

Environmental Adult Education: A Strategy for Curbing Poverty among Youths and Adults in Nigeria

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ANNOTATION: Poverty has over times been known as a popular challenge bothering on all African nations to be particular. It has done a lot of havoc to lives of citizens all over the world and in Nigeria in particular. Considering the enormity of the effect of poverty on every nation, no nation wants in any way to harbor or cherish poverty. It is on this felt note that every nation would want to fight to ensure that poverty is never given a place of comfort in its domain but dreaded to the core. Therefore, this paper seeks to use EAE (after all other strategies that have been tried) as a strategy to curb poverty in Nigeria. In a bid to do this, the essence of EAE has been exposed as efforts in teaching environmental issues and how individuals and businesses can manage or change their lifestyles and ecosystems to live sustainably among other things; the paper x-rayed past efforts of the governments, individuals and non-governmental organizations and many more; the challenges that EAE has experienced in cause of delving into the fight of curbing poverty in the nation; how EAE could be used to curb poverty in Nigeria and also exposed the way out after all the efforts and concluded that it takes education about the environment for solution about environmental issues to be settled as the cause of poverty among other things could also be traced to the environment.

Keywords: EAE, Strategy, Curbing, Poverty, Youths and Adults.

Introduction

Environmental adult education is an eclectic field of study that brings to the knowledge of youths and adults what the environment is, how important the environment is to both humans and the rest of the components of the ecosystem. According to Summer (2003), Environmental Adult Education is recognized as a “hybrid outgrowth of the environmental movement and adult education, combining an ecological orientation with a learning paradigm to provide a vigorous educational approach to environmental concerns.” In laymen’s terms, EAE is referred to as efforts in teaching environmental issues and how individuals and businesses can manage or change their lifestyles and ecosystems to live

sustainably (Ephraim, 2017). EAE in its way of performance helps to enlighten the youths and adults on the use of God-given resources made available for man's survival. It guides man on how adequately to use the resources at their disposal without destroying the ecosystem or using it to destroy their existence. EAE helps in exposing humans to the issues related to the environment and bring about solutions to the challenges created by their misuse of the environment while trying to make a way for their survivals (food, development, urbanization, industrialization, protection and many more).

Poverty on the other way round reveals the fact that when an individual finds it difficult to make adequate provision for his survival; it means there are lacks in many areas of his life existence. It could also be noted that poverty covers many areas of man's existences. A man could be said to be poor if he has no skill to fight against financial poverty (Uzoka, 2010), he could be said to be poor if he lacks the knowledge of managing his resources and also his inability to transform what he has to wealth in his hands. This could draw attention to a man who works with multinational company where he is paid good salary and he believes that he will always receive such salary all the time and does not have savings until he finds himself sacked from the work and when he turns around and does not see the money come again, he finds himself begging to eat. Another instance could be a man who does not know he can transform his farm produce like cassava to garri, but always sells cassava tubers to make little money where he would have enriched himself with the use of cassava to produce items like garri, fufu, cassava flour, tapioca and many other things. One could go on and on by saying he is poor because he has neglected the care of his health based on the types of food he eats, how he protects and secures himself in order to avoid harm to himself. EAE could be seen as such strategy that is functional enough to curb poverty among the youths and the adults' citizens in Nigeria. The underlying issues concerning EAE in its ability to curb poverty among the youths and the adult citizens of Nigeria will be discussed in this paper going on.

Conceptualization

Poverty though could be seen at different facets according to Mustapha cited in Ezechu (2020) is defined as a social condition characterized by inadequate access to basic human needs to sustenance of socially acceptable minimum standard of living in a given society. Ezechu (2020) see the definition anchored on rudimentary factors like the availability of food, shelter, quality health care, education, portable drinking water and good job opportunities. In the same way one would also consider poverty to be a situation where an individual is not capable to provide for himself and family because of his negligence to cooperate with the economic situation of the society. A man who says because there is lock down against his office work and cannot make good use of his hands and legs but sit at home day in and day out would suffer poverty. In addition, Ugwu and Ohia (2008) relate it to other factors like ill health as Gabriel (2013) puts it on the evidence of lack of job in the society. Consequently Uzoka (2010) defined poverty as the scarcity of human basic needs or the inability of an individual or society to acquire human basic needs for existence. Ali, Onyemachi, and Nwachukwu cited in Uzoka (2010) says poverty could be intellectual, social, political, managerial and many more. This could attest to the fact that several things lead to the state of poverty. In this case, it is very important to delve into the different causes of poverty as we continue.

