

# ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION: A PRAGMATIC OPTION AND PRE-EMPTIVE ACTION FOR ECONOMIC REHABILITATION AND RELIANCE

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## Abstract

The dependence of any country on environmental resources for socio-economic development is essential and appropriate. The advantages derived from such usage require that the idea of being reliant and properly rehabilitated need to be imbibed at the classroom level so that school products will constantly engage in income generating projects and productive ventures for self-sufficiency and economic benefit. This can be done without tampering with the original sources of economic advancement. The adequate rehabilitation of individuals therefore requires workable educational programmes that will instill the basic knowledge, skills, values and the right attitudes for the attainment of a viable economic rehabilitation and reliance. This of course is the position of this paper.

## Introduction

The environment in general is of great advantage to man in terms of the interactive influences and the benefits therein. Despite this, the depletion of environmental resources through wrong usage has rendered the environment a predisposing factor to serious health hazards to man.

Chiot and Merton, (1986) in Shaekman, et al, (2002: 2 of 17) indicated that "environment can be a cause of failure to change... The problem is that the centres of high population densities and centralized authority with their civilization are subjected to great catastrophes". In the view of Yusuf, (2002 : 600 ) "The degradation of the environment constitutes a threat to human survival and man has been responsible for this. Concerted efforts to arrest the environmental degradation did not start until about three decades ago".

The acquisition of knowledge, skills, values and the right type of attitude towards the use of environmental resources in a purposeful educational programme can bring about the needed change and social transformation. After all, it is a known fact that environmental factors can lead to development of systems of fiscal and economic exchange and standard rules of transactions, which are positive preconditions for the development of a viable economic system.

## Conceptual Issues

### Environmental Education

**Environment:** This means the collective natural entities found in man's surroundings for his use and existence. Environments constitute the biophysical surroundings that form man's circumstances of living and affect lives in general. The environment consists of socio-physical components that dictate man's ways of life.

According to Satterwaite, et al, (1996) in Gwaram, et al, (2002) in *The Educator*, (2002: 589), Environment means "surroundings especially affecting lives, or in other circumstances of living". Environmental Education in the words of LawtorTand Dufour, (1976: 178) in Bozimo, et al, (1999:28) 3.is "an approach through activities based on the child's natural and human environment, which leads to the progressive development of attitudes and skills required for the study of scientific, historical and geographical material".

Environmental Education is a programme of instruction that leads to understanding, awareness and action with respect to the quality of the environment. (Jarohmek, 1977:176 in Bozimo, et al, 1999: 28). Environmental Education is a philosophy which is inter-disciplinary in nature and holistic in approach. Environmental Education is a comprehensive body of knowledge that concerns man's natural communities with the intent of rehabilitating the environment, restraining its use and maintaining an acceptable quality of life. Environmental Education is the process of recognizing values and clarifying concepts in order to develop skills and attitudes necessary to understanding and appreciate the interrelatedness among man, his culture and his biophysical surroundings. It entails practice in decision-making and self-formulation of a code of behaviour about issues concerning environment quality (Hart, et al, 1982) in Gwaram, et al, (2002: 589).

### Economic Rehabilitation

This involves the restoration of economic indices that are contributory factors in growth

trends and development. Economy entails the existence of scarcity and the financial resources directed at reducing the effects of the scarcity. Economy depicts the provision of goods and services through available financial resources. To achieve economic rehabilitation and reliance for development, there must be considerable increase in output per capita which can be made possible through the judicious use of environmental resources. In addition, the mobilization of savings and investments with a stable and incorruptible government can deal with social or economic disruptions that may occur during periods of change (Kuznets, (1989: 8 in Shaekrnan, et al, 2002; 11 of 17). Added to this, Tilly, (1997) in Shaekrnan, et al, (2002: 15 of 17) remarked: "Because of the many interconnectedness in environment and economy which essentially, is an (elusive) enclave that is not partially free of the conditions that hold back efforts towards economic improvement and restoration.

### **Economic Reliance**

This denotes less dependency on external help for productive investments. In the words of former China leader - Mao Tse Tsung, self-reliance entails "regeneration through our own efforts". This follows that economic regeneration through personal efforts is essential to the idea of self-reliance. The state has important roles to play in ameliorating the impact of structural change arising from trade. In the same tone, Tilly, (1997) in Shaekrnan, et al wrote: "State influences the economy in several ways, for example, through political activities, creation of administrative structures, infrastructural investment, and regulating to varying degrees, exchanges, commitments and other relations among economic actors<sup>1</sup>. In addition to this, human factors, such as decision-making are also important non-systematic sources of change and attempts at self-reliance.

Self-reliance in the idea of Ake, (2001: 140) "is about responsibility: in the context of development, responsibility for producing a development project as well as providing the resources to carry it through. The embracing of self-reliance will be the real revolution of development in Africa".

### **Environmental Features and Their Catastrophic Effects**

Technological improvement and increasing mechanization are the major means by which environmental resources are further depleted. This is done irrespective of the attendant effects, As posited by Chirot and Merton, (1986) in Shaekrnan, et al, (2002: 3 of 17);

The problem was that centres of civilization were subject to great catastrophes. There could be extreme droughts, or invasions by nomadic raiders who lived in surrounding regions. When the droughts or invasions occurred, the civilizations fall, and it could take centuries to recover. The necessary complex irrigation systems, the animal stock and the human population all took long times to recover from the great disasters. Thus, because of constrictions placed by geographic conditions, very long term continuous growth could not occur, since the civilizations had to spend centuries repeatedly recovering from recurring disasters.

