

IMPLEMENTATION OF POPULATION EDUCATION PROGRAMME FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

By

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Abstract

One of the formidable problems which stare the nation in the face is her rapid population growth, which offset every aspect of human endeavour for her development. A need is being felt for imparting factual and practical knowledge about population issues and problems, so that the younger generation may understand the nature and magnitude of the burden imposed by population growth. This paper focuses attention on the implementation of population education programme in Nigeria for better understanding of the influences and roles of population in sustainable national development. The paper also discusses the importance of population education, challenges to the implementation of population education programme in Nigeria and also makes some recommendation for future researchers. Some of the recommendations are that, teachers should be trained to educate learners on population education, funds should be raised to manage the programme and government should be more committed to population issues in the nation for the betterment of the citizens.

People are the central concern of sustainable development. Effort to promote more sustainable development pathways must take account of people, their number, location and age structures as well as their living conditions, ambitions and opportunities. (UNFPA, 2011) A focus on people is also essential to better understand the linkages among social, economic and environmental development, for a strong and meaningful integration of these dimensions of sustainable development.

Population constitutes a vital component of the resource base for the development potential of any society. The term population is used to embrace the sum total of the human resources available in given country or area. (Babajo, 2010) Population is important both as a factor and as a measure of development in the world. The exploitation of mineral resources and development of commerce and industries to a large extent, depend on the population. This is because; the population constitutes the labour force as well as market for the products of all the primary, secondary and tertiary economic activities. The effectiveness of labour force in any country depends on its size and quality in terms of the level of education and skills available.

Population education is a process by which students explore the nature of population processes, population characteristics, causes, population change and the consequences of these processes to the society. It is the study the study of population in a given environment. (Idienye, 1988) Its purpose is to improve the quality of life of the individual, the family and the society.

Population and development in the developing world context are interred related mainly because of the cyclical relation between them. It means that development is directed at improving the socio-economic well being of the population and at the same time, requires people for its technical and manual labour power. It should be kept in mind that population is necessary to get the process of development moving regardless of the nature of the population. The overriding issues about population and development in the developing world revolves around poverty, unemployment, under employment, inequality, malnutrition, poor sanitation and many other social miseries.

According to Dudley (2008), a country cannot be considered developed or developing unless it has been able to reduce the level of poverty, unemployment and socio-economic inequality affecting its population. All these cannot be achieved without effective population education.

Definition of Concepts

Population

According to Rao (2010), Population is the total number of people living together in a particular place, town, community, nation or a country with the same interest and national goals.

Population, according to Sahu (2011) is the total number of people, animal and other elements found in a place at a particular time. They are people who live together in a particular geographical location.

Rauta (1999) defines population as the total number of persons, male and female, old and young, nationals or residents living in a given area at a specific time. While Ekuafeh, (2004) Stated that human population is the total number of person living in a political or geographical area in particular point in time. In short, the concept focuses on total number of people in existence in a given environment at a specific point of reference. These numbers are not evenly spread all over the globe.

Population education

According to UNESCO (2012), population education is an educational programme which provides for the study of the population situation in family, community, nation and the world, with the purpose of developing in the learners/Students rational and responsible attitudes and behavior towards that situation. It is an educational program me that provides for the study of population phenomenon in order to enable the learners/students make feasible decisions about problems arising out of population explosion and other population related problems and issues.

Sahu (2011) sees Population Education as educational programme which provides factual knowledge about population dynamics that are required to understand the nature and magnitude of burden imposed by rapid population growth. He also postulated that population education is education which provide for the study of the population phenomenon so as to enable the students to take rational decisions towards any problem arising out of rapid population growth. Population education should not be seen merely as a quantitative phenomenon or just an essay in numbers. It is the quality of the population that is most relevant, both as a factor of growth and an end product of growth, and numbers have to be treated in terms of the effect they have on quality either by way of development or improvement. Population education therefore, is essentially related to human resources development. Thus, population education is not only concerned with population awareness but also with developing values and attitudes so that both quality and quantity are taken care of.

Based on the definition sited so far, it is concluded that, population education is an education programme which creates awareness in the people regarding causes and consequences of population growth. It creates rational and responsible attitudes and behavior in the learners about desirable family size and quality of life. Its purpose is to improve the quality of life of the individual, the family and the society.

Sustainable development

According to Okunloye (2010), sustainable development is a socio-economic and environmental development that does not harm the environment. He also postulated that, sustainable development is an economic development which does not pollute the environment. It is economic developments, which are maintained within acceptable level of global resource depletion and environmental pollution.

According to Bonnett (2002), Sustainable development is “development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs”. The definition implies that sustainable development is a process that is continually evolving.

Aims and objectives of the study

Population education is that education which helps a nation to understand the level of population growth rate, causes and the economic effects on its citizens.