Causes of Poverty

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In Nigeria, several factors could be traced to poverty and need to be addressed in order to be able to curb poverty and its effect on the citizens of the nation Nigeria. In consideration of EAE being the strategy to curb poverty through this paper, attention and focus will be tilted to the issues concerning the environment as they are the factors to look at as the causes of poverty which EAE seeks to address. Therefore, the following causes could be looked at:

1. Inadequate access to employment
2. Hunger in the land
3. Inadequate access to markets
4. Destruction of natural resources
5. Environmental illiteracy
6. Ignorance
7. Corruption
8. Lack of infrastructures
9. Poor health condition
10. Underemployment
11. Low investment
12. High level of migration
13. Environmental degradation
14. Natural disaster (Oyebamiji and Adekola; and Baghebo and Emmanuel in Echezu,2020)
15. Lack of policies backing the interest of the environment.
16. Carrying out economic activities that devastate or degrade the environment.
17. Lack of protection of the environment.
18. Negligence on the part of the government on the lack of mass awareness of environmental issues and problems at the grass root.
19. Neglecting the fact that EE be given appropriate place in the school curriculum to address environmental issues and challenges from the primary and secondary levels of education.
20. Crime and violence

Efforts Made to Reduce Poverty in Nigeria

Several governments of Nigeria both federal and states have tried their best in their capacity to curb poverty in Nigeria yet all to no avail. This is to buttress the fact that poverty is part of man's existence and this is a true fact that put too much pressure on the environment. This is because virtually every raw material that man works with to meet his needs comes from the environment (everything that surrounds man's existence). For instance, the following programmes have been carried out in Nigeria at all levels:

1. Green revolution (1980)
2. Directorate of food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRI)
3. National Directorate of Employment (NDE)
4. Operation feed the nation (1970)
5. Better Life for Rural Women Programme (BLP)
6. School to Land
7. People's Bank of Nigeria (PBN)

8. Family Support Programme (FSP)
9. Family Economic Advanced Programme (FEAP)
10. Oil Mineral Areas Development Commission (ONPADEC)
11. Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) 2009
12. Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC)
13. National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) and many more (Elechi & Agi in Ephraim, 2013:132).

All these were meant to settle the scourge of poverty in Nigeria yet even in this era of technology worse is still experienced about poverty in Nigeria. It is therefore necessary for man to rise up as a team to consider from the root where poverty emanated from (man's association with the environment and work with the advocates of EAE to work out the followings to curb poverty in Nigeria

How Environmental Adult Education Could Help

Every human being relies on the natural resources to make his living. It does not matter whether he is the primary, secondary or the tertiary user of the resources. The attitudes of humans to the environment therefore determines if the environment is marred or made. This is based on his understanding of what the physical and social environments are; what he stands to do or gain from them. The natural resources are harvested either through the different forms of agriculture or other means of humans' livelihood. For instance, the physical environment or resources are seen through the components of the environment like the land, vegetation, climate, in the rivers, seas, lakes, oceans. While the social environment has to do with man's social relations with the environment where he seeks to explore and exploit the environment to discover how useful the environment is to him. In this manner, he has no insight that in course of exploring and exploiting the environment, he could destroy or devastate the environment, hence he degrades and also cause harm to himself personally and generally.

Today, it could be found that the contest between man's activities and the environment, those that were supposed to work as two harmonious entities have become problems which have set them apart and the harmony is aper. Factually we could discover that everything God created with their functions to assist man to survive on earth has lost their responsibilities; the trees in the forest meant to form shed for animals, homes for animals and birds; trees and their uses for medicine have become useful for man's furniture, factories, roads and many more useful for frivolous things leaving us bare without habitat for animals and birds, supply for oxygen and absorption of carbon-dioxide, animals and birds extinction, trees and plants extinction and other evil experiences.

