health of man and his environment are tremendous. In the face of these circumstances, the need for sustainable development has become more paramount, and environmental education assumes a position of prominence and importance in an organized effort towards freeing man from the destruction.

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