

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO STUDENT TEACHERS VIEWS ON THE  
INTRODUCTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION INTO THE  
NIGERIAN  
SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM**

**BY**

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Abstract

*The purpose of this study was to investigate student teachers views on the introduction of environmental education in Nigerian Schools. One hundred and My (150) Sandwich Social Studies Students of the Institute of Education, University of Ilorin were selected for the study using researcher-designed questionnaire to collect relevant data. Their responses were analyzed using simple percentage. The finding of the study showed that majority of the trainees had a wrong conception of environmental education because they were not exposed to it. However, majority of the respondents agree that environmental education should be introduced into the Social Studies Curriculum. A recommendation deriving from the study is that environmental education should be introduced as a matter of urgency at a level of our education: it should be infused into the Social Studies Curriculum.*

Introduction

Often, teachers are neglected in the formulation of policy in education, and worse still, innovations in education disregard teachers' role in the effective execution of governments' policies. That is why Adedoyin (1988) observes that innovation in education fans to encore the teachers their rightful place in the smooth and successful implementation of government policies. Government fails to realize that teachers themselves are not only agents of change but also innovator in a society, and therefore they are to be recognized as they should when innovation in education that would reflect government policies are to be made.

To support this, Adeyinka (1990) gives an instance of when Social Studies was to be introduced and there was no adequate preparation of teachers to effectively handle and teach the subject in schools. As a consequence, social studies which in United State America is considered an important subject as noted by Adeyinka (1990), is relegated to the background. Adedoyin (1988) also notes that the result of this inadequate preparation of teachers to cope with the teaching of social studies is that the subject not only made a slow start but also faces some biases among the educational administrators as well as lecturers in the tertiary institutions. This may account for the inability of the subject as citizenship education to achieve the objectives for which it is set.

In order to prevent what happened to social studies from affecting the introduction of environmental education in schools, this study is conducted to

find out the student teacher views on the introduction of environmental education in the Nigeria social studies curriculum.

#### Statement of the problem

Various studies have been conducted on the desirability of environmental education and its integration into the school curriculum. Such studies include those of Larson (1976), Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) (1992), Aina (1992), and Salami (1997). Adedayo and Olawepo (1997) note that environmental degradation caused by human activities provides justification for the need to introduce environmental education at all levels of education. According to NERDC (1992), the Federal Government has even directed its agency, NERDC, to infuse environmental education elements into the new citizenship education curriculum of primary and secondary schools. However, Naibi (1982) and Salami (1997) discovered that teachers had a remarkable low knowledge of the basic concepts of environmental education. To Olawepo and Jekayinfa (1998), it is not surprising to see environmental education not taught as it is supposed to be because teachers are not aware of the programme. The finding that environmental education has not gained ground is probably a reflection of the inadequate preparation of teachers to handle it. It is based on this fact that this study is designed to find out the views of student teachers on the inclusion of environmental education in social studies curriculum. Literature is reviewed in that environmental education is, its objectives and how the curriculum on environmental education developed.

#### Meaning and Scope of Environmental Education

According to Douglas, Hugget and Robinson (1996), environment is the sum total of all external conditions which may act upon an organism or community, to influence its development or existence - the surrounding air, light, moisture, temperature, wind, soil, and other organisms are part of the environment of various living and non-living objects, happenings and influence (both natural and artificial), the aggregate of which forms its environment, and on which it depends for life and survival of life (Faniran, 1997).

From these Definitions, environment can be classified into two, namely physical and social. Faniran (1997) states that physical environment constitutes the natural environment while social environment is the man-made or artificial environment. Man lives in his environment and he explores the environment to make use of it to his advantage.

Nigeria is only just beginning to realize that sustainable industrial development, like sustainable economic progress, cannot be divorced from healthy environment. Falomo (1997) asserts that sustainable economic development must be linked with healthy environment. Government, in the National Policy on Environment, states that Nigeria's commitment to sustainable development is based on proper management of the environment in order to meet the need of the present and future generations.

Since healthy citizenry constitutes a strong nation, efforts at national development programme, since the promulgation of N.P.E. in 1980, has been aimed at improving the quality of life and health of the population. However, it is recognized that there are evidences of environmental degradation, which is a result of a combination of any human activities that include bush burning, pollution, grazing, *and use* technology over the years.

