
Towards Sustainable Development in Nigeria: The Imperativeness of Environmental Education

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Abstract

It is common knowledge within the development circle that development involves a physical reality and a state of mind. Through development process, the interactions between social, economic and institutional processes must be continually sustained to meet up with increasing future demands in terms of population growth and continuous use of natural, human and material resources. A clear understanding of the above assertion describes sustainable development and the road map to this understanding is offered by environmental education. Environmental education has become inevitable in Nigeria, if actually our country wants to achieve sustainable development. This paper, via conceptual analysis presented the imperativeness of environmental education towards attaining sustainable development in Nigeria. The paper concludes that environmental education is directed at creating awareness and understanding about environmental issues that leads to responsible individual and group actions; it also focuses on processes that promote critical thinking, problem solving, and effective decision-making skills in line with environmental issues and recommended among many that; a coherent and coordinated framework on environmental education is therefore urgently required in Nigeria to accelerate the widescale incorporation of environmental education into education strategies at all levels.

Introduction

In the years that followed independence in Nigeria as a nation, national emphases were on economic growth and higher national income (Risiro, et.al, 2013). 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.

Environmental degradation has been identified as a major crisis across the globe. Environmental degradation is the deterioration of the environment through depletion of resources such as air, water and soil, the destruction of ecosystems, habitat destruction, the extinction of wildlife and pollution. When natural habitats are destroyed or natural resources are depleted, the environment is degraded. According to UNESCO (2012), environmental degradation resulted due to growth of urban centers, rise in poverty levels, and surge in population. The need to create food security has led to deforestation, and depletion of water reservoirs. Moreover, industrialization resulted in increased chemical use hence air pollution (UNEP, 2012). Environmental degradation in form of all types of pollution and deforestation has been increasingly manifesting (UNEP, 2012). This spells doom for the future generations. Hence, the need for adequate and effective education which will equip the citizens with the basic and useful knowledge, skills and attitude towards and about their environment cannot be overemphasis.

Education is a social mechanism necessary for enabling people to learn how to live as a useful member of society. Through education, people can acquire relevant knowledge, skills and attitude that are desirable and useful in the production function, preservation of cultural values and protection of the environment as well (Owolabi, 2005). Education is of a good quality it enables learners learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be (Delors, 2013). The current deterioration of the environment due to human activities and behaviours, therefore, attracts an urgent need to develop environmentally literate citizens able to makes informed decisions concerning the environment (Hollweg et. al., 2011). Therefore, the imperativeness of environmental education in the face of the above assertion cannot be undermine.

Several authors identify Environmental Education (EE) as one of the remedies to escalating environmental challenges (Wolwick, 2014). According to Mutisya and Baker (2011), Environmental Education enables learners to acquire knowledge and skills for enhancing the right attitude towards environmental conservation. Environmental Education as a tool enhanced awareness and comprehension of social the emerging social and physical environment including the natural, manmade, cultural, and spiritual resources. This is coupled with the national use and conservation of these resources for development. This implies that Environmental Education enables individuals make sound decisions and individually formulated code of behaviour about issues concerning environmental conservation and quality which eventually leads to sustainable development.

Environmental education has become inevitable in Nigeria, if actually our country wants to achieve environmental sustainability for self-reliance and positive development. This is consequent upon the fact that our environment suffers unwanted abuse from man which leads to its degradation. In south eastern region of Nigeria, gully erosion has caused untold damage to numerous farmlands such that many people find it difficult to acquire enough farmland for farming, (Gbamenja, 1998). Also, oil spillage and gas flaring from oil companies have brought about a lot of destructions in the south – south states of our country. In the northern fringe, the Sahara Desert is rapidly encroaching on the lands, and this results to shortage of rainfall and poor crop yield each year, (Akintude, 2008).

