



Children and Climate Change Education for Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

Children need to be well educated on the impacts of climate change and ways to effectively adapt and mitigate for sustainable development in Nigeria. Climate change is affecting school children, facilities and activities, school attendance, and learning in a profound way. There is great need to improve public understanding of the potential impact of climate change on children in Nigeria. This study identified the great need for Nigerian children to be educated on climate change issues and also be encouraged to develop their talents such as poetry which can be creatively used in climate change adaptation and mitigation in Nigeria. This paper identified poetry as one of those valuable tools which can be used to educate our young ones. This paper concluded by identifying the innovative tool of poetry which can be used in climate change education for children in Nigeria in order to achieve sustainable development.

Keywords: Children, Climate Change, Education, Poetry, Sustainable Development

Introduction

Education is the bedrock of the society and the wings on which our nation can soar to greater heights. Education for the sustainable development of the various sectors of our nation will certainly require lifelong learning (Anabaraonye, 2017). According to the World Health Organization (WHO) Director General on the World Health Day 2008, "Climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time. Climate change will affect, in profoundly adverse ways, some of the most fundamental determinants of health: food, air, water. In the face of this challenge, we need champions throughout the world who will work to put protecting human health at the center of the climate change agenda (Chan, 2008)". Lifelong learning which begins from cradle is very vital for every child that will grow to become leaders of tomorrow. This lifelong learning which can be formal or informal will ensure the growth and development of the Nigerian children mentally, emotionally, spiritually and socially. Lifelong learning ensures that every child grows up to become responsible citizens of their communities who contribute meaningfully to the sustainable development of their communities and nation. Through lifelong learning which starts from the cradle, children are equipped to stand and be counted in the quest to find solutions to issues of global warming, climate change and environmental pollution which are challenges facing the world today (Anabaraonye, 2017). Education is an essential element of the global response to climate change. It helps young people understand and address the impact of global warming, encourages changes in

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their attitudes and behaviors and helps them to adapt to climate change-related trends. Children of today will be leaders of tomorrow and investment in their education secures our future too(UNESCO,2015).

Our children must be well equipped with the right information about climate change and other related issues of national and global concern in order survive and thrive amidst the challenges facing the world today. This implies that there are potentials in every Nigerian child which need to be harnessed with the tool of education to ensure maximum profitability and national sustainability(Amanchukwu, Amadi & Oluebube, 2015). Climate change is a global phenomenon which is evident in Nigeria. It is an international issue which requires both national and international approach and indigenous knowledge. The impact of climate change has no border and it directly affects global sustainable development, livelihood and man's ability to coexist on earth (Sambo, 2010). Climate change education is therefore very important for children in Nigeria in order to achieve sustainable development.

The Impacts Of Climate Change On Nigerian Children

There are 2.3 billion children in the world representing 30% of the world's population, and this number is increasing. This makes them(children) the largest group of people affected by climate change. Children are also more vulnerable than adults to its harmful effects. Many children born today will enjoy vast opportunities unavailable about 30 years ago. However, despite the advances observed in the last decades, the global crisis posed by climate change has the potential to undermine all the gains that have been achieved in child survival and development, and to even promote greater dangers for the future(UNICEF,2015). Climate change undermines children's most basic rights, putting their survival and wellbeing in danger. Major climate related-risks which can have a profound impact on children arise from the following phenomena:

- (i)Drought and water stress;
- (ii)Floods and severe storms;
- (iii)Heat stress;
- (iv)Air pollution;
- (v)Change in the incidence and geographic spread of diseases(UNICEF,2015),

Understanding Climate Change And Sustainable Development

Climate change has been described as an existential threat to human well-being. Globally, it affects the social and environmental determinants of health: clean air, safe drinking water, sufficient food and secure shelter. The effects of climate change are far-reaching and include heat waves and severe weather,

