

SUSTAINING THE NIGERIAN ENVIRONMENT THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL ADULT EDUCATION STRATEGIES

Essien, Cecilia K. Ph.D

Department of Continuing Education and Development Studies, University of Calabar,
Calabar, Nigeria

ABSTRACT: *All human beings in Nigeria depend on the environment and therefore must have a role to play in sustaining the environment since all of us take part in the degradation of our environment. Therefore providing relevant information on the complex nature of the environment and its associated problems through environmental adult education strategies will help in addressing the numerous environmental issues facing Nigeria. This paper, therefore, is an attempt to highlight some of the strategies of environmental adult education for the promotion of environmental sustainability. These strategies may include; communal areas management programme for indigenous resources, community participation, community environmental education, community tree planting and public enlightenment strategy. Sensitizing the general public on the nature of the environment and its complexity through the various strategies of environmental adult education will help them develop positive attitude to protect and sustain the environment. It therefore becomes pertinent that individuals, governments, practitioners and non-governmental agencies should lay much emphasizes on the promotion of environmental adult education strategies for environmental sustainability.*

KEYWORDS: Environment, Environmental Adult Education

INTRODUCTION

The environment is vital to all human beings. As a living science it includes living and non-living things, water, land, air, human beings, plants and animal species (flora and fauna) of different kind. Human beings depend on the resources of the environment for food, shelter, clothing, water, medicine, and fuel wood for survival. Man's desire to survive had degraded the environment through indiscriminate and unfriendly environmental practices which had posed numerous environmental problems culminating into flooding, erosion, deforestation, desertification, pollution and depletion of the ozone layer. This of course had threaten those basic resources that are life sustaining.

The idea of sustainability as a concept to protect the environment arose as a result of man's indiscriminate activities which had degraded the environment. Sustainability of the environment could be described as a process which protect or secure the human natural environment so as to address the needs of present generation without destroying the ability of future generations to benefit from the same resource base. Sustainability of the environment emphasizes on longevity, that is, it is a concept which deals on the environmental needs of both present and future generations for a long period of time. Therefore, to ensure proper management of the environment, the concept of sustainability becomes relevant through environmental adult education strategies.

Adult education

Adult education is a multifaceted field of study that lends itself to different views concerning its definition. Although the definition of adult education depends on the way an individual sees it. Mbalisi (2014) viewed adult education as any educative and purposeful learning activity organized for adults on how best to survive in life by providing them with those needed attitudes, knowledge, competencies, information and skills to performed meaningfully and live successfully in the society. Adult education is any education given to adults based on their social, political, cultural and economic needs or problems to enable them adjust fully to changes and challenges in their lives and society, (Nzeneri, 2008:10). Harris (2018) viewed adult education as a means of gaining knowledge and ability in which an adult individual is able to transform his world and liberate himself. The above definitions clearly emphasizes on adults living meaningful lives in all aspect of life. Adult education therefore can be described as education for life that is learner centered which the adult individual acquire on remedial or long term basis. This type of education could be either formal, informal or non-formal.

Environmental adult education

Environmental adult education is an integral part of adult education, which blends the basic principles and goals of environmental education with those of adult education. Environmental adult education focuses on adults as regular users of the environment based on their daily activities, and emphasizes on acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding and attitudinal change which is the foundation of environmental sustainability.

Mbalisi in Essien and Anthony (2018) defined environmental adult education as an application of the theories, principles, programmes, methodologies, approaches and resources (human and material) of adult education educating adults about the happenings in the environment and its associated resources with the intention of helping to develop in adult knowledge, skills and attitude required to show a sense of responsibility and commitment towards solving present and future environmental problems. Eheazu (2016) viewed environmental adult education as a process of developing in adults knowledge, skills and certain attitudes that will enable them to successfully interact and live in harmony with the forces and elements that surround them as they engage in their daily activities for survival. Moreso, Essien and Anthony (2017) described environmental adult education as that type of education which creates a relationship between the adults and their environment to enable them understand the problems which occur within their environment and at the same time develop skills and knowledge in solving such problems. Impliedly, the above definitions of environmental adult education revealed that, there is a degree of commonality in that, the definitions above emphasizes on skill, knowledge and acquisition of the right attitude which is the foundation in environmental sustainability.

Objectives of environmental adult education

Eheazu in Oduru-Mensah (1992) clearly states the objectives of environmental education which are consistent with the objectives of environmental adult education as contained in the Tbilisi declaration of 1977. These objectives include:

- a. To develop knowledge and understanding of the environment, the forces that contribute to its deterioration.
- b. To identify specific chemical, biological, physical and socio-cultural characteristics of the environment that constitutes potential hazards to life and health.
- c. To develop skills for solving environmental problems and improving environmental quality.