The manifestation and persistence of these environmental problems have prompted the federal government to bring about environmental policy and environmental education with a view to prevent and ameliorate environmental damage. The interventions as observed in the national policy on the environment are two in number, that is, short term and long term. Akintude, (2008) has observed that the short-term measures are both preventive and ameliorative the long-term measures have to do with provision of solution to environmental problems through a policy intervention such as environmental tax and inclusion of the private organization in the environmental protection. Another measure embarked upon by the federal government is the introduction of environmental education whose target audience are the youths who are mostly found in schools at various levels. Environmental education in Nigeria is aimed at making these targeted audience at different levels of education see the environment as an asset, a stock of available wealth and found a way of utilizing this wealth with adequate investment for the future. 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, It is only when this is attained that (sustainable development), development that meets the needs of the

present, without compromising future generations to meet their own needs can be achieved in Nigeria.

The overriding sustainable development challenge in Nigeria is poverty eradication. As identified during the “African Ministerial Statement to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD 2019) poverty eradication as an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. Africa and Nigeria in particular, is the only region in the world where poverty has increased both in absolute and relative terms (ECA 2006). Apart from being one of the poorest country in the world, Nigeria remains one of the least developed, the most technologically backward, the most indebted, the most food-insecure and the most marginalized. Furthermore, malnutrition, disease, environmental degradation, natural resource depletion, poor and inadequate infrastructure, unemployment and weak institutional capacities continue to pose serious development challenges for Nigeria, which stand as major indices for sustainable development.

Sustainable development thrives best in an environment of good governance, peace and security and most importantly, where environmental components and its natural resources are well managed, presently and for future use; where citizens are environmentally literate. Without which, sustainable development will continue to remain an illusion for Nigeria.

Education stands as one of the main aspects to achieving sustainable development. Education for sustainable development constitutes an important part in ensuring that human beings acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values necessary to shape a sustainable future. According to Kimaryo (2011), education for sustainable development envisions a better world where there is a balance between economy, ecology and society. In practice, Ssozi (2012) pointed out that education for sustainable development should address holistically other academic disciplines apart from ecosystem and life science. The author suggests inclusion of societal development, economic growth and environmental conservation. This is important as economic growth has been achieved through unfair deals without taking into consideration environmental consequences and the communities whose survival depends on the environment and the resources therein. It is therefore, based on this background that this paper revalidates the imperativeness of environmental education towards sustainable development in Nigeria.

Environmental Education

Environmental education constitutes a core component of education for sustainable development. Kansas (2012), as (cited in Beatus, 2017) defined environmental education as a process directed at creating awareness and understanding about environmental issues that leads to responsible individual and group actions. Furthermore, the author describes that successful environmental education focuses on processes that promote

critical thinking, problem solving, and effective decision-making skills. On the other hand, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (2017) defines environmental education as the process of recognizing values and clarifying concepts in order to develop skills and attitudes necessary to understand and appreciate the inter-relatedness among humans, their culture, and their biophysical surroundings. In its report, the union insisted that the need of the hour is environmental education and awareness for all so that humans learn how to handle environmental issues, how to lead a better life with less pollution, and to make this earth a better place to live in for the present and future generations. Environmental education utilizes scientific tools; these techniques involve observation, measurements, and classifying, experimenting, and other data gathering techniques. This process assists students in discussing, inferring, predicting, understanding and interpreting data about environmental issues. The above definitions imply that environmental studies has reached the status of a multidisciplinary subject where it acts as a meeting ground of all disciplines including arts, science, commerce, medical science and engineering. It also covers all fields of environmental science. This includes how humanity can save itself from the problems which we have caused through the abuse, misuse and over-use of the resources provided by the nature. Therefore, environmental education should not only focus on the effects of environmental degradation but very importantly, the understanding of the fundamental causes.

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 Schneider (1979). He defined EE as:

- i. Education from the environment: This relates to experience gleaned from the environment.
- ii. 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.
- iii. 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.