According to Viederman (1974) observed that, the general goals of population education are: to enable learners to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary a) to understand and evaluate the prevailing population situation, the dynamic forces which have shaped it and the effect it will have on the present and future welfare of themselves, their families, communities, society and the world; b) to make conscious and informed decisions (based on their understanding and evaluation); and c) to respond (either by an intention to act or by an action itself) to population situations and problems in a conscious and informed manner. The above general goals can be translated to major goals as stated by Audu (2006), where he summarized the major goals of population education as a programme of activities that enable learners to acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes, morals and values that will enable them to:

- 1) Understand and evaluate the prevailing population situation in their communities and country,
- 2) Explore and appreciate the dynamic forces that have helped to create the present population situation and the likely future consequences of the trends,
- 3) make conscious and informed decisions based on their understanding and evaluation of the population situation,
- 4) become aware of the relationship between the population issues and problems and the socio-economic development of their communities and the nation and
- 5) Respond in a rational and responsible manner to the population related issues and problems.

The importance of implementing population education programme in Nigeria.

The importance of population education in attaining sustainable development in Nigeria is very vital in all aspect of human endeavor. Due to the vital role played by population education Odo (2006) stated that the Federal Government of Nigeria under the leadership of Gen. Ibrahim Babangida saw the dire need to re-examine the nation's population trends with their consequences and formulate a National Policy on Population for development, unity, progress and self-reliance. This policy was endorsed by the then Council of States in February 1988 and was subsequently launched by the erstwhile vice president, Admiral Augustus Aikhomu in April, 1998.

The goals and objectives of Nigeria Population Policy were outline in Odo (2006). From these goals and objectives it reflected the importance of population education as summarized below:

1. It will help in promoting the awareness among the citizens of this country of population issues, problems and the effects of rapid population growth on development,
2. It will help in providing everyone with the necessary information and education on the values of responsible family size to individual family and the future of the nation in achieving self reliance,
3. It will help in educating all young people on population matters, sexual relationship, fertility regulations and family planning. This will lead to improvement in the standard of living and quality of life of the citizens of this country,
4. It will assist the citizens of this country to maintain responsible parenthood and embrace the principle of small family unit,
5. It will help in making available family or reproductive education services to all couples at affordable cost early enough. This will promote the people's health welfare particularly high risk groups such as mothers and children,
6. It will help in improving fertility management programmes thereby encouraging the citizens to have manageable family size,
7. It will help in improving demographic data collection analysis on regular basis and to use such data for economic and social development planning and
8. It will help in achieving integrated urban and rural development in order to improve the living conditions in the rural areas and slow down the rate of migration from rural to urban cities.

Problems facing the implementation of population Education in Nigeria

Despite the importance and vital roles of population education in our social, political and economic development, series of problems is militating against proper implementation.

1. **Inadequate planning and coordination:** The inability to plan and coordinate well is the major problem facing population education in Nigeria. As a result of these, professionals and teachers are not carried along in the educational policy formulation.
2. **Inadequate human and material resources:** Population Education requires adequate human and material resources to function well in our school system. The absence of qualified teachers and inadequate instructional materials in the teaching and learning of population education is a serious problem to be addressed.
3. **Inadequate awareness:** There is inadequate awareness and knowledge of Population Education in the society. It is observed that many people are not fully aware of the roles of population education in the nation and so many do not realize the

importance of birth control and birth regulation policy due to inadequate awareness of population education.

4. Inadequate Fund: There is no educational programme which can succeed without adequate fund. There is inadequate financial provision for the procurement of basic teaching and learning materials that can make the programme to practicable in the school system.

5. Inadequate commitment: There is inadequate commitment on the part of the government, non governmental agencies, teachers as well as the students. The government especially shows inadequate commitment in the implementation of population education in Nigeria.

6. Ignorance of the citizens: Many people are ignorance of the need and usefulness attached to population education in Nigeria.

Possible solution to the problem of implementation of population education

According to Omorere (2013) as population education is faced with many problems, the possible solutions are also provided to address these problems. Some of the ways out of these problems are:

1. Adequate planning and coordination of population education programmes at all levels
2. Provision of adequate fund and resources for smooth running of the programme
3. Provision of modern and reliable transport and communication network for effective disseminations of information.
4. Provision of adequate trained teachers and training facilities.
5. Integration of population education into existing educational process.

Conclusion

Population education is no doubt, a tool for sustainable development because it cannot be attained without sound population education and reliable population data for effective population management in the nation. As such, attentions should be given to all the issues highlighted and discussed for effective population education programme and the attainment of its goals.

Recommendations

Based on the importance attached to population education towards achieving sustainable development, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Population education should be introduced into the curriculum of schools and colleges by incorporating it in different subjects.

- ii. Steps must be taken to clearly define the content of population education at different levels. Methods of teaching and examination system, text books, supplementary reading materials as well as audio-visual aid, teaching guide etc, should be readily available.
- iii. Effort should be made to encourage research works on population education in Nigeria schools.
- iv. Adequate fund should be provided to ensure smooth running of the programme at all levels.
- v. Steps should be taken to organize in-service training programme for the teachers in all levels of our educational establishment.

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