



THE NEED FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA - A REVIEW

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Abstract

Nigeria has faced different environmental challenges most especially from oil bunkering activities by the local people in the southernmost part and other non-chalant attitudes from the northernmost part which have to a large extent affected the ecological environment, moreover it causes a lot of lives and properties. Despite efforts made by the concerned authorities in solving these environmental problems by executing different developmental projects, these problems seems to persist as it caused a lot of effects on the entire Nigerian community. As such the need for proper implementation of environmental education in solving environmental problems was recommended in order to bring a lasting solution, thereby enhancing environmental sustainability.

Keywords: Environmental Education, Implementation, Nigeria

Introduction

The need for utmost awareness and implementation of environmental education has been a pressing issue not only at national level, rather in the international communities. There is no doubt about the fact that environmental stewardship can rather be achieved only when the concern communities are exposed to these pressing environmental issues and subsequently



how these issues are tackled and resolved. In developed countries today, environmental education has had a remarkable impact on both the quality of their environment and the citizen's well-being, meanwhile the reverse was the case in the developing countries in which people struggle in order to attain environmental sustainability. Therefore, the utmost need to consider environmental education as a real focus in different societies in order to attain environmental sustainability was first identified in the 1977 Tbilisi conference organized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (Tbilisi Declaration, UNESCO 1978). In which it was declared in the conference that, environmental education has become a critical need for our global future. The following pronouncements were made after the conference.

1. To develop a great awareness and utmost concern about economic, social, political and ecological interdependence both in rural and urban areas.
2. To provide an avenue in which the concern citizens will have an opportunity to acquire knowledge, values, attitudes, commitment as well as the skills needed to preserve and protect the environment.
3. To develop a new approach in the behavioral pattern of people towards the environment.

Having observed these declarations, there was need to put more effort on environmental awareness in order to attain sustainability most especially in the twenty first century. As such there seems to be tangible improvement on issues of environmental health as well as environmental consciousness (Potter, 2010). As it was widely supported in the United State Environmental Report (2011); *"More than ever, children and adults need to understand how ecological system works and why they matter. Some people have become so disconnected from the natural resources that sustain them that they don't know where their food comes from or where they get their drinking water. The health of the environment is inseparable from human's well-being and economic prosperity and to successfully address and solve environmental problems; people require knowledge, tools and sensitivity,"*

Educational Development in Nigeria

The need for educational development has become an issue of greatest concern in Nigeria right from the independence in early 1960's. Having realizing the major role education have played on the issue of national development, various administrations have invested/enacted different educational policies and programs with the high expectation of meeting the country's need in the area of social, human and economic development. Gideons, (2008), observed that some of the past policies enacted which includes: The Universal Primary Education (UPE) is a program initiated in the Western and Eastern regions of Nigeria, the takeover of schools from the missionaries, the establishment of Unity Schools in 1976, with the sole aim of meeting educational needs of the citizens of the country as well as the subsequent introduction of UPE.



Furthermore, Fafunwa (1986) also maintained that despite this initiation, the educational outcome did not seem to achieve the set objectives as a result of inadequate fund allocation, poor planning and implementation.

The subsequent introduction of 6-3-3-4 educational system all over the country by the Federal Government in 1982 has played another important role in achieving educational standard in Nigeria. This type of educational system requires a child spending almost 6 years in primary school, 3 years in lower secondary school and 3 years in upper secondary school as well as 4 or 5 years in tertiary institution as the case may be which have showcased the Federal Government's commitment towards total eradication of illiteracy in the country. Furthermore, Gideons and Sorkaa (2008), also noted that, there are a lot of challenges associated with these educational policies which includes, lack of proper funding, improper monitoring and evaluation, lack of consideration of environmental education most especially in upper secondary schools. As such despite these policies, the rate of illiteracy most especially on issues that affects the environment was very high which was resultantly showing on the general environmental well-being in which there was rampant pollution, degradation, as well as issues of improper waste disposal in the affected communities.

Therefore, the need for a more comprehensive and appropriate educational policy arouse throughout the country especially after the Jomtien World Conference held in 1990 as well as the declaration of Education for All (EFA) by the year 2000 in that same conference. Subsequently, there was introduction of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with the sole aim of re-emphasizing the EFA objectives. The MDGs came up with eight point agenda after a decision was reached at the United Nations Millennium Summit which was held in September 2000. According to European commission (2003), the major declaration was the commitment of all the member countries which includes Nigeria, to strive and attain the following 8 goals by the end of year 2015.

