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Private Participation in Environmental Education and Sustainable Economic Development in Akwa Ibom State

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Abstract

The study examined the impact of private participation in environmental education on sustainable economic development in Akwa Ibom State. The survey research design was adopted for the study. The population consisted of all senior staff of Akwa Ibom State Ministry of Environment. This stood at 118. The purposive sampling technique was used as the entire population constituted the sample. Two null hypotheses were developed and tested at 0.05 level of significance. Data collection was done using a structured questionnaire tagged "Private Participation in Environmental Education" (PPEE) questionnaire. The instrument was duly validated and pilot-tested with a reliability coefficient of 0.77. Data collected were analyzed using one sample t-test. The results indicated poor private participation in environmental education in Akwa Ibom State. It was recommended, among other things, that increased private participation in environmental education in the state should be encouraged through adequate creation of awareness among the populace.

Introduction

The problem of environmental degradation vis-à-vis economic development in Akwa Ibom State has made life difficult. Oil spillage is constantly reported in many parts of the state leading to loss of aquatic lives and farmlands, consequently throwing many out of employment culminating in high cost and low standard of living. This is linked to poor environmental literacy and management resulting from poor funding of environmental education in the country (Adedeji, 2003). The benefits of environmental education accrue to every member of the society. Its funding should therefore be shared by all stakeholders. Stakeholders in environmental education include the government at all

levels, NGOs, educational institutions, parents/ guardians and the private sector. Others are the students and the society in general. Environmental education, according to Sharp, Register and Leftwich (1988), should be a cost sharing venture. This is because its benefits cut across the entire society.

Financing environmental education in Nigeria today is a crucial national problem. The amount of investment required for a functional environmental education is enormous and cannot be left to the government alone.

Environmental education in present day Nigeria, especially the south-south where oil production is the dominant industrial activity with its attendant consequences, can only be facilitated through sustained financing from all stakeholders. The industrial, social and economic factors, which are currently having significant impact on our environment, have necessitated the need for public-private participation in the funding of environmental education.

Environmental Education and Economic Development

The Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA, 1990) viewed the term 'environment' to include water, air, land and all plants and human beings or animals living therein and the inter-relationships, which exist among these or any of them. This definition include environmental changes ranging from ecological problems like damage to the natural habitat, the conservation of flora and fauna, and problems such as emission of dangerous gasses into the atmosphere.

Environment is considered as the unit from which resources needed for human sustenance and economic development are obtained and into which human development is directed (Oyeshola, 1995). This implies the components of our ecological system (earth), the interactions therein and the changes that occur. It encompasses economic and socio-political structures whose policies at local and international levels exert changes on the structure and organisation of the physical setting.

Nigeria's natural environmental resources and the quality of its air, water, and soils are severely threatened. Increasing poverty, high population growth and migration, especially into urban areas, and political/institutional constraints are the underlying causes for environmental degradation and slow pace of economic development in

the state. Since the return to democracy in 1999, there has been a renewed interest in environmental management and protection. The newly created Federal Ministry of the Environment (FMoE) is pushing an agenda that makes priority issues of gas flaring, marine and coastal resources degradation, desertification, industrial and urban pollution.

The Niger Delta Development Commission is given a transparent mandate to help the unique and resource-rich region seek and develop community-based solutions to the environmental problems that have been growing for decades. Public leaders, NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs) should be encouraged to help implement environmental activities that result in improved livelihoods for the people.

The capacity to integrate environmental concerns into economic development planning and activities is weak in the state. Unfortunately in many instances, there is also the lack of political will to even attempt to do so. Though the capacity is gaining some momentum at the federal level, there are usually no 'flow-down' mechanisms to the states and certainly not to the local government levels where environmental threats need to be directly addressed.

Legal and political frameworks for environmental management require further work; considerable gains in improved environmental management could be made by effectively enforcing existing regulations, both in regards to pollution control and biodiversity conservation.