According to Joel, (2011) it is a process of imparting awareness an adequate knowledge about the problems and function of the environment, how to use it wisely and proffer solutions the current environmental problems. Abubakar (2010:176) opined that the concept is concerned with the 'analysis of the nature, causes and consequences of the current environmental issues.' Akintunde (2008:69) defined environmental education as "the expansion of the study of ecology; a branch of biology dealing with the interrelationship of living organisms with one another and with their surroundings. Therefore, the fundamental role of environmental education (E.E.) is to give concrete awareness about the environment and how to use it for sustainable development. Abubakar (2010:177) outline the objectives of environmental education as follows:

- a. Awareness: - To help social groups and individuals acquire an awareness and sensibility to the total environment and its allied problems and/or issues.
- b. Sensitivity: - To help social groups and individuals gain a variety of experience in, and acquire a basic understanding of the environment and its associated problems and/or issues.
- c. Attitude: - to help social groups and individuals to acquire a set of values and feeling of concern for the environment and motivation for actively participating in environmental improvement and protection.
- d. Skills; - to help social groups and individuals acquire skills for identifying and solving environmental problems and/or issues.
- e. Participation: - to provide social groups and individual with an opportunity to be actively involved at all levels in working toward, resolution of environmental problems/or issues.

Environmental Policy and Environmental Education in Nigeria

The intervention as observed in the national policy on the environment are two in number, that is, short – term and long – term.

According to Akintunde (2008:69) "the short – term measures are both preventive and ameliorative". Preventive measures include environmental monitoring programme and environmental impact assessment studies. The ameliorative measures involve installing sandstorm barriers to control desertification; a forestation; flood and erosion control; solid and liquid waste management and sanitary engineering. In the case of long – term measure, the solution to the problems of environmental decay in our country will be through a policy intervention such as environmental tax and inclusion of the private organizations in the environmental protections.

Out of the aforementioned measures, the one that involves the youths is environmental education; and the target youths are mostly found in schools at various levels. The reason for having the young ones as target learners of environmental education is to ensure that in the long – run, they should be able acquire positive attitude and values towards the environment. This affords the opportunity to not only learn about the dynamics of the environment but also about the policy measure for its sustainability, Akintude (2008) has also opined that environmental education is the expansion of the study of ecology. He said in the long – run, the panacea to the problems of environmental degradation in our country will be through a comprehensive environmental education (at both formal and raise a generation of Nigeria who will develop positive thinking about the environment and a commitment towards its proper management and preservation on a sustainable basis. Also, since environmental problems are man – made, the themes of the new programme (environmental education) have to do with reducing the human population and controlling the polluting activities of man.

Environmental questions are often built around central concepts as the study of food supplies, source of energy, conservation of resources, pollution of land, air, water and use of pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, drugs, industrial chemicals, radiation, control of human population and environmental ethics. According to him, these supposed to constitute the content of environmental education in Nigeria. Today, environmental education concepts have been integrated into disciplines such as geography, biology, health science, Integrated Science, social studies and agricultural science, in order to continue to show concern for the environment. The question one may ask is: - can the inclusion of environmental education in our curricula makes us to solve our environmental problems?

Methods of Teaching Environment Education

The method that could be employed in teaching environmental education include lecture, discussion, practical field studies or excursion, project, seminar, symposium, quiz, debate, etc. However, Abubakar (2010:180) has opined that the teaching of the issues in question could achieve its target objectives through putting emphasis on:

Reconnaissance Survey: - All environmental problems to be tackled need a well-planned reconnaissance survey. To embark on such surveys, the equipment to be used on field as well as the topographical maps should be provided as they guide the movement and work of the researcher, while on the field.

Measurement of Environmental Attitude: - these include those on vegetation parameters soil and its colour, slope, elevation, depth of water table etc. As much as possible the students should be made to measure them with the supervision of the teacher.

Laboratory Analysis: - environmental problems such as pollution and soil erosion require laboratory analysis of soil samples collected from the field the teachers of environmental education should encourage their students to carry out the analysis for reliable result because mistakes made during analysis reflect in the final result.

Collection of Data and Statistical Analysis: - data collected from the field and laboratory should be made in an orderly manner to ease computation and statistical analysis. In this aspect of research, the teacher needs to give a very good attention to the learners because most of them find it difficult to collect, analyses and compute simple data.

Sustainable development

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). Since then, it should be noted that there is no single clear-cut definition for sustainable development but there are key ideas common to all, definitions concerns resource exploitation at a rate that would not prove detrimental to future generations. 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.

