ROLE OF SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION IN PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT AND REDUCING UNEMPLOYMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract- The paper examines the role of Social Studies Education in promoting sustainable environment as a tool to reducing unemployment in Nigeria. The paper argues that the concept of Social Studies in the context of Nigeria education is comprehensive and viable enough to promote sustainable environment in which its resources can be judiciously utilized to create employment and wealth in Nigeria. Given the massive potentials environmental resources offer, the paper therefore recommends the need for strategic action plan by the government to ensure active sustainable environmental practices so that it can yield its wealth for the benefit of the nation.

Key Words- Social Studies Education, Sustainable Environment, Unemployment

I. INTRODUCTION

The Problems confronting third world or developing countries are multi-faceted. Some of these challenges are natural while most of them are man-made. In Nigeria, problems of the environment are surmountable and can be channeled to money making ventures to curb the monster called unemployment. Any nation that ignores the fact that unemployment is a time bomb will continue to wallow in abject poverty. All nations should strive to provide employment to her teeming youths, as the absence of this would definitely leads to all forms of vices and deviant behaviours that would retard progress and development.

There are several ways to make youth gainfully engaged to avoid or minimize social vices. The most cost effective one is the care of the environment for sustainable development and growth. Unemployment is a macro economics challenges which could be drastically reduced through effective utilization of informal sectors like the environment agenda. Social Studies Education concepts are rooted and anchored on in-depth knowledge of awareness of one's physical and social environments which can be effectively used to arrest youth restiveness and be a source of employment generation for teeming school leavers and adults who are either finding it difficult to secure job or are lay off due to downsizing or rationalization.

II. UNEMPLOYMENT SITUATION IN NIGERIA

The term unemployment connotes a state of lack of employment and joblessness. The alarming rate of unemployment in Nigeria is on the scaring side. Awogbenle and Iwuamadi (2010) and Federal Bureau of Statistics (2016) put youth population at eighty (80) million representing 60 percent of the total population of the country. Sixty four (64) million of them are unemployed while one million six hundred thousand (1.6 million) are said to be under employed. This prompted Olubukola (2013) to observe that the rapid rise in the country unemployment rate has become a source of concern to government and other stakeholders. Every year, millions of school leavers and graduates leave school without job; a condition in which a skilled or semi-skilled able bodied individual is willing to work but could not get paid job. Fajana (2012) views unemployment as a situation where people who are willing and capable of working are unable to find suitable paid job. Several scholars talk on causes of unemployment. Mushin (2005) attributed it to lack of proper skills that could match the needs and demands of employers. UN Report (2006) attributed it to high degree of geographical mobility in Africa in the form of rural to urban migration. While, Oviawe (2010) attributed it to the state of economy and Obikeze and Obi (2004) attributed unemployment to lack of leaders investing in profitable ventures.

Agriculture supposes to be the major employer of labour in Nigeria. However, it remains at the subsistent level, unattractive and capital intensive. The climatic changes due to global warming is not helping matters, this has resulted in low yield. Damachi (2001) attributed high rate of unemployment in Nigeria to lack of technical and vocational education and this can be effectively used to reinvent agricultural technologies. This will go a long way to change the face of agriculture from subsistent level to commercial mechanized level. This will increase yield, provide more revenue, make farming attractive and reduce unemployment in Nigeria.

The effects of unemployment on the individuals, society and the nation are colossal. Oye, Ibrahim and Ahmad (2011) observed that unemployment has shown enormous effect (over

65%) on the making of the Nigeria Gross Domestic Product. Njoku and Ihugba (2011) opined that unemployment contributes to reduction in the potential which exists in the purchasing power of people that fuels economic growth. Unemployment contributes to crime and violence in a nation. The youths that are unemployed takes to crime, experience depression and cause political instability.

To reduce unemployment in Nigeria the federal government introduced number of measures one of which is National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS). Idogho and Esheotse (2011) opined that this programme is a long term package to address gross unemployment and under employment while Paul (2005) sees the program as capable of achieving the following:

- To offer functional education for the youth to be self-employed and self-reliant.
- Provide the graduate youth with adequate training that will enable them to be creative and innovative in identifying novel business opportunities.
- To serve as a catalyst for economic growth and development
- To create employment opportunities.
- Reduction in rural-urban drift.
- Create smooth transition from traditional top a modern industrial economy.
- Provide the graduate youth with enough training and support that will enable them to establish a career in small and medium sized business.

The above mentioned measures if given serious and adequate attention will improve employment opportunities and drastically reduce activities of miscreants such as kidnappers, religious bigotry, militants, armed robbers and host of others.

Social Studies Education in Nigeria Context

The term Social Studies Education connotes interdisciplinary school discipline that was designed to solve immediate and remote challenges of the society. Ogundare (2010) outlines the dimensions of Nigerian Social Studies Education programmes at all levels of education, be it primary, secondary or tertiary to include the following key features:

- Man; uniqueness or that which is human about human beings; his origin, interdependence.
- Aspects of Social and Physical environment.
- Ways in which man is coping with his environment.
- Ways in which man is governing himself.
- How man is providing for his basic needs and decision making process.
- The social control functions perform by group.
- Major developments, major problems of man and solution techniques.
- The beliefs and values of man.