Credible change in Nigeria's enforcement of environmental regulations requires more than simple "capacity building", it requires building the political support or "the political will" to see the regulations enforced. These types of changes are long term and require raising the awareness of a wide range of stakeholders as to the interrelated nature of environment, economics and health.

The court system should be strengthened at the state level. This might involve raising environmental awareness among court officials, both in a general sense and vis-à-vis the existing legislative framework. This will serve to help strengthen the application of environmental legislation by the judiciary.

The early 1980s witnessed growth of concern for environmental issues in Nigeria particularly at the non-formal level with the setting up of the Nigeria Conservation Foundation (NCF). The concern became

stronger with the dumping of toxic waste in Koko, a village in Edo State of Nigeria in 1987. As a result, discussions and concern for natural and physical environment, which, used to be treated as esoteric assumed national prominence.

This event set the tone for the development of environmental education in Nigeria. At the forefront of environmental education in Nigeria are the Nigerian Conservation Foundation (NCF) and the Nigeria Educational Research Development Council (NERDC). These two organizations contributed a great deal of efforts towards the development of environmental education (EE) curricula for secondary schools as well as, the popularisation of environmental education within the non schooling communities.

Today, environmental education is taught as part of other school subjects like social studies, integrated science, biology, chemistry, geography, and agricultural science in Nigeria. The notion of infusing environmental education is compelling; it is believed that by incorporating environmental education throughout the total curriculum at every grade, a more comprehensive treatment of environmental issues and concerns can be accomplished (Simmons, 1989).

However, the infusion of environmental education has generated concerns and anxieties from the teachers, who viewed the infusion as overloading of the already loaded curricula. Therefore, it would serve many purposes if environmental education was accorded its place in the curriculum as a subject of its own.

In 1996 the Science Teachers' Association of Nigeria (STAN) through its National Environmental Education Project (NEEP) commenced, a regimen of training for environmental educators (train-the-trainers workshop) as a response to growing teachers' concern regarding overloading of curriculum (Okebukola, Ahave, Kola-Olusanya and Ogunsola-Bandele, 1997).

Organized on annual basis, the workshops presented opportunities for secondary school science teachers, to learn about the strategies which can best allow easy assimilation of knowledge (Thiele and Treagust, 1991; Okebukola, 1996); as well as facilitate students' understanding of environmental concepts or principles (Ahave, 1997). Being important change agents in the education enterprise, teachers are therefore at the heart of any successful effort to promote environmental education (Okebukola et al. 1997; Desinger, 1984).

As observed by Ndukwe (2000), the environment influences man and the society to a large extent. The environment controls the physiological functioning of man, the choice of his occupations, his consumption habits, including all the aspect of his behaviour ranging from political, philosophical, religious, scientific and so on. On the other hand, man also interacts with and shapes his environment in order to suit his needs. This underscores the need for effective environmental education and management through adequate funding enhanced by way of private-public partnership. Investment in environmental education has been described as direct investment in human development.

Fien (2004) corroborated this when he observed that investing in environmental education led to improvement in the environment resulting in enhancement in the standard of living of the inhabitants. According to this scholar, the environment affects man in a number of ways. It contributes to the total well-being and success of the people. It is therefore natural that man should create awareness regarding vital environmental issues and manage the environment properly to enhance the well-being of the dwellers.

The envisaged funding partnership could be achieved with:

- Funds from the Local, State and Federal Governments
- Support from NGOs; Multinational Companies
- Gifts, Grants and Endowments
- Investment income
- Consultancies and Research activities
- Community Participation, etc.

Nigeria's environmental problems are extensive. Reversing these trends will require significant political and popular will, not to mention the huge amounts of financial and human capital. Public-private partnership is required if these problems must be effectively managed for sustainable economic development of the state and the Niger Delta Region.

The study was carried out to examine the impact of public private participation in environmental education on sustainable economic development in Akwa Ibom State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Ascertain the level of private participation in environmental education in Akwa Ibom State.
2. Ascertain the impact of environmental education on economic development in Akwa Ibom State.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to direct the study.