- Eradication of extreme poverty and hunger
- Achieving Universal Basic Education
- Promotion of Gender Equality and Women empowerment
- Reduction of Child Mortality
- Improving Maternal Health
- Combating HIV/ AIDS, Malaria and other deadly diseases
- Ensuring Environmental Sustainability
- Developing a global partnership for development

Meaning and Scope of Environmental Education

Environment can be described according to Hugget and Robinson (1996), as the sum of all external conditions which may not act upon an organism or community, which influence its development or existence. It can also be describe according to Faniran (1997), as an entity



which includes the surrounding air, temperature, moisture, wind, soil and other related organism in which man depends on for life and survival.

Man lives and explore from the physical environment for his utilization and advantage which in most case that utilization will always be at the expense of the environment itself.

Importance of Environmental Education

Benny (2009) observed that *“Environment is the physical and biotic habitat that surrounds us”*. The major goals of environmental education programs are mainly to raise environmental consciousness about environmental condition as well as teaching environmental appropriate behavior. This indicated that, there is utmost need for general awareness on how to keep the environment safe not only for our generation but for the future. On the other hand, it also teaches individuals how to weigh various sides of an issue through critical thinking and enhances their own problem solving skills. As such, Benny (2009) highlighted the following as some of the guiding principles and features for effective environmental education.

- Environmental education considers the environment in its entity, in terms of ecology, natural, technology, sociology, aesthetic and built environment.
- Environmental education explores not only the physical qualities of human relationship with the environment, but also the spiritual aspect of this relationship.
- Environmental education can serve as a response to the challenge of moving towards an ecologically and socially sustainable world.
- Environmental education emphasizes participation in preventing and solving environmental problems and revokes the passive accumulation of information about the environment. It should foster and arouse a sense of personal responsibility, greater motivation and commitment towards the resolution of the environment.
- Environmental education focuses on current and future perspectives on environmental conditions.
- Environmental education transcends the division of knowledge, skills and attitudes by seeking commitment to action in an informed manner to realistic sustainability.

Some Pronounced Environmental Problems in Nigeria

Olujimiet'al (2011) have defined environmental problems as some of the undesirable change in the physical, chemical and biological characteristics of land, air and water bodies which could be detrimental or inimical to human life and their living conditions. While environment was described as sum of all the conditions surrounding man (Jike, 2004). Therefore, the concept of environmental problems was perceived in different ways by different scholars in academic field, as such pollutants could be generated from human waste or natural sources which could either are toxic or non-toxic in nature. These pollutants could be classified into three which is based on the nature and the type of the affected environment which are as follows; water pollution, air pollution and land pollution.

Delta State has been identified as one of the state of much concern in terms of environmental problems which almost more than half of its biodiversity has been depleted as a result of

different environmental degradation activities in the past few decades (UNDP, 2006). As such the issue of environmental problems most especially from oil exploration and related issues in Delta has been of much concern to many environmentalist and other stakeholders most especially when the problems was viewed in a larger context of global concern.

Oil sabotage occurs primarily through what is referred to as “Bunkering” which is the process whereby the hoodlums make an attempt to illegally tap the petroleum from the pipelines and the oil tanks, this act is done mostly for economic purposes where the tapped oil is sold to the public in the name of Black Markets. In this process a lot of pipelines are damaged or destroyed, which according to estimation accounts for 28%. This act of sabotage and oil theft has become one of the pressing problem in Nigeria, it causes rapid environmental degradation because if the pipes are damaged a lot of fuel spilled around and in most cases it takes much time before it can be fixed up. On the other, while people are making much money in this form of illegal business, much death casualties are recorded as a result of fire outbreak in almost more than half of the bunkering act. More than 600 people were killed as in September 2004 (Jike, 2004).

Figure 1: One of the oil spillage sites in Delta



Source: *Social Action* (2009)

Another, issue of utmost environmental concern in Nigeria is flooding (a situation that results when land that is usually dry is covered with water of a river overflowing or heavy rain, flooding occurs naturally on the flood plains which are prone to disaster) most especially in the different metropolitan cities in the country. It was observed by Akinyemi,



(1990), that flood affects and displaced more people than any other disaster in Nigeria; it also causes more damages to properties as well as natural environment. At least 20 per cent of the population is at risk from one form of flooding or another.