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deteriorated air quality, displacement and migration of vectors resulting in increase of a range of diseases related to water and ecological factors. Increasing incidences of mental health issues are being recorded and identified as a consequence of environmental change(Lu, 2016; PAHO, 2013). Generally, climate change is caused by natural and human activities. Human activities are subdivided into those that either emit large amount of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere contributing to the ozone layer depletion or activities that result in reduced carbon absorption from the atmosphere(Nakagawa,2015). In the first category are industrialization, burning of fossil fuel, gas flaring, urbanization and agriculture. The latter include deforestation, alterations in land use, water pollution and agricultural practices(Lu, 2016; PAHO, 2013). Furthermore, due to its negative effects on economic activities, climate change has transcended the realm of just environmental to being a developmental issue. Its impact is far reaching, traversing agriculture (Crops and Livestock), freshwater resources, coastal water resources and fisheries, forests, biodiversity, health and sanitation, human settlements and housing, transport and communication, energy, industry and commerce, disaster, migration and security, livelihood, vulnerable groups and education (Lu, 2016; PAHO, 2013). Climate change adaptation refers to the ability of a system to adjust to climate change (including climate variability and extremes) to moderate potential damage, to take advantage of opportunities, or to cope with the consequences. Climate change mitigation is any action taken to eliminate or reduce the long-term risk and hazards of climate change to human life, property and the society. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change(IPCC) defines mitigation as: “An anthropogenic intervention to reduce the sources or enhance the sinks of greenhouse gases” (GGW,2018; IPCC,2007a).The term ‘Sustainable Development’ has been popularized by the World Commission on Environment and Development(WCED), in its 1987 report entitled, ‘Our Common Future’. The commission defined sustainable development as ‘the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs(WCED,1987)’. Climate action is among the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 13).

Methodology

Data used for this study is derived from published works including academic articles, journals, conference papers, textbooks and internet materials. The researchers gathered materials for the research but summarized the characteristics that centered more on children and climate change education for sustainable development in Nigeria. This enabled the researchers to generate the synthesis of various researchers’ views on children and climate change education for sustainable development in Nigeria.

Result And Discussion

Climate Change Education For The Nigerian Children

Climate Change Education is of utmost importance for the young ones in the face of global warming and environmental pollution to ensure their sustainable development. Nigerian children need to be well equipped with the right information about climate change in order to thrive amidst the environmental pollution and global warming besetting our communities and nation. Through its Climate Change Education for Sustainable Development programme, The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization(UNESCO) aims to make climate change education a more central and visible part of the international response to climate change. The programme aims to help people understand the impact of global warming today and increase "climate literacy" among young people. It does this by strengthening the capacity of its Member States to provide quality climate change education; encouraging innovative teaching approaches to integrate climate change education in schools and by raising awareness about climate change as well as enhancing non-formal education programme through media, networking and partnerships(UNESCO,2015).Young people at every stage of their education should be informed about the dangers of environmental degradation and the overuse of fossil fuels as well as the prospects of renewable energy. Educators are therefore urged to include climate change education, environment and energy-related topics in the curricula for children(UNICEF,2015).

Engaging Nigerian Children In Climate Change Education, Adaptation And Mitigation

The United Nation's Children Fund(UNICEF) is also playing a great role towards the climate change education, adaptation and mitigation of the impacts of climate change on children in Nigeria and in Africa. Young people need to be given a greater voice on climate change issues. They need a platform from which they can express their demands. They would like to move forward with a multigenerational, multidisciplinary vision: Working together, leaders and youth can redesign how society operates. Together they can lobby for a holistic education and climate-change curriculum so that today's youth are not only climate-change literate but are equipped with the tools to act (UNICEF, 2015).While the accelerating deterioration of the global environment has its most profound effect on children and young people, environmentally aware and empowered children and adolescents are potentially the greatest agents of change for the long-term protection and stewardship of the earth. More than 46 percent of the world's population is now younger than 25 years old – 3 billion individuals in all. The decisions they make can and will shape the future of our world. The next 10 years are crucial, and they offer an amazing window of opportunity(UN,2015).