In order to redress this situation of the environment, the government promulgated National Policy on Environment. Akinjide (1997) states that the

goal of the N.P.E. is to achieve sustainable development in Nigeria, and, among other things, secure for all Nigerians a quality of environment adequate for their health and well-being. It is against this background that Adefolake (1997) observed that the relatively new concept of sustainable development upon which environmental policy now rests recognizes and encourages the necessary interlink age between both. The policy, according to Falomo (1977) comprehensively brings together the disciplinary initiative, and he implores further that appropriate measures will be adopted to disseminate information on environmental issues to policy makers, researchers and the public in general. The policy, according to Falomo (1997), shall give priority to the training of specialists and teachers who will disseminate such relevant environmental education jostles to people.

However, environmental education is not just the acquisition of knowledge about the environment. It is the education that is put in place to bring about environmental education as an inter-disciplinary approach in schools and out of schools, encompassing all levels of education and directed towards the general public in particular, the ordinary citizen living in rural and urban areas, youths and adults alike with a view to educating them as to the simple steps they might take within their means to manage and control their environment.

In essence, environmental education has emerged as a corrective interdisciplinary approach to check the abuse of the environment through pollution, deforestation, desertification and other behaviors of man, which have led to the general degradation of the environment and a threat to survival on earth. This is an educational programme designed to inform the people about environmental dynamics, the causes and consequence of human activities, and the interrelationship of environmental change to development and to aspects of living (man and nature study action centre NANAC 1996). From this definitions, the focus is on the dynamics of environment and survival and quality of human being. It is also recognized that man has the fundamental right to freedom equality and adequate conditions of life, in an environment of a quality that permits a life of dignity and well being, and he bears a solemn responsibility to protect and improve the environment for present and future generations (Stockholm Conference, 1972).

Tony (1997) states that environmental education content can be drawn from such established subjects like geography, economics, anthropology, mathematics, physics, medical sciences, chemistry, and sociology. Indeed, the content of environmental education is obtained from the subject called regional and urban planning which means a body of knowledge, theories and concepts which attempts to explain man's exploration of the environment, dynamics of the environment, and how man makes use of the environment, without jeopardizing the chance of the future. It is observed, however, that while these various disciplines treat one or two aspects of environmental education, social studies is more appropriate in handling environmental education at both the junior and senior secondary school levels. This will go along way not only to make environmental education as a study, but also as a way of life. This view is supported by Tony (1997) who claims that the introduction of environmental education to social studies at all levels of education will not only make it as a study but as a way of life and of improving the quality of life of each individual who goes through the course.

Tony (1997) notes with dismay that the non-inclusion of environmental education in the school curriculum is like incubating a massive army trained naturally for environmental destruction. He cautions that if serious efforts to harness and direct the sleeping army for the good of the environment are not done now, all we are doing out there will amount to zero. He imagines what nearly 17 millions environmental

ignorant children turned adults will do to the Nigerian environment come school leaving and graduation. Because of these, there is the need for increased awareness on environment. Adebisi and Olawepo (1997) assert that, environmental degradation resulting from arable farming, bush burning; grazing, mining and human settlement and unregulated use of chemicals provide the justification for environmental awareness and education in Nigeria.

### **Curriculum Development for Environmental Education**

To develop a curriculum for environmental education at the J.S.S. Level, it is advocated that a separate course approach should be adopted. According to Adeyoyin (1988), such as approach will not only foster an interest in the new field of knowledge but it will also provide adequate understanding of selected themes upon which other themes can be built. Obayan (1986), discussed the National Policy on Education (N.P.E.) and the question of implement ability while Adebisi and Olawepo (1997), recommended integrated single subject approach to social studies curriculum. This integrated single subject approach is advocated because 'teachers' preparation will benefit in it and it should be used at all levels of teacher education programme. The teachers programme in environmental education in the University of Calabar, and Federal Colleges of Education focuses on the interdisciplinary approach. This approach, according to Omo (1997) would assure effective collaboration of academic professionals in some cases.<sup>1</sup> ^{W general nature of problems encountered in social studies' and environmental education forces integrationists to inquire into what tomorrow would look like. This can be obtained through various forms of futurology or the discussion on pollution and global effect of climate change.