- d. To develop appropriate attitude and sense of responsibility that will enable man to live harmoniously with his environment.
- e. To develop appropriate curricular for environmental education and train personnel for the management of natural resources.
- f. To develop aesthetic values that will encourage a culture of environmental beautification and maintenance.
- g. To plan appropriate action programme and mobilize citizens to actively participate in the protection and restoration of the quality of our environment.
- h. To promote among adults the practice of sustainable development to ensure a continuity of resource base.

The above objectives clearly show that adult learning is a relevant instrument in raising environmental awareness and promoting environmental sustainability. Thus, awareness creation about the environment can also be achieved through environmental adult education strategies.

Environmental adult education strategies for sustainability of the Nigerian environment

The strategies of environmental adult education for sustainability of the Nigerian environment include the following:

a. Communal areas management programme for indigenous resources (campfire):

The word (CAMPFIRE) is an acronym of a programme for resource conservation, which means communal areas management programme for indigenous resources. However, this programme is well known internationally for its success in helping rural communities to sustain their environments especially in the area of wildlife conservation and forests.

The aim of this programme is to decentralize the management of natural resources specifically wildlife to indigenous communities. The idea is to help indigenous communities to have a sustainable livelihood from wildlife management. This programme could be adopted in Nigeria to stop further deterioration of our natural resources, especially the disappearance of endangered species of plants, animals and forests. Ehezue (2016) explained that rural communities, no doubt are the real owners of the natural ecosystem, but with lack of local environmental awareness and the danger of unfriendly behaviour in the exploitation of these resources, the need for indigenous education and control by government became an alternative to manage these resources sustainably.

Murphree in Okorie (2016) identified four relevant pre-requisites for successful community-based natural resources management initiatives. These include:

- 1 The recognition of local communities rights to ownership of natural resources.
- 2 The empowerment of communities with the operational and technical capacity to initiate and implement resources management initiatives.
- 3 The recognition and incorporation of existing indigenous knowledge and practices which are community specific.
- 4 An empowering and conducive legal framework (p. 156-164).

b. Community participation: Community participation is another strategy of environmental adult education in sustaining the Nigerian environment. Participation is one of the goals of environmental management. Therefore involving members of various communities in managing their resources will go a long way, as members of these communities are regarded as bonafide members of the ecosystem as they depend on the environment for survival.

Appel and Camozie in Essien, Anthony and Ndifon (2017) stated that active participation in environmental management is the cornerstone of all community-based environmental management and must be considered as a priority in any environmental education programme. In this wise, when community members are actively involved in the management of environmental issues, they will identify their environmental needs and make decisions that is relevant to their lives.

WHO in Ugwoegbu and Abey-Fashae (2017) defined community participation as:

A process by which people are enabled to become actively and genuinely involved in defining the issues of concern to them, in making decision about factors that affect their lives, in formulating and implementing policies. In planning, developing and delivering services and in taking action to achieve change (pp.9).

The authors further defined community participation as the process which involved members of the community to take decisions on issues which affect their lives or needs to enable them achieved their stated goals or objectives. It implies that, members of those communities could be more productive in environmental issues if actively involved in the management of their environment. Moreso, Essien (2018) described community participation in environmental management as a process whereby members of the community are actively involved to enable them identify their environmental problems and solve them collectively.

c. Community environmental education: Community environmental education is another strategy which environmental adult education advocates in sustaining the Nigerian environment. The Nigerian environment could be sustained if adequate information on environmental problems is given within the community. Community environmental education is an educational process that addresses environmental problems in the community. It is that type of education that raises the consciousness of it members on the dangers of unsustainable environmental practices, and sensitizes on the need to conserve the natural environment. It is a traditional non-classroom learning which focused on the development of its members and the community. The aim of community environmental education, according to Usang in Edet, Igwe and Etim (2014) include:

- A greater awareness of the environment and the consequences of human interaction with it.
- An understanding of how life is sustained and supported on earth but locally and globally.
- An appreciation of the range of perspectives that impinge upon environmental issue for instance the biological, economical and technological aspects.
- A wide range of knowledge and skills from different fields to assist in investigating environmental issues and choosing appropriate courses of action.
- An understanding of the need to balance development and conservation to meet the needs of society.
- A commitment to work, personally and cooperatively, for a better physical and social environment and a willingness to apply the knowledge of and skills acquired in action programmes to improve and protect our own environment.
- An environmental ethic which changes and enhance environmental values, leading to the appreciation of natural and human-made beauty valuing a healthy environment, concern for the welfare of people and other living things and belief in the wise use of resources (p. 171-175).

