Cultivating a Sustainable Healthy Environment among Nigerian Youths: Social Studies Education as a Panacea

Tiamiyu, M. B, Yusuf, I. O. and Odetomi G.E
Department of General Studies, Oyo State College of Agriculture and Technology, Igboora

Abstract
The main thrust of this paper is to explore the possibilities of using Social Studies Education to cultivate a sustainable healthy environment among Nigeria youths. It begins with the need for sustainable environment, followed by conceptual framework and the necessity for environment education. The papers critically assess environment education objectives and role in Social Studies in relation to healthy environment and the role of Social Studies in promoting healthy environment. In realizing the objectives of the subject, recommendations are provided towards re-engineering the subject.

Key words: Sustainable, Healthy Environment, Youths and Social Studies.

Introduction

The need for sustainable environment is becoming more pertinent and of course, it has become an essential demand for national survival. The social demand for sustainable environment is dictated by the challenge of human environmental abuse such as pollution, deforestation etc. It has therefore become necessary to educate the populace most especially the youths in order to inculcate appropriate values and attitudes in them through social studies.

Human beings act in the environment in response to their quest for development. The interaction and interdependence between human and the environment is a reciprocal one. As man influences his environment, he in turn is influenced by his environment (jekayinfa and yusuf, 2005). The human being has demonstrated his interaction with the environment through his quest for industrial development, increase in agricultural production, and construction of roads, house and amenities and so on. All of these have led to a serious environmental damage daily.

No one disagrees that man can only control a few elements and factors of the environment. Beyond a given level, a number of human activities can be environmentally probable and not entirely environmentally possible. We must be cautioned and take cognizance of the inevitable limitation imposed by our cultural and environmental factors particularly the radical alteration of global life support systems that shape the global climate, the air we breathe, the water we drink, regulate the water flow and recycles or regenerate the system in general.

These are essential variables to sustain healthy environment for human survival (okobiah, 2007).

Sustainable development is a difficult concept of define because it is continually evolving. One of the original descriptions of Sustainable development is credited to brundland commission reports (1997). According to the report, Sustainable development is the development that meets the need of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet the needs the of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs. World commission on environment and development, (1987) also reported that Sustainable development is generally through three components: environment, society and economy. The well-being of these three areas are interwined and not separable. For example, a healthy prosperous society relies on a healthy environment to provide food and resources, safe drinkable water, and clean air for its citizens. The sustainability paradigm rejects the contention that causalities in the environmental and social realms are inevitable with their consequences of economic development. Thus, the authors consider sustainability to be a paradigm for thinking about a future in which environmental, societal and economic considerations are balanced in the pursuit of development and improved quality of life.

Many government and individuals have pondered what Sustainable development means beyond a simple – one sentence definition. The Rio declaration on environment and development fleshes out the definition y listing eighteen principle of sustainability. According to the declaration:

People are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature

Development today must not undermine the development and environmental needs of present and future generations.

Nation have the sovereign right to exploit their own resources, but without causing environmental damage beyond their boarders

Nations shall use the precaution approach to protect the environment where there are threats of serious damages, scientific uncertainty shall not be used to postpone cost effective measures to prevent environment degradation.

In order to achieve Sustainable development, environmental protection shall constitute an integral part of the development process, and cannot be considered in isolation from it. Eradicating poverty and reducing disparities in living standards in different parts of the world are essential to achieve Sustainable development and meet the needs of the majority of the people.

Nations should cooperate to conserve, protect and restore the healthy and integrity of the earth's ecosystem. The developed countries acknowledge the responsibility that they bear in the international pursuit of sustainable development in view of the pressure their societies place on the global environment and of the technologies and financial resources they commands. Nations should reduce and eliminate unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, and promote appropriate demographic policies.

Environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens. Nations shall facilitate and encourage public awareness by making information widely available

Sustainable development requires better scientific understanding of the problems.

