IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES IN ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION; PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS.

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Abstract
Human interactions with the physical environment result in some damages. This is done consciously or otherwise. Whatever the case, public enlightenment and environmental awareness would go a long way in helping the society to positively interact with the environment and have less consequences. This paper assesses the concept of Environmental Education (EE), the position of EE in school curriculum, problems of implementing EE and prospects. It also proffers some useful suggestions towards successful implementation of EE in both formal and non-formal education.

Introduction
Nigerians have interacted with their environment since creation and lived with the consequences either consciously or otherwise. Government of Nigeria has instituted legislation or restrictions governing the exploitation its natural resources taking only what was needed in a subsistence manner and utilizing traditional technologies that enable the preservation of flora and fauna. Nature remained largely unpolluted, serene and beautiful and longevity was achieved.

However, the coming of European traders introduced a new dimension to the situation, According to Adara (1997), trade boomed and resources exploitation expanded without consideration to the natural ecological processes of replenishment and life support systems. The end result was the general degradation of the environment.

The concern for a quality environment in Nigeria can be traced back to the Stockholm conference of 1992, and the commitment of the country to the protection of the environment is derived from the 1981 National Policy on Education (NPE), because Education is essential to change the destructive relationship between human beings and the rest of nature. This paper will therefore discuss the definition of environmental Education (EE), the position of EE in Nigerian school’s curriculum, problems or difficulties in implementing Environmental Education projects and the prospects of EE in Nigeria.

Definition of Environmental Education (EE)
Ononugbo (2005) defined Environmental Education (EE) as the process of helping people through formal and non-formal education (to acquire understanding, skills and values that will enable them to participate as active and formal citizens in the development of an ecologically sustainable and socially just society. This implies that inadequate environmental ethics, ignorance or inadequate environmental awareness, knowledge, skills and actions can only be removed through education. According to Palmer (1998), Environmental Education is a process of recognizing values and clarifying concepts in order to develop skills and attitudes necessary to understand and appreciate the interrelatedness among man, his culture and his biological surroundings. It also entails practices in decision - making and self formulation of a code of behavior about issues concerning environmental quality (Mashi and Alhassan, 2006) Strengthening and enhancing EE are some of the more critical measures and approaches that have to be taken to develop among the people sensitivity to existing environmental problems and to be able to adapt a rational and integrated approach in managing the environment. EE is thus, about learning to live in a sustainable way.

The Position of EE in School Curriculum
As stated earlier, the commitment of Nigeria to the protection of the environment is embedded in the 1981 National Policy on Education (NPE) which sets "to provide people who can apply scientific knowledge to the improvement and solution of environmental problems for the use and convenience of man at all levels of our educational system" (Quoted in Adara 1997).

Despite the provisions of the NPE, the formal introduction of EE into the Nigeria educational system was only sensitized by a Nigerian Conservation Foundation (NCF) (a non Governmental
Organisation) which spearheaded the development of the draft National Conservation Education Strategy in 1988 (Adara, 1997) The Nigerian formal education system at all levels is structured in such a way that it offers subjects with direct or indirect link with the environment and as such, provides opportunities for subject specialists in respect of EE content. The national school curriculum is deficient in EE element at the secondary and tertiary levels as determined during the 1991 National Curriculum Review conference. EE is being taught using the relevant school subjects but never independently. According to Ahmad (2008), very few tertiary institutions teach EE as an orientation program (General studies in Education) once in the students' academic program period of 3-4 years. Very few never have EE as an orientation program, while some tertiary institutions offer EE courses. Notwithstanding direct or indirect interaction with the environment, EE is for all citizenry to be environmentally aware and thus, it behooves on the nation to provide a general EE curriculum guideline from which all categories of scholars can select environmental dimensions relevant to their area of specialization for possible multidisciplinary integration and implementation.