In support of the view above, Held, et al (1999) in Shaekman, et al, (2002: 9 of 17) wrote:

The pollution and degradation of the global commons (such as the oceans and the atmosphere), the overspill of the effects of environmental degradation from one state to another (environmental refugees), trans boundary pollution and risks (nuclear power, acid rain): the transportation and diffusion of wastes and polluting products across the globe (toxic wastes), trade, global relocation of dirty industries, and, finally, the formation of global institutions, regimes, networks and treaties that seek to regulate all these forms of environmental degradation.

From the foregoing, it can be seen that environmental health hazards is taking a global dimension and because of the destructive effects, appreciative efforts must be made towards redressing the problem.

### **Environment As Socio-Economic and Development Problem**

Environment as a development problem inserts itself at the intersection between nature and society. Environmental problems are mainly problems which are connected with the surrounding nature. These problems have considerable social, political and economic consequences. According to

Martinussen (1997: 155):

Environmental problems faced by Third World Countries are further aggravated because of global processes of economic exploitation... large agro-business firms are the major actors in these processes. They operate under conditions where there are no economic incentives to make them act in an environment-friendly manner. On the contrary, many resource-depleting and polluting firms are attracted to the poor countries as a result of the more lenient policies and regulations pertaining to their activities in poor, peripheral as opposed to affluent, centre countries. In the latter group of countries, environmental protection legislation has increased steadily... while most poor countries have not dared to introduce similar restrictive policies for fear of scaring away foreign investors... Capitalism and production under market conditions are seen as part of the solution to many environmental problems. When the market economy advances, and when water, land, forests, etc. are assigned economic values, unrestrained exploitation will be significantly limited.

Added to this, a Lagos-based Environmentalist, Ogunleye, (2003: 50) has this to say, the damage to the marine and socio-economic environment and the threat to the livelihood of thousands of persons are of serious concern... The meeting of members of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development in New York to hammer out a work programme and carry out recommendations of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg".

### **Environmental Education as the Preferred Option**

Writing on Reflections on Education and National Development, Ojih, (1996) in Ojiakor, et al, (1998: 165), "In all developed and developing societies, education is always regarded as a catalyst to national development. Its role in promoting economic development is dominant and prominent... Education makes people more capable and organised of producing goods and services... it also provides individuals with special skills and expertise, which it brings to bear on economic development... The level of management of human and material resources is greatly influenced by education".

Writing on Education for National Development, Parker, (1978) in Thomas, et al, (1988: 228) observed that: "Education system is thought of, administered and financed as a producer of human skills in the kinds and numbers needed to meet planned expansion in industry, agriculture, and government. With economic planning taking precedence".

• Education is generally geared towards human development for effective societal performance. In support of this, the United Nations Development Programme in Ayres, (1995: 21 - 23) is of the view that: "People are the real wealth of a nation. The basic objective of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy healthy and creative lives. ... Human development does not end there, additional choices, highly valued by many people, range from political, economic and social freedom to opportunities for being creative and productive".

According to A. Aina, (1990), in Lawal et al (Eds.), (1994: 9 - 10) Environmental Education Workshop and Seminar Proceedings (1990 - 91) Vol. 1:

Various definitions have been put forward for Environmental Education. At the International Workshop on Environmental Education held in Belgrade in 1975, Environmental Education was defined as "education aimed at developing a world population that is aware of, and concerned about the environment and its associated problems, and which has the knowledge, skills, attitudes, motivations and commitment to work, towards a solution of current problems and the prevention of new ones.

Aina, (1990) wrote that "In 1972, the United Nations held its first conference on Human Environment in Stockholm, Sweden, which heralded the full involvement of the United Nations in global environmental programme (UNEP). In one of the principles of the Stockholm Conference, it was stated that "education in environmental matters for the younger generation as well as adults... in protecting and improving the environment in full human dimension",

In the UNEP's report on Environmental Education and Training (1978), Environmental Education was described as the outcome of a re-orientation and adaptation of the various disciplines and of different educational experiences... making it possible to achieve an integrated perception of the environment and to act towards it in a more rational way that corresponds to social needs (Aina, (1990 in Lawal, et al, 1994: 12).

Writing on FEPA - Federal Environmental Protection Agency and Formal Environmental Education, Aina, (1990) opined that "with the ever increasing environmental problems in Nigeria...

jobs will be created that will require personnel capable of analysing environmental problems and their associated web of social, economic and ecological implications".

### **Concluding Notes**

The actions of social beings, the deteriorating conditions of environmental resources, the sequence and systematic intensified exploitation that combine in a variety of ways to produce a variety of forms and processes against the realisation of economic rehabilitation and reliance. Development path does not necessarily follow a single pattern. The specific forms of economic indices which emerge and the relations between socio-demographic characteristics and modernisation process for sustained growth that occur at different levels of disparities all point to the need for education and subsequent economic development and rehabilitation.

### **Recommendations**

On the basis of the elaborate theoretical research-based write-up, the presenter is humbly recommending the following:

1. Improved investment in education for social relevance, awareness, sensitisation and mobilisation for economic rehabilitation and complete regeneration through personal designs and efforts.
2. The creation of various national economic opportunities and variables for more competitive and more fully integrated into the global economy.
3. Judicious use of environmental resources, conservation efforts and preservation strategies for sustained economic growth.
4. Increased research activities towards development path and comprehensive information technology are important in determining long-run economic growth and rehabilitation.
5. The acquisition of expressive values for positive growth of human choice, self-determination and self-realisation of desired goals directed at societal development.
6. The inclusion of Environmental Education as a core subject in school curriculum at all levels of education.

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