The environment should be seen as an asset, a stock of available wealth but if the present generation spends this wealth without investment for the future, then the world will run out of resources. If, however, we use this capital (grant) to research and develop new resources for the future, we can build machines that will substitute for the environmental resource (resource substitution). A good example is the construction of solar panels to replace oil, coal, hydro and thermal power generation mechanisms". It is also about being clear and responsible about the use of scientific, and other, evidence – for example, about levels of pollution or carbon emissions. The international Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) sees sustainable development in many ways, but the most frequently quoted definitions are from Our Common Future, also known as the Brundtland Report: "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs

of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts: - The concept of needs, in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and - The idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs". All definitions of sustainable development require that we see the world as a system-a system that connects space; and a system that connects time. When you think of the world as a system over space, you grow to understand that air pollution from Europe/Americas affects air quality in Asia, and Caribbean, and that pesticides sprayed in Argentina could harm fish stocks off the coast of Australia. In an ecological perspective, sustainability must involve limits on the population and consumption levels and the process that generate variability and novelty-the generation of genetic diversity and the resultant processes of evolution and change in species and ecosystem. Jonathan Harris (2000) noted that advocates of sustainable development recognize social development as an essential part of the paradigm shift.

Components of Sustainable Development

There are three basic components of sustainable development economic, social and the environment. The three components are inter-related (Karpagam 2014:182). The economic component of sustainability requires that societies pursue growth paths that generate optimal flow of income while maintaining their basic stock of manmade capital, human capital and natural capital. Economic sustainability also requires internalizing all costs including the environmental costs associated with production and consumption. The three basic goals of economic sustainability are: to increase production of goods and services, satisfy the basic needs or reduce poverty and improve equality. The social dimension of sustainable development is built on the twin principles of justice and equality. For a developmental path to be sustainable over a long period of time, wealth, resources and opportunities should be equitably shared. Social equity implies equal opportunities to all for education and for making productive contribution to society in terms of cultural diversity, social justice, gender equality and public participation. The environmental component equally demands sustainable resource use, efficient sink function and maintenance of stock of natural capital i.e. the environment should be able to perform its three functions efficiently and uninterrupted so that ecological stability and resilience are not affected.

The sustainable development goals are made up of 17 items namely:

- End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

- Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
- Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
- Reduce inequality within and among countries
- Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
- Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
- Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
- Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
- Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

A critical analysis of the SDGs goals, one will not be out of place to assert that it all centered on the environment; its sustenance and its conservation for now and for the future. The ability to achieve that means the attainment of the SDGs goals which defines sustainable development.

Rules of Sustainable Development

The fundamental implication of the concept of sustainable development that one may understand from definitions involving inter-generational equity is that, the present generation should bequeath to the next generation a stock of 'quality of life' assets no less than those that was inherited. This can be interpreted to mean (Karpagam 2014:183):

- a. That the next generation should inherit a stock of environmental assets no less than that inherited by the previous generation.
- b. That the next generation should inherit a stock of environmental assets no less than that inherited by the previous generation.

- c. That the components of the inherited stock should be man-made assets, natural assets and human assets.

The first interpretation underscored all capital assets: man-made and natural. The second emphasized natural capital only and the third include human capital besides natural and man-made capital. Premised on the classification of capital, sustainability of development process may be verified. The dilemma or conflict is whether sustainability rule should be defined in terms of natural capital alone or in terms of aggregate capital stock, where aggregate capital stock includes man made capital consisting of machines, buildings, roads, and the like; human capital comprising of the stock of knowledge and skills and natural capital that is made up of renewable and nonrenewable resources or any natural asset yielding a flow of ecological services with economic values over time. Pearce (2013:18) proposed a constant capital stock rule as a criterion for sustainability. A precondition for sustainable development is that a nation's stock of capital should not decline through time. The two variants to this rule are weak sustainability that requires the total capital stock-physical, human and natural-are non-declining through time and strong sustainability that requires that the nation's stock of natural capital is non declining. Weak sustainability rule implies that less environment can be passed on so long as the loss can be offset by increasing the stock of roads and machinery or other man-made physical capital. Weak sustainability rule will however hold if there is perfect substitutability between different forms of capital; for if the various capital forms are not perfectly substitutable, natural capital stock cannot be substituted for man-made capital. For example, ecological assets and ecosystem that perform life support services cannot be replaced. Daly (2013:14) posited that sound principles should provide the basis for the first step toward operationality. The main principle is to limit the human scale to a level which is commensurate with the carrying capacity of the environment, for once the human activity exceeds the carrying capacity there will be a deviation from the path of sustainable development. Also, technological process should be throughout efficiency increasing rather than throughout quantity increasing, renewable resources should be exploited on a profit maximizing sustainable yield basis and in general not be driven to extinction and the rate of depletion for non-renewable resources should not exceed the rate of creation of renewable substitutes.