The above objectives of community environmental education clearly explained the need to protect and conserve the environment and its resources.

d. Community tree planting: Community tree planting is a welcome idea and a vital strategy of environmental adult education in sustaining the environment. The importance of tree planting in our various communities, if well sustained and managed appropriately cannot be overemphasized. As tree plants could be used for water shade, soil loss, erosion and wind control, medicinal purposes, recreational activities, reforestation and regulate the climate. Thus, to achieve sustainable community tree planting among various communities in Nigeria, the services of the Department of Forestry in Ministry of Agriculture and Research Institutes should be employed. However, forests and trees in communities today are facing extinction because there are no appropriate options for replacement to encourage regeneration in communities. In this wise, Akinsanya in Erim and Asor (2017) explained that community forest is being threaten by a lot of human activities such as logging, agricultural expansion, quarrying activities and natural hazards which have degraded the environment.

The authors suggested that in order to achieve sustainable forests management, that communities should embrace conservation and sustainable forest management initiatives. In support of the above statement, Pratt and Boyden in Aruma (2016) noted that the tropical rain forests have not only shrunk in area because of agricultural expansion or encroachment, but, large areas of land have also been seriously devastated through exploitation and bush burning.

e. Public enlightenment: This is another strategy of environmental adult education which advocates sustainability of the environment. Public enlightenment has to do with the generality of the public by educating, sensitizing, and getting the general public informed about the need for environmental protection. Therefore, information about the environment could be related to the public through the radio, television, posters, leaflet and books. Also, local languages could be transmitted through the television and radio to drive home the message to illiterates' adults. In addition, in local communities where these gadgets are not possible, information about the environment could be spread or disseminated by using indigenous communication system such as wooden gong, symbols, drums and bell through the services of village criers.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

Sensitizing the general public on the nature of the environment and its complexity through the various strategies of environmental adult education will help them develop positive attitude to protect and sustain the environment. It therefore becomes pertinent that individuals, governments, practitioners and non-governmental agencies should lay much emphasizes on the promotion of environmental adult education strategies for environmental sustainability.

REFERENCES

- Aruma, E. O. (2016) Strategies of adult education promotion of sustainability of environment in Nigeria. *International journals of continuing education and development studies (IJCEDS)* 391), 54-60.
- Eheazu, B. A. (2016) *Fundamentals of environmental adult education*. Port Harcourt: University of Port Harcourt press.

- Erim, C. M. & Asor, L. J. (2017) Attitude of rural dwellers and sustainable management of forest resources in Ekuri communities in Akamkpa Local Government Area of Cross River state. *International journal of continuing education and development studies (IJCEDS) 491* 95-100.
- Essien, C. K. (2018) Participation: An environmental adult education strategy in changing rural dwellers attitude towards forest resources management in Akamkpa Local Government Area of Cross River state. *International journal of contemporary social science education.(IJCSSE) www.socialscienceseducationjournal.org.ng.1(2). 139-143,*
- Essien, C. K. & Anthony, G. B. (2017) Halting biodiversity loss through environmental adult education in Nigeria. *Education for today journal of faculty of education, University of Calabar, 13(2) 161-167.*
- Essien, C. K., Anthony, B. G. (2018) ICT utilization in the teaching and learning of environmental adult education. *International journal of contemporary social science education(IJCSSE) 1(1), 15-20. www.socialscienceseducationjournal.org.ng.1(2). 15-20.*
- Essien, C. K., Anthony, G. B. and Ndifon, E. N. (2017) Group Discussion: An environmental awareness strategy on forest resources conservation in Akamkpa Local Government Area of Cross River State. Special needs education. *Journal of the department of special education, university of Calabar, 3, July 2017.*
- Harris, S. J. (2015). The whole purpose of education is turning mirrors into windows.
- Mbalisi, O. F. (2014) Environmental adult education: Principles and practices in G. Adekola and B. Vikoo (eds). Themes in adult and non-formal education. Port Harcourt: Pearl publishers.
- Nzeneri, I. S. (2008) Handbook on adult education. *Principles and practice*. New York: Abigab Associates.
- Oduro-Mensah, D. (1992) Environmental adult education and awareness creation through adult education: suggestion from Ghana. *Journal of Adult Education and Development, 39:251-264.*
- Sam, I. E., Robert, A. I. & Asuquo, E. E. (2014) Community environmental education: Panacea for environmental sustainability. *International journal of continuing education and development studies (IJCEDS) 2(3)171-175.*
- Ugwoegbu, I. T. and Abey-Fashae, G. C. (2017) Community participation for maximum utilization and protection of community projects. The case of Oredo area council of Edo state. *Journal of the national council for adult education 22(1) 45-56.*