Non-Formal EE Strategies

Ahmad (2008) identified this type as an education that takes place outside the highly regimented classroom walls and situations. It is used to incite or promote awareness, knowledge, attitudes, skills or levels of participation in a given task. It is for all ages, social groups and societies (Melhoine 1996, in Ahmad, 2008) EE in Nigeria outside the formal school system have been embraced by the government as there were legislations and promulgation of some decrees such as the Endangered species Decree No 11 of 1985, Environmental Sanitation Decree, Natural Resources Conservation decree and Federal Environmental protection Agency (FEPA) Decree 58 among others.

The basic aim of EE is to succeed in making individuals and communities understand the complex nature of the natural and the built environment resulting from the interaction of their biological, physical, social, economic and cultural aspects and acquire knowledge, values and attitudes. (Mashi and Alhassan, 2006). As a matter of fact, the level of Environmental enlightenment and awareness of the average Nigerian is abysmally low. The awareness or enlightenment comes mostly in speeches during Tree planting campaign, articles and papers presented in the National Dailies, magazines, conferences, seminars and workshops. Such strategies are elitist in nature as the poor and their children are not involved. Also, such activities and occasions are also not adequate in a year.

Implementation Problems of EE

A lot of problems have hindered the proper implementation of EE in Nigeria. These problems range from limited number of teachers who are knowledgeable in EE content and strategies to teach trainers, to writers of EE instructional materials in the case of formal education. There's the limitation of professionals who can conduct community education on EE.

Ononugbo (2005) noted that Jack of public initiative for environmental education and difficulty in encouraging public participation in environmental activities are some obstacles to successful implementation of EE policy. She further observed that not enough networking or coordination among government and Non-governmental Organisations also hamper the planning and implementation of environmental activities.

Other problems associated with implementing EE are lower environmental interest at the tertiary level institutions compared to that in primary and secondary schools, coupled with difficulty of teaching the affective component of EE considering that most of EE is value education. Also limited is baseline information on the local/regional environment that can be used in the preparation of textbooks and reference for EE.

Prospects of EE in Nigeria

In spite of all the problems identified, there is the hope or great expectations that Environmental Education will graduate from its present state to a greater height because:

> EE is being embedded in most schools curriculum with the hope that it would be rooted into the early childhood curriculum also so that pupils will grow up with the awareness of their environment.

> At the formal level of EE, workshops and seminars have been organized by governments and
non-governmental agencies for EE instructors to enhance their knowledge and create more awareness as to how they would improve their teaching techniques.

> Enlightenment campaigns and sensitization are some efforts of the government with regards to man's interaction with his environment and the subsequent consequences. This sensitization has been going on in Nigeria especially in areas where deforestation, are rampant. The expectation is that with time people would be more aware of the dangers of the problems mentioned above.

> Some tertiary institutions have developed certificate and degree programs in Environmental Science, Environmental Education and other related areas of specialization. This will go a long way in creating more awareness of Environmental Education.

**Recommendations**

> To make EE a success in promoting effective management of environmental crises in the country, special attention should be paid to understanding the complex relations between socio-economic development and the improvement of the environment.

> There is the need for promotion and enhancement of non formal education in EE in Nigeria by integrating cultural, traditional and contemporary knowledge to target local, regional and international environmental issues.

> More workshops, seminars and conferences should be organized to school administrators and teachers to enhance understanding of local, regional and global environmental concerns and promote commitments to environmental protection.

> The community and school should be brought together in understanding EE activities and projects. Government should encourage greater participation from the public as well as corporate and non-governmental organizations in environmental programs.

> Government should set up EE centres that will serve as a nerve centre for an EE information and communication network as well.

> The Federal Ministry of Education should encourage tertiary institutions to develop more programs in EE and set up EE clubs in related departments.

> Government should make EE a lifelong process, beginning at the pre-school level and continuing through all formal and non formal stages.

> EE in schools should also be interdisciplinary in its approach, drawing on the specific content of each discipline in making possible a holistic and balanced perspective.

**Conclusion**

The mixing effect of currents in the atmosphere and hydrosphere makes it impossible to enhance man's quality of life on Earth and to preserve its resources unless we pursue environmental protection and conservation. For Environmental management to be more effective, people should be made to have more important and proactive roles to play in this regard than what is presently obtainable in which the business is seen as that of the government alone.

**References**