The country is located in the tropical area as such characterized by relatively high temperatures throughout the year which result to heavy down pour of rainfall which varied from one part of the country to the other. For example the southern part of the country receives almost 12 months round of rainfall as a result of south westerly winds which blows from the Atlantic Ocean while the north receives almost 5 months of rainfall as a result of north easterly wind which blows from the Sahara desert. Generally, floods are either caused by Natural factors like heavy rainfall or human induced factor like dam failure. One of the recent severe flood incident happened in September, 2010 in Kagara village of Sokoto State which basically wiped away the entire village, including their farmland and their stored food which brought about the death of several peoples and animals. In another studies, it was noted by Durotoye, (1999) that, Property estimated at several millions of Naira were destroyed in many communities in the Ikorodu local government axis. This flash flood occurs as a result of human induced activities in which the land scape was altered for different construction activities which consequently increase the water run-off at the period of rain fall and result to submergence of streets, houses, roads among others.

Figure 2; Lagos Flash Flood, Ajegunle -Ikorodu Express Road at Ajegule



Source: Shehu (2014)



Some Solutions Taken Towards Solving These Problems

The Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) in collaboration with the operating multinational companies as well as the NGOs have in several ways come up with different strategies towards solving these pressing environmental problems and this is in response to the host community's agitations as well as governmental effort towards ensuring good environmental sustainability. Some of these strategies includes;

- The ministry of the Niger Delta in 2008.
- Formulation of laws in the national assembly on oil spillage and gas flaring issues.
- Compensation payments from the multinational companies to the host community
- Provision of some community development services to the affected communities.
- Extraction companies and social responsibilities
- Establishment of National Relief Management Agencies as for the areas that were adversely affected by floods and other related disasters.

The Need for Implementation of Environmental Education

As it was observed by Abdul Kareem (2005), that most of the policies introduced by the national assembly on gas flaring and other related environmental protection issues in Nigeria for the past 22 years was unsuccessful as a result of poor and insufficient planning, political and cultural issues. Whereas, it was reported by Saturday independence newspaper (2010) that the NDDC achievements towards solving environmental problems in the Niger Delta was not encouraging, in such a way that the designed developmental master plan was not duly followed rather was thrown into the dustbin due to political and some personal reasons as such the main aim of the commission (ensuring maximum environmental protection) was not fully achieved (Saturday Independent 2010). Inadequate public awareness/ education on issues that concerns environmental protection on the other hand have played a significant role in ruining the government planned policies and programs, as people were mainly engaged in creating havoc by vandalizing some of the running pipelines for illegal oil tapping (Bunkering) in the name of looking for a way to earn a living or making quick money. As such these acts have in many ways affected the entire community's social, economic and the entire environmental well-being. On the other hand, the concerned communities have always showed nonchalant attitudes towards environmental protection by improper waste management, excess deforestation, etc. which at long run affects the environment negatively, thereby causing lots of lives and properties.

Based on the forgoing, it can be concluded that the government and concerned environmental agencies alone cannot single handedly solve the pressing environmental problems in Nigeria, as such there is utmost need of environmental education in solving these pressing problems in order to achieve a long lasting sustainable development not only for the present but for the future generations.



Conclusion and Recommendation

The need for environmental education in solving environmental problems in Nigeria cannot be over emphasized. This described the utmost need of pulling ideas and resources together in order rescue the current environmental problems facing the country people which have to a large extent brought them a lot of challenges which ranges from social, economic, health among others. Therefore, in order to achieve a good implementation of environmental education, the following recommendations were to be observed.

- There should be creation of environmental awareness unit and sub-unit in federal and state ministry of education with the sole aim of enhancing the level of public awareness about environmental issues.
- There should be a monthly comprehensive programme in a renounced media station and other communication channels organized by resource persons purposely to enlighten the public about the need for environmental education in solving environmental problems in Nigeria.
- There should a well-designed environmental educational programme which is to be incorporated within the main academic curriculum right from primary up to tertiary schools across the country, this will enable the upcoming generation to fully educated and show more concern to their environment.
- There is need for the local authorities to always offer the public the general information needed about environmental education which will facilitates their involvement in a protecting the environment in a meaningful way
- There is need for the non-governmental organizations (NGO, s) in collaboration with the federal and state government to pull resources and ideas together in order to come up with good initiatives i.e. through drama series, public debates, etc. about the essence and importance of environmental education.



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