H_{01} The level of private participation in environmental education is not significantly high in Akwa Ibom State.

H_{02} Environmental education does not impact significantly on economic development in Akwa Ibom State.

Methodology

The survey research design was adopted for this study. The study population consisted of all senior staff of Akwa Ibom State Ministry of Environment that totalled 118. The purposive sampling technique was adopted to select the sample population from the total population. Two null hypotheses were developed and tested at 0.05 level of significance. Instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire; The Public-Private Participation in Environmental Education (PPPEE). The instrument was validated by experts in the profession using face validity, trial tested with a reliability coefficient of 0.77. Data collected were analyzed using t-test.

Results

Hypothesis 1

The level of private participation in environmental education is not significantly high in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 1: One Sample t-test Analysis of the Level of Private Participation in Environmental Education

| Variable | N | \bar{X} | SD | t-cal |
|--|-----|-----------|------|-------|
| Level of private participation in environmental education in Akwa Ibom State | 118 | 21.87 | 1.92 | 1.32* |

$P < 0.05$

The calculated t-value was 1.32. This was tested for significance by comparing it with the critical t-value at 0.05 alpha level with 117 degrees of freedom. The calculated t-value of 1.32 was less than the critical t-value of 1.96. Hence, the null hypothesis was retained. The implication is that the level of private participation in environmental education in Akwa Ibom State is low.

Hypothesis 2

Environmental education does not impact significantly on economic development in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 2: One Sample t-test Analysis of the Impact of Environmental Education on Economic Development in Akwa Ibom State

| Variable | N | \bar{X} | SD | t-cal |
|--|-----|-----------|------|-------|
| Impact of environmental education on economic development in Akwa Ibom State | 118 | 19.36 | 1.81 | 1.27* |

$P < 0.05$

The calculated t-value was 1.27. This was tested for significance by comparing it with the critical t-value at 0.05 alpha level with 117 degrees of freedom. The calculated t-value of 1.27 was less than the critical t-value of 1.96. Hence, the null hypothesis was retained. The implication is that there is no significant impact of environmental education on economic development in Akwa Ibom State. This is justified by the data analysis as the t-cal is less than the t-critical.

Discussion of Findings

Data analysis in hypothesis one indicated low level of private participation in environmental education in Akwa Ibom State. The calculated t-value was less than the critical t. This led to the retention of the null hypothesis. This implies that the government is mainly responsible for the funding of environmental education in Akwa Ibom State. This may account for the numerous environmental problems facing the state in recent times. This finding is supported by Adedeji

(2003). Poor funding of environmental education due to lack of private participation does not augur well for the people. Besides the problem of environmental degradation, the inhabitants are exposed to several health problems and loss of occupation resulting from pollutions and damage to farmlands.

Private participation in environmental education is inevitable in order to preserve the environment as it is the unit from which resources needed for human sustenance and economic development are obtained (Oyeshola, 1995).

Data analysis in hypothesis two revealed no significant impact of environmental education on economic development in Akwa Ibom State. The calculated t-value was less than the critical t. This led to the retention of the null hypothesis. The implication is that environmental education does not have positive significant influence on economic development in the state. The finding is in line with Fien (2004).

Investment in environmental education has direct bearing with human and economic development.

Environmental education leads to economic development and enhancement in the living standard of the people. Environmental literacy equips the citizens with the tools and courage to fight environmentally hostile practices, degradation, and facilitates co-operative efforts and team work towards the development of the environment.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that:

- the level of private participation in environmental education in Akwa Ibom State is low.
- investment in environmental education does not impact significantly on economic development in the State.

Recommendations

On the basis of the conclusion drawn, it is recommended that:

1. More awareness campaign should be carried out to educate the people on environmental issues and the need for public-private partnership in educational initiatives for environmental education in the state.

2. The Ministry of Environment in the State should concentrate more on tackling those environmental problems that impact more on the lives of the inhabitants.
3. Management of the Ecological Fund should be more transparent, and its users held more accountable. This will go a long way in promoting environmental management in the state.

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