Sustainable Development Context in Nigeria

Arguably, sustainable development cannot be achieved without the interface between development and environment. This is because while development is pro-people and environment pro-nature, they are both evidently interrelated (Eugene 2013:14; Tietenberg 2015). Also, while environment provides the valuable and critical inputs that are needed to produce the outputs of development through environmental resource

conversion and transformation as well as technological innovation and advancement there has been a growing concern about the environmental limit to growth and development as well as the imperative of environmental quality and management. This concern has made the adoption of a middle-of the –road approach aimed at satisfying two important criteria-efficiency and sustainability a desideratum.

In Nigeria, the exigency of the efficient use and management of natural resources cannot be overemphasized. This assertion derives from the fact that it is the only way to pursue a development path and, as a consequence, ensure sustainable development. Ordinarily, without responsible resource use and management in Nigeria, environmental utilization space, which is the total space provided by the environment for use by the present and future generations will be grossly depleted. Kelly, (2015) maintain that the capacity of the environment to supply both renewable and non-renewable resources, to assimilate wastes by either absorption or dispersal and to provide life support services by maintaining ecological balance and genetic diversity will be constrained with the grave consequence of environmental crisis. Despite the critical role that natural resource management is expected to play in the attainment of sustainable development in Nigeria, it is sad to note that there is a threat to the long-term development in Nigeria. Worse still, is that the natural resources in Nigeria are being over-exploited in a fashion that appears wasteful.

The Imperativeness of Environmental Education towards Sustainable Development in Nigeria

Education is an important instrument towards the development of the individual as indeed, it is a vital instrument in nation-building. Technology has effaced conventional barriers and the world has become a globally networked community of information ideas. The challenges which confront the system of education have evolved rapidly, perhaps too rapidly for our educational system to develop pragmatic solutions to meet them. Along with general principles of education (scientific character, fundamentality, evolutionary nature, historicity, integrity, systematic approach, interdisciplinary character, humanism, practical orientation, etc.) the content and methods of environmental education and education for sustainable development are based on the following key principles:

Sustainability (global and local use of natural resources without a contemporaneous decrease in biodiversity and regenerative capacity);

Prevention (lack of reliable information about the environmental effects of various human activities should be taken into account at all levels of planning, and activities causing environment degradation should be avoided);

Environmental (protection of the integrity of ecosystems, carrying capacity of the biosphere, biodiversity, quality of the environment, environmental impact assessment, etc.);

Economic (illustrating the imperative of sustainable development knowledge for effective economic management, efficient use of resources, strategic sustainable management of territories, resources and economic sectors, etc.);

Social (education in the sphere of human rights, conflict studies, safety of living, ethnography, anthropology, social and human ecology, etc.).

Hence, education for sustainable development constitutes an important part in ensuring that human beings acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values necessary to shape a sustainable future. According to Kimaryo (2011), education for sustainable development envisions a better world where there is a balance between economy, ecology and society. In practice, Ssozi (2012) pointed out that education for sustainable development should address holistically other academic disciplines apart from ecosystem and life science. The author suggests inclusion of societal development, economic growth and environmental conservation. This is important as economic growth has been achieved through unfair deals without taking into consideration environmental consequences and the communities whose survival depends on the environment and the resources therein. Therefore, it can be said that the essence of introducing education for sustainable development is to dissolve the artificial boundaries between the environment, economy, and society.