When these useful plans of God with His natural resources lose their propensities, what else do we stand to gain than poverty? Poverty today could be seen in the area of polluted air as there are no plants to absorb the dirt in the air to protect man, man is in poverty as he lacks medicinal help from the herbs in the forest that have been chased out due to deforestation, industrialization, and other means of developments. Poverty also comes as we invite climate change through our attitudes and activities. This bring about rise on the level of the sea, causing flood; desert encroachment, desertification, global warming, ozone layer depletion,

greenhouse effect and many more that are experienced in the life expectancies.

Poverty experienced through man's actions towards the environment has become overwhelming and would need to be controlled. This could be done through the knowledge of EAE as it has the capability to expose man to what actions of man that have brought poverty to human race and also direct on actions that would be taken to curb poverty which has presented itself as a plague to mankind. In this instance, Kwale 2010:226 supported the cry of Benedict which states;

“Whether we can remain indifferent before the problems associated with such realities as climate change, desertification, the deterioration and loss of productivity in vast agricultural areas, the pollution of rivers and aquifers, loss of biodiversity, the increase of natural catastrophes and the deforestation of equatorial and tropical regions? Can we disregard the growing phenomenon of “environmental refugees”, people who are forced by the degradation of their natural habitat to forsake it and often their possessions as well in order to face the dangers and uncertainties of forced displacement? Can we remain impassive in the face of actual and potential conflicts involving access to natural resource.

Benedict cited in Kwale (2010) saw these as issues of profound impact on the exercise of human rights such as rights to life, food, health and development which have brought about degradation and devastation to human race and he put up the cry to say mankind will close his eyes against it and let it continue? It is the high time we stand to fight for the environment and at the same time save lives and properties considering posterity.

EAE has different programmes by which it could expose man to, though he makes use of the environment to solve or meet his poverty needs and also solve the problems from reoccurring. In this way they will align with environmental sustainable development and will need to do the following:

1. Sustainable use of natural resources
2. Ability to use their natural resources profitably
3. Ability to generate resources from their natural resources through tourism
4. Applying the principles of CAMPFIRE to take care of poverty in their community levels
5. Ability to transform products from their natural resources to secondary and tertiary products
6. Ability to expose their indigenous people to functional education to enable them improve on their occupations.
7. Ability to provide their fellow indigenes with adequate infrastructure in order to make life easy for the people.
8. Ability to provide basic industrial technology for easy lifestyle
9. Ability to minimize and manage waste derived from their productions
10. Ability to minimize carbon emission by providing alternative means for the use of firewood such as the use of gas for cooking, electricity for cooking, operating ovens for baking bread etc.
11. Ability to phase out deforestation, drought, erosion etc by felling one tree and in place plant four trees (Penn in Cummingham, 2010).

Challenges of EAE

Asoegbu (2010) sees challenges as something new and difficult that will require great effort and determination it is therefore to see EAE as a threat to people who are bent on making profit from the predicament that the environment has found itself in but an avenue or strategy through which there could be a balance between human needs, aspirations and environmental sustainability. It has been discovered by experience that in cause of humans trying to bring about environment and development had refused to mind the advocacy of living a friendly and harmonious living with the environment and so devastate the environment in a way to satisfy and meet his needs for survival.

Seeing these actions Delor's Report of 1972 cited in Asoegwu 2010 proposed four pillars as the foundation of education which he saw as learning through life in line with lifelong education. He outlined the four pillars thus:

1. Learning to live together
2. Learning to be
3. Learning to do and
4. Learning to know

Learning to live together spells the reason why man is expected to take it easy with the environment knowing that they were both created to service one another harmoniously, forming equilibrium. The report senses that it is necessary that man develops the capacity of seeing the entire component of the environment as one indivisible entity and there, demands that man learns to respect, value and appreciate other components of the environment considering what each of them stands to gain from each other. Just like man would express respect to his culture and the cultural diversity which helps to strengthen the moral values and sensitivities in developing behaviours and attitudes meant to establish peaceful responsibility.