Discussing on interdisciplinary approach, Adeyoyin (1988) stressed that experts in various fields will contribute their quota, thereby enriching the course content. This paper, however, strongly advocates integrated approach at the junior and senior secondary school levels, having recognized the similarities in the basic concepts in social studies and environmental education, such as contained in the programmes. The integrated approach emphasizing on man, environmental dimension, environmental degradation, pollution, climate changes, occupation, and development will go a long way to put the programme in place for now and ensure its future. f

### **Goals and Objectives of Environmental Education**

From the survival policy of government on the environment, 'one can' arrive at the following goals as posted by NERDC (1992):

- (a) To enable young people to participate in decision making related to environmental issues.
- (b) To enable learners to develop operational understanding of some of the basic concepts and processes relating to environment issues, e.g., pollution, grazing, deforestation and interaction between population and their environment, the use of resources and environmental conservation.
- (c) To develop the ability to enquire into problem situations associated! with the environment (this is done by defining the problem, into account social and cultural factors of the people, and suggesting solution).

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were raised for the study.

- A. How do teachers conceive environmental education?

- B. To what extent have the instructional objectives of social studies provided for the development of teachers skills in the teaching of, environmental education?
- C. Should environmental education be included in the social studies?
- D. At what level should environmental education in social studies be taught?

**Research Methodology**

The population employed for the study consisted of Sandwich Degree Students of the University of Ilorin. Since this study was designed to investigate teachers views on the inclusion of environmental education, in the social studies curriculum, the subject was limited to the students whose .area of specialization was social studies. A simple random sample of one hundred and fifty students was used.

A questionnaire focusing on teachers views on environmental' was, designed based on the conception of environmental. Education studies, at what level it should be taught, how it should, be taught and the need for environmental education. The questionnaire was made up of twenty items. Each item has a scale of two responses, that is Yes or No, The questionnaire was personally administered on the respondents without allowing for consultation among themselves. The data obtained were analyzed item by item, and the statistic used was simple percentages.

**Result and Finding**

From the analysis, it was observed that majority of the respondents showed negative attitude in their knowledge of environmental education. This is shown on the table below.

Table 1 : ;

**Student Teachers' knowledge of Environmental Education Responses**

|                                   | Sex  | Yes | %   | No  | %    |
|-----------------------------------|------|-----|-----|-----|------|
| Knowledge Environmental Education | N    |     |     |     |      |
|                                   | M80  | 12  | 15  | 68  | 85   |
|                                   | .F70 | 5   | 7.1 | 65  | 92.9 |
| Total                             |      | 17  | 8.3 | 133 | 86.7 |

Table 1 reveals that only 27 (19%) out of 150 have heard of environmental education while out of 80 male respondents, only 12 (15%) have heard and only 5 (7.1%) of the 70 female respondents have knowledge of environmental education.

The analysis also reveals that only few respondents have the right conception of environmental education. We consider the frequency table below.

**Table 2: Students' Teachers' Conception of Environmental Education**

|    | Definition of Environmental Education is  | No  | %    |
|----|---|-----|------|
| 1  | Study of Environment  | 81  | 54%  |
| 2. | Study of Town Planning  | 39  | 26%  |
| 3  | Study of environmental issues, dynamics and how they affect the quality of life now and in future | 30  | 20%  |
|    |   | 150 | 100% |

From the table above (Table 3), only 30 (20%) respondents had the right conception of environmental education. These were respondents who viewed it as the study of environmental issues, dynamics and how it affects the quality of life now and in future. Majority of the respondents, i.e., 81 (54%) viewed environmental education as the study of environment while 39 (26%) of the respondents thought that it is the study of town planning.

The analysis on table 4 revealed that environmental education should be taught at all levels. This is because majority of the respondents showed positive attitude towards the inclusion of environmental education at all levels of education as indicated in the table below.