As reflected in the latest nested sustainability model above, society is owned entirely by the environment which provides services such as food, clean water, fresh air, fertile soil, and other natural resources. Therefore, sustainability is grounded in ecosystems, society and economy. Social aspects such as culture, beliefs, norms and attitude are at one hand, but also the model addresses issues related to economy such as income, living costs and prices of sources of energy, all in relation to ecological dimensions: life supporting systems such as natural vegetation, water resources, soil conservation, and issues such as climate change and biodiversity conservation.

According to UNESCO, "Environmental education is a way of implementing the goals of environmental protection. It is not a separate branch of science but a lifelong interdisciplinary field of study." It means education towards protection and enhancement of the environment and education as an instrument of development for improving the quality of life of human communities. In the context of environmental education, it needs to be pointed out that environmental education opens up many career opportunities. With increasing awareness and stress on the study of the environment and its impact at various levels, there is a growing need for environmental educators and professionals. Professionals to deal with hazardous waste problems, lawyers and other specialists to develop government and industry policy, laws and regulations to protect the environment, engineers to develop technologies and products to prevent environmental degradation are the need of the hour.

Increasingly, economists, geographers, and social scientists would be required to evaluate the costs of environmental pollution and depletion and come up with solutions that are socially, economically, and in other ways suitable for the world. Business too needs a new class of environmentally literate and responsible leaders who can study how products and services affect our environment. Environment-related jobs would occupy a prominent place in the years to come. So environmental education, as a discipline and as an aspect linked to all other disciplines, is not only vital in it but also has a tremendous scope in terms of job creation. Environmental Education for Sustainable Development needs to be embedded in all educational activities, so that awareness leads to understanding and understanding to action. It is undisputed that the existence and sustenance of human beings are because of nature. If nature is destroyed because of the ambitious greed of one's interest by encroaching forest lands and water bodies disturbing biodiversity, environment, and ecology, definitely it affects the existence and sustenance of human beings. If we are not careful, we can contribute to environmental degradation. We can take care of the world by providing environmental education to the people to help them develop familiarity with their surroundings that will enable them to take care of environmental concerns thus making it more useful and protected for our children and the future generations.

Conclusion

It has been clearly recognized and accepted that in the absence of global control, man's so called peaceful constructive activity is turning into global aggression against the very foundation of life on earth. One of the prominent issues that have engaged the attention of stakeholders at the global, regional, national and local levels is sustainable development. It is also evident that zero pollution can only be attained through zero production for no production activity is perfect in terms of technology, hence with zero population growth, pollution is inevitable. What is desirable therefore is a package of educational programmes, policies and measures that will equip the youth at early age with the needed knowledge, skills and attitude to be able to identify and monitor pollutants, identify their economic, environmental, political and social effects; proffer solutions and to combine them within levels that are not only safe for survival but appropriate for sustainability across generations. To this end, environmental education constitutes a core component of education for sustainable development; it is directed at creating awareness and understanding about environmental issues that leads to responsible individual and group actions; it also focuses on processes that promote critical thinking, problem solving, and effective decision-making skills in line with environmental issues. Hence, environmental education is presented as a key towards sustainable development in Nigeria.

Recommendations

The important role of environmental education as a tool for advancing the SDGs, especially those relating to water, energy, food, education, and climate change, has been clearly identified in Nigeria. Despite this increasing recognition, however, the implementation and delivery of environmental education programs continues to be adversely impacted by lack of sustained funding for education programs. To this end, this paper recommends that;

A coherent and coordinated framework on environmental education is therefore urgently required in Nigeria to accelerate the widescale incorporation of environmental education into education strategies at all levels.

There is also a clear need to scale up the design and implementation of environmental education programs in higher education institutions. First is the need for higher education institutions in Nigeria to clearly identify environmental education as one of their core strategic teaching and research missions, as a way of emphasizing its importance across the institution.

When environmental education is highlighted and aligned with the core curriculum or missions of an institution, more institutional resources can be made available to drive environmental education programs.

Given the importance of environmental education to sustainable development, there is a need for higher education institutions to prioritize the recruitment of environmental educators, scholars, researchers, and teaching assistants at colleges and faculties who can take the lead in designing and implementing environmental education courses.

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