In a bid to learn to be, one would remember the popular palace which people say 'live and let's live' meaning 'do your own and I do my own'. This is to encourage the humans who claim to be the highest creature that stands the ground to take the highest authority over all other creatures. Learning to be could guide humans on their way of doing things taking into consideration the fact that they are not alone on the environment. Learning to do take man to the knowledge of sustainable development which states that whatever actions we take on the environment, we should not jeopardize or deny the future generations opportunity to see and make use of such resources we are using today in their own time. Therefore, we should be careful with the way we deal with the environment and do things right.

Consequently, it is important that we learn to know what the environment is, how we should live with the environment and maintain the relationship with the environment to still be in the same state of equilibrium to create environmental sustainability. In cause of looking at the challenges EAE has encountered, one would consider the lack of and inabilities of the society to acquire skills of environmental literacy that could make them display the feeling of responsibility towards the environment and at the same time understand their place /position with other components of the environment while carrying out their activities. It is because of this draconian caused by environmental illiteracy that creates their inability to critically think about what their actions could do or affect others. Another factor is the inability of the

society to reflect on past issues and challenges the society has experienced from their actions to the environment. Instances of flood, erosion, deforestation, drought, to the current and more recent happenings which accompanied climate change as its effect in the whole world in general and in Nigeria in particular. Even at these instances, humans have still been acting with their stiff-necked attitudes without considering their actions as unfriendly to the entire ecosystem (Asoegwu, 2010). In the same manner, humans have played nonchalant attitude as to how to communicate or create synergy with other counties of the world to know what environmental challenges they have been facing as to learn from their own strategy on how to manage theirs.

Way Forward

EAE has different programmes by which it could expose man to, though he (man) makes use of the environment to solve or meet his needs and also solve the problems from re-occurring. To ensure the use of EAE to curb poverty in Nigeria, the following strategies could be applied (Eheazu, 2012):

1. Sustainable use of natural resources
2. Ability to use their natural resources profitably
3. Ability to generate resources from their natural resources through tourism
4. Applying the principles of CAMPFIRE to take care of poverty in their community levels
5. Ability to transform products from their natural resources to secondary and tertiary products
6. Ability to expose their indigenous people to functional education to enable them improve on their occupations.
7. Ability to provide their indigenes with adequate infrastructure in order to make life easy for the people.
8. Ability to provide basic industrial technology for easy lifestyle
9. Ability to minimize and manage waste derived from their productions
10. Ability to minimize carbon emission by providing alternative means for the use of firewood such as the use of gas for cooking, electricity for cooking, operating ovens for baking bread etc.
11. Ability to phase out deforestation, drought, erosion etc. by felling one tree and in place plant four (Penn in Cunningham, 2010).

Conclusion

It takes education that brings light for one as an individual and the society to see light. Light in the community, nation and many more places of visibilities chase away poverty. For instance the poor indigenes in the rural areas who fend for their living and do not have what it takes for them to take their wares to the light in the city, would continue to remain poor because since they don't have the means to communicate with the language of the light through functional literacy, their wares will only be collected cheap and the will always from hand to mouth (a level of poverty); if they cannot take their wares themselves to the town on good roads, fare means of transportation, they will continue to be cheated by township dwellers who capitalize on their incapability; if they do not have good infrastructure like electricity or generator and simple idea of using industrial facilities many other necessary tools that could enable them transform their resources from primary to secondary and tertiary sources they will still remain at the level of hand to mouth, it is therefore very important that the indigenous people are brought to light

through education on the use of the environment. The knowledge of EAE as it exposes man to what the environment is, what they stand to gain from the environment, how they have been dealing with the environment, what harm they have been causing themselves and what they need to do as part of the harmonious family with the environment; by so doing, the thing called poverty will have no place in their lives. In is on this very note and essence that EAE is rightly viewed as the right strategy for curbing poverty in Nigeria. When the necessary steps as suggested above are applied in the society, the difference in the rate of poverty would be experienced and the consequences ever experienced would be brought to a barest minimum.

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