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Young people's knowledge of water, environment, and health is a largely untapped resource. They are the next generation of water users and environmental stewards in households and communities. The capacity of our children to live in harmony with nature and to manage and maintain local water, air and land resources effectively is absolutely vital. Community-based monitoring and advocacy activities in selected countries have begun to create opportunities for young people to participate in actions that reduce the incidence of water-related disease and deforestation, as well as clean up degraded community environments and watershed areas to improve living conditions for themselves and their families. Children's participation in these activities has succeeded in raising awareness about their role as agents of change. But experience tells us that more must be done to influence the opinion of adults so they regard children as partners in a shared mission. Based on the premise that what children learn today will shape the world tomorrow, instilling environmental awareness at a young age is an effective way to protect the environment. Programmes that improve the availability and quality of environmental education are key interventions for long-term change(UNICEF,2014).

Taking Responsibility For Sustainability In Nigeria

Nigerian children need to be educated on the issues of climate change and encouraged to deploy their skills and talents which should be used effectively to help overcome the environmental and economic challenges facing the country. As we are made to see, no one is too small to make a difference. With millions of children at increased risk from infectious diseases, malnutrition, water scarcity, disasters, and the collapse of public services and infrastructure, the response to the threat of climate change demands investment in child-centered adaptation. Adaptation refers to the process of adjustment to actual or expected climate and its effects. It includes any spontaneous or planned action taken to cope with the impacts of, or reduce vulnerability to, climate change. As such, adaptation represents a whole set of activities, from introducing alternative livelihoods that are not as dependent on natural resources to modifying agricultural practices to be better suited to a drier climate(Amanchukwu, Amadi & Oluebube, 2015).

Child-centered adaptation specifically focuses on the needs and vulnerabilities of children. Climate change is increasingly recognized as an emerging crisis requiring radical and immediate action. While children are among the most vulnerable, they need not be considered passive or helpless victims. Through education, projects and action, children can contribute to every aspect of climate change policymaking, mitigation and adaptation. Furthermore, today's children are tomorrow's business leaders, decision makers and consumers. Children are therefore powerful agents of change(UNESCO,2015).

Poetry As A Valuable Tool For Climate Change Education For The Nigerian Children

Poetry is one of the valuable tools which can be used in educating the Nigerian children on the impacts of climate change. It can also be used as a tool for climate change adaptation and mitigation. Poetry is beauty and beauty attracts (Pinchuk, 2001). By using poetry as a tool in climate change education, we can promote the right values and behaviours to help protect our environment from environmental degradation and global warming (Anabaraonye, Nji & Hope, 2018). Poetry is a vital and effective tool which can be used in the global response to climate change. It has the capacity to help people easily understand the impact of climate change and global warming, encourages changes in their attitudes and helps them mitigate and adapt to climate change for global sustainability (Anabaraonye, Ewa & Hope, 2021). Poetry with its therapeutic ability has been discovered as valuable tool which can be used to help students and teachers in the various Universities in Nigeria and beyond to understand the impacts of climate change and to learn the adaptation and mitigation strategies for sustainability (Krista, 2015).

Poetry helps in language development, creative language skills, writing skills, self-expression, and in the development of natural rhythms. Poetry is important for children, and poetry is good for adults as well (Klein & Longo, 2018). The use of poetry in climate change education encourages creativity and increases climate literacy amongst the students and teachers. It also enhances innovative teaching approaches to climate change education in primary schools, secondary schools and in the Universities. It turns out that there are some important developmental benefits of poetry for the Nigerian children (Krista, 2015). Poetry has a unique way of expressing emotions, ideas and experiences which is so appealing and attractive to the human mind. It turns out that there are some important psychological, therapeutic and developmental benefits of poetry (Klein & Longo, 2018). I believe that conveying the beauty and joy of poetry to Nigerian children is truly important in climate change education for sustainable development in Nigeria. There is so much we can learn from poetry and so much we can teach with poetry including climate change education. It is highly effective for conveying information in a memorable and intimate way (Anabaraonye, Nji & Hope, 2018).

Conclusion

It is good to know that through our study, we have discovered that climate change education, mitigation and adaptation is loaded with entrepreneurial opportunities and has the capacity to provide employment for young people nationally and globally (Anabaraonye, Okafor & Eriobu, 2019). Children in Nigeria must be well educated on the issues of climate change and encouraged to deploy their skills and talents which should be used effectively to help overcome the economic challenges facing the country today.

This study identified poetry as one of those valuable tools which can be used to educate children in Nigeria. As we are made to see, no one is too small to make a difference.

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