The concept of man and his environment in Social Studies Education can be handled effectively by classroom teachers to arouse interest in environment such as territory, grassland, thick forest, lakes and desert. Others include: highlands, lowlands, dry land, riverside areas and creeks. All these are freely given by nature as wealth; the proper use of them would reduce poverty and create jobs for millions of citizens of Nigeria. People are influenced by the place they live, that is why people around sea and ocean take to aquatic and marine life. People in the grassland region of Nigeria have domestic animals such as goats and sheep while those in the forest region of the country grows cash crops such as rubber, oil palm trees, cocoa among others. In the far North, crops like cowpeas, guinea corn and onion are cultivated.

Man can annex his environment since he is not a slave to his environment. He can judiciously replace a cut tree, plant trees to protect the environment, provide dams and water ponds for all-round farming, for domestic use and for his animals. Man can also explore the potentials of science and technology maximally to modify, control and exploits his environment for the benefit of all and sustainable development.

Environmental issues are a key component of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Mbang and Oyibe (2013) opined that the millennium development goals are rooted in the context of the millennium declaration at the United Nation General Assembly in the year 2000. The cardinal basic concerns of the summit were:

- Eradication of extreme poverty and hunger.
- Achieve Universal Primary Education.
- Promote gender equality and empower women.
- Reduce child mortality.
- Improve maternal health.
- Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.
- Ensure environmental sustainability.
- Develop a global partnership for development.

The teacher can use adequate instructional strategy in the class to educate students on how individuals, corporate bodies and government can effectively explore and invest in a variety of alternative energy components, not only to address unwanted carbon emissions but also to embrace cleaner alternative to cooking such as liquefied petroleum gas and ethanol cook stoves.

Deforestation and land degradation are becoming increasingly complex with attendant socio-economic challenges. The direct effect of illegal logging and bush burning has direct impact on the environment. The government can use various means including Social Studies Education to educate students' and citizens on the harmful effects of these practices and the need for attitudinal changes for preserving a virile environment that is free of abuse and sustainable for future use.

Polythene from sachet water is one of the wastes that littered the school environment and constitutes

environmental hazard. Akunro, Ikumawoyi, Yahaya and Ologungba (2010) asserted that polythene for assorted items poses various threats to public health and adversely affects flora and fauna as well as the environment. On the other hand, air pollution as a result of the abuse of the environment due to energy production and use, causes heart and lung diseases and cancer. These energy sources that cause the release of deadly air pollutants, such as black carbon, also release greenhouse gasses, including methane and carbon dioxide. All these drive climate change which threatens to undermine all of the environmental conditions on which human lives depend – food, water and shelter which are key concepts of Social Studies Education. Therefore, Social Studies Education can be used to educate and change attitudes of students towards indiscriminate disposal of waste which poses health challenges and environmental degradation.

Ogundare (2010) reiterated the fact that Social Studies Education curriculum is adequate in engendering the development of personal moral and inculcation of environmental discipline in learners to facilitate virtues of self-regulation, diligence, social responsibility, honesty, dedication and selfless service to one's fatherland. In line with this, National Policy on Education (2004) enunciated fundamental value and attitude education which are necessary for effective citizenship, national unity, stability and survival. Individuals and the nation must strive to be economically independent and one of available means to achieve this is to make judicious use of the environment.

Students in and out of school indiscriminately litter their environment which must be changed for us to have a sustainable environment. Some of the bad practices that must stop are urinating and desecrating arbitrarily in unauthorized and designated places. Egun (2011) noted that every available non – utilized space is immediately seen as a potential urinary/toilet and used. Besides this, available Public conveniences provided are kept in bad condition that people avoid making use of them for fear of contracting disease and bacterial infections. Also, proper evacuation of heaps of refuse dumped on authorized sites and neglect by local authorities in timely evacuation turns these refuse into offensive odour and constitutes health hazard to inhabitants of the area in which they are located.

Smith (2003) noted that the output of this daily waste depends on dietary habits, lifestyles living standards, population of the inhabitants and the degree of urbanization and industrialization. Social Studies Education class should assist students to transform all these perceived wastes into money spinning ventures. The waste can be converted to energy to generate electricity, can serve as organic manual for farming purposes, it can also be recycled. All these can create huge investment, job creation and poverty reduction. All these will go a long way to check youth restiveness, and promote sustainable environment.

CONCLUSION

Environment sustainability should be a source of concern to individuals, schools, organizations and government hence, Social Studies Education should be a catalyst for creating awareness and educating all and sundry on the need for environment protections and the derivable wealth in it. To reduce unemployment in Nigeria waste collection enterprise can be an avenue of bringing on new job, municipal collection, sorting, recycling and secondary use of waste are critical for creation and boosting the national economy. Failure to protect populations from environmental risk is not just a human cause, but places additional strain on health services. Health service–related cost is among the largest financial burdens for governments and individuals, Social Studies Education must therefore strive to promote environmental awareness and sustainability in schools for meaningful progress and development in our world.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on issues that have been addressed in this paper, the following recommendations are hereby offered:

- Environmental sustainability should be incorporated in Social Studies Education curriculum at all tiers of education.
- Government should use environment regeneration as source of employment generation.
- Sixty five percent of energy consume should be derived from renewable sources.
- Agriculture mechanization should be promoted and organic fertilizer should be encouraged.
- Youth in and out of school system should be strategically and functionally oriented towards care for environment
- A practical-oriented workshop on environmental regeneration and sustainability should be incorporated into National Youth Service Corp (NYSC), so that Corp members can demonstrate the knowledge and skills in their places of primary assignment and equally mobilize their host communities in the same direction.

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