Another concept whose clarification germane to the understanding of this paper is youth, or put rhetorically, 'who are the youth?". From a demographic viewpoint and according to the world health organization (1997) the term" youth" is used to cover people within 15-24 years bracket. Before the 1999 pronouncement of the Federal government pegging the youth service corps (NYSC) to 25 years, the age limit for the youth programme was 30 years. Thus, for the purpose of this papers the age range of 15-30 years shall be adopted because it is at this period that most people (youth) are at school. Ogunyemi (1998), writing on the characteristics of the youths observed that youths are people of enormous energy, adventure, restlessness and escapades. They are people in the prime of their physiological and socialization development that demand that they should properly managed for self-actualization and fulfillment. The term environment has been defined and interpret6ed in many ways, The Webster new world dictionary (2008) defined environment as the condition circumstances influences and surrounding affecting the development of an organism or group of organisms. In this case, the organism is primarly a human being and the group of organism is generally a group of human beings. Aregbeyen and Adeoye (2001), conceptualize "as the total space and all human and material resource contained therein".

To promote a healthy environment., we need to protect the air we breathe, our water, our food and our surroundings, including the chemical, radiation and microbes as well as physical world that we have contact with every day the environment's effects on our health is complicated of this sufficient knowledge from decades of the research to take action in reducing environmental hazards.

Literature Review

Okobiah (2007) studied culture, environment and the place of social studies. In his study, he agrees that the culture of the people must be understood before a study of the environment. He therefore submitted that social studies can serve as an instrument that can study's culture in the environment. He analyzed the various cultural manifestations using three schools of thought about culture – environment: determinism, possiblism and probablism. The researcher submitted that individual must understand his immediate environment through cultural practices and education will consolidate environment through cultural practice and knowledge.

Okoye (2007), affirmed that6 the environment deteriorate as man's civilization advances. According to him it is man that makes environment uncomfortable for man as a result of various manipulation done to the environment. He therefore argued that environmental sustainability should be encouraged. Among various methods that were recommended are short – term measures, such as afforestation, flood and erosion control, etc the long – term measures to be adopted are environment education, environmental law etc. Okoye (2007), further argued that before environmental problems could be solved environment education needs to be promoted.

These literature thus shows that environment education is not only desirable but require urgent action of Social Studies educators in order to encourage and promote environmental friendly among all and sundry.

Environmental Education Topics in Social Studies

Topic	Performance Objective	Content	Teacher Activities	Student Activities	Teaching & learning resources	Evaluation
Physical & Social Environment	Student should be able to define physical & social environment	Physical environment consist of the land from which man sources the means of economic survival	Teacher leads a discussion on the meaning of physical and social environment	Participate in class discussion and ask question	Resources persons, parents, the environment	Students are to define physical and social environment
	Mention types of environmental problem	Social environment consists of people and social	Identification of Environmental problems by	State environme ntal problems.	Relevant cases	Mention types of environment al problems
		Institution such as family, community and rules and norms for social interaction	Nothing the frequency of occurrence of the problems in the society	Leads the discussion on how to solve environme ntal problems		
	Identify causes of environmental problems	Physical environmental problems e g earthquake pollution, volcanic eruption, winds etc. b. social environmental problems. Breaches of social norms and rules, religious conflict, boundary disputes, war etc	Guide class to discuss causes and solution to the environmental problems		Radio, Tv and video clips	Identify causes environment al problems
	State the solution to the environmental problems	Ways of solving environmental problems e.g. government policies, personal discipline, public orientation etc.				State ways of solving environment al problems

NERDC curriculum

Social Studies Education and the Challenges of Healthy Environment

The society prescribes and expects the educational system at each level through various school subjects to cultivate, perpetuate and still in the citizens the society – cherished ideals as expressed overtly or covertly. Nigeria and Nigerians have identified long ago their cherished values and have subsequently charged the educational system to orientate learning towards their attainment (Ifegbesan, 2001).