Table 3: Levels where Environmental Education should be taught

| Levels                | No  | %     |
|-----------------------|-----|-------|
| Primary               | 6   | 4%    |
| primary and Secondary | 19  | 12.7% |
| Teachers Colleges     | 8   | 5,3%  |
| University            | 26  | 17.3% |
| At all Levels         | 91  | 60.7% |
| Total                 | 150 | 100%  |

The above table shows that majority of the respondents agreed to the teaching of Environmental Education at all levels of our education institutions. Only 6 (4%) of the respondents claimed that it should be taught at the primary .level, 19 (12.7%) was of the opinion that it should be taught at both primary and secondary levels, only 8 (5.3%) of the respondents responded' that it should be taught in teachers colleges and 26 (17.3%) of the respondents are , of the opinion that it should be taught at the University levels while the majority 91 (60.7%) feel that it is necessary to be taught at all levels of education. On what subject is best suitable for the integration of environmental education, the result on table 5 shows that majority of the respondents support its inclusion in social studies. This is revealed in the table below.

Table 4: Subject in which to infuse Environmental Education

| Subject          | No  | %     |
|------------------|-----|-------|
| Social Studies   | 108 | 72%   |
| Geography        | 20  | 13.3% |
| English Language | 7   | 4.7%  |
| Economics        | 3   | 2%    |
| Agric Science    | 11  | 7.3%  |
| Biology          | 1   | 0.7%  |
|                  | 150 | 100%  |

From the above table, 108 (72%) of the 150 respondents opined that social studies is the subject that is most suitable for the accommodation of environmental education while 20 respondents (13.3%) indicated geography, only 1 respondent (0.7%) supported Biology.

### Discussion of Findings

That only few respondents had right conception of environmental education is not surprising. This is because environmental education .curriculum has not

been implemented. This wrong conception, as Adebayo and Olawepo (1997) noted is due to the fact that Environmental Education Curriculum for primary and secondary schools produced by NERDC has just been out and the implementation has not started.

The finding that majority have not heard of environmental education is also easy to understand. The fact is that, environmental education is not one of the courses the respondents have to offer, either as compulsory or elective. For this reason, the respondents who are students are not expected to have heard about environmental education as a course. According to Adebayo and Olawepo (1997), there are only two units for the training of teachers in preparation for environmental education, one at Calabar, and the other at Ekiadolor. This means the few who have heard of environmental education must have come across it through mass media or seminars.

However, the finding that all the respondents have heard of social studies is not surprising because the respondents are undergoing training in social studies.

It is interesting to note that the respondents have positive attitude towards the teaching of environmental education at all levels of education in Nigeria, despite their lack of knowledge of environmental education. Their positive attitude is not surprising because the respondents are matured adults who have come in contact with environmental education through the mass media and have been participating in the jettisoned national monthly environmental sanitation exercise.

The finding that respondents showed a more positive attitude to social studies as a subject most suitable for the infusion of environmental education is equally understandable. It is clear that social studies emphasize the interaction of human with the physical and social environment. Jekayinfa and Olawepo (1998) noted that students of social studies are quite aware of the consequence of man-environment relationship which has a lot to do with environmental issues. This positive attitude can also be seen as a reflection of their knowledge of social studies as citizenship education, and that both

### **Social studies and environmental education have symbolic relationship which is in line with the view of Omo (1997).**

#### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

In this paper, emphasis has been on student teachers' view on the introduction of environmental education. This study has established that teachers are agent of change and therefore should be well equipped to impact environmental education in social studies which the government has identified as priority as contained in the National Policy on Environment. It is against this conclusion that the following recommendations are made.

As it has been emphasized, the quality of life instruction depends on the quality of teachers. In view of this, teachers in training school should be exposed to many innovations and changes by trainers as they surface. Also, *both* social studies and environmental education should be introduced not only at the undergraduate levels at the University, but also at the postgraduate level.

Furthermore, basic concepts in environmental education should be integrated in social studies at primary, junior secondary and senior secondary levels. The concepts are to be taught without delay, not just as a study but as a way of life.

As a matter of urgency, environmental education should be infused into the social studies curriculum, and social studies should be taught and made one of the compulsory subjects at both J.S.S. and S.S.S. levels.

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