Social Studies as a school subjects is designed to foster in learners a better understanding of man's interaction with his physical and social environments (mansaray, 1991). According to the national policy on education (1981) the school system as a tool at all levels must strive to inculcate the following national philosophy and values:

As controversy surrounding the definition of Social Studies lasts, its subjects matter (human survival) and objectives remain unchanged. Kissocks (1981) defines social studies as a programme of study which a society uses to instill in students the knowledge, skill, attitudes and actions it considers important concerning the relationship people have with each other, their world and themselves. Social studies can be defined as subject that attempt to change learners behaviors in the direction of acceptable norms values skill and attitudes this modifies process involved learner in the studied of human influence and the environment and that of the environment on humans with the desire to provides solution to the imagi9ng problems in order to ensure human survival (Akinlaye, et al, 1996, Ogunyemi 1997).

Social Studies is unarguably the most integrated of all subject at the primarily and secondary level of our education this is so because only by deriving and integrating its content and learning experiences from a variety of discipline that social studies can attempt to foster this understanding. It's this broad- based nature of social studies that make it the most appropriate subject in the school curriculum to meet many demand of an education for healthy environment (Adeyemi and Oyetade 2010). This suitability is aptly reflected the some of the objective stated below for the teaching of social studies in Nigerian schools.

To develop a sympathetic appreciation of the diversity and interdependence of all members of the local community, and the wider national and international community

To develop in learners, positive attitude of togetherness, comradeship and cooperation towards a healthy nation; inculcation of appropriate values of honesty, integrity, hard work, fairness and justice at work and play as one's contribution to the environment.

Social studies is a problem solving approach, eclectic in nature, interdisciplinary and broad in depth of coverage and integrative in philosophy. As a useful subject, it has objectives, which aim ultimately to ensure human survival within the context of the environment.

Objectives of Social Studies in Relation to Healthy Environment

Social Studies is meant to aid the attainment of some of the objectives of healthy environment thus:

- ➢ To create an awareness and understanding of the social and physical environment as a whole
- ➢ To develop the ability to learn and to acquire basic skill such as listening, reading and writing, speaking, observing, analysis and inferences essential for the formation of sound judgment.
- ➢ To develop in student positive attitudes of togetherness, co-operation towards a healthy nation.
- ➢ It helps us make proper use of our national and human resources.
- ➢ It helps us to understand the need of our nation and how we can successfully contribute to its growth and development.
- ➢ Ensure the acquisition of the relevant body of knowledge and information for personal development and to the making of positive contribution for the betterment of the society.

As Social Studies deals with the study of man in his environment, it therefore focuses on almost every aspect of the environment and man survival within it. It studies man's interaction and interrelationships with his/her environment for his/her survival in the environment as it does not live in isolation. The diverse kind of activities in which man is involved therefore makes Social Studies to enable the learners gain understanding of the physical environment, their interaction with the physical features, the impact of their activities on the environment and their roles in the protection of the environment from both natural and man made disasters such as flood, erosion, land slide and drought which affect man adversely (Falaye 2013) this was corroborated by Mansary (1991) who present social studies as the studies of interaction between man and his physical and social environment, of the problems and issues posed and this interaction and of the way by which man seeks solutions and clarification on them.

Recommendations

In view of the submissions above, it's recommended that:

Environment education topics should be continually updated to be United Nations organization standard in Nigeria.

Only experts in Social Studies education should be allowed to teach environmental education and Social Studies

In services training should be organized for social studies teachers and should focus on recent environmental issues with current pedagogical approaches in teaching them.

Conclusion

Healthy environment is not the sole aim of teaching social studies. However, the present social studies curriculum at all level of the school system needs a paradigm shift with regard to subject matter and pedagogical approach. Strategies identified for increasing the possibility of cultivating healthy environment through social studies curriculum bother largely on reforms in integrating more relevant topics an environmental protections and preservation.

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