

EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION (ECCDE) FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

By

Ogbu, Edwin¹ Asabe Comfort Ismaila² and Ikpi Nokwa Iliya³

School of Early Childhood Care and Primary Education^{1,2,3}

Federal College of Education (Technical) Gombe^{1,2,3},

edwinjohn914@gmail.com¹, dubukumamrs50@gmail.com²

and ikpinokwa4@gmail.com³

Abstract

The paper titled 'Early Childhood Care Development and Education (ECCDE) for Sustainable National Development' posits that one of the best and effective way to assume a just and sustainable nation is by giving ECCDE all the attention necessary through the implementation of the ECCDE policies to ensuring all round (holistic) development for every child. Children will be equipped through teaching and mentoring with the knowledge of core African values that promotes obeying law and order, respect for elders, sanctity of human lives and the environment. The paper further discusses ECCDE as a discipline and highlights some of its features that can contribute to building a sustainable nation as enshrined in its objectives. The paper highlights the importance of putting together all the related efforts in the local realities; using different formal, informal and non-formal settings; re-orienting the program content towards sustainability; The paper points out some challenges that hindered sustainable national development and finally proffers some recommendations among which Government and private sectors should join effort and resources together towards developing Early Childhood Care Education in Nigeria.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Early Childhood Care Development and Education. (ECCDE)

Introduction

Education for sustainable development need to begin at the Early Childhood Care Development and Education (ECCDE) level if it must yield the desirable result. This is because early years in children's life are the most important as it is the period when the formation of intelligence, personality and social behaviour of a child takes place. The years (0-5ears) before a child reaches Kindergarten are among the most critical in his or her life as it seriously influence learning. The challenges facing human race today in terms of achieving sustainable development is as a result of not informing the leaders of tomorrow and agents of change of the need to change in both thought and activities that causes sustainability. There is the need to start at the very early stage of child development if it must be gotten right. Ejiehi (2006) supported this when she posited that today modern societies show serious interest and concern for the education of their young

ones by providing needed support to prepare them to succeed later in school. Since change is something that people are resentful to, children should be taught of its importance at the very early stage to channel their energy, creativity, initiative and innovations more towards conservation of the environment, alleviating poverty, respect for elders, the norms and values of the society etc.

World Declaration for EFA (1990), opined that Learning begins at birth and even before. Early Childhood Care Development and Education lays solid foundation for later learning and development. So many life skills necessary for the contribution towards sustainable development are acquired at this early stage e.g. learning to communicate, co-operate (socialize), to be creative, innovative, have good societal moral values, autonomy, respect for human and the environment. Skills learned at this early childhood stage reflect throughout the child's life and which can be

carried on and reinforced through continuous interactions within families and societies.

The Federal Government of Nigeria in recognition of the numerous benefits envisaged in Early Childhood Care Development and Education, included it in the Universal Basic Education (UBE) program and moved a step further to inaugurate Early Childhood Education policy on 8th October, 2007 (Punch, 9th October, 2007, p.16.). This was a move in the right direction towards the provision of the right education to the Nigerian child to attain an all-round development of the human potential to fit well and contribute meaningfully his quota to the society. It is against this background that this paper discusses the concept of sustainable development in relation to Early Childhood Care Development and Education implementation policy.

Conceptual Clarification

Sustainable Development

The concept of sustainable development emerged in the 1980s. Many definitions of the term have been introduced over the year. Sustainable development can be seen as rising the calibre of human life while living within the premise of supporting ecosystems. This emphasizes on improving the quality of human life while protecting the Earth's capacity for regeneration. Ugoh, (2008) described sustainable development as a construct, which envision development as meeting the need of the present generation without compromising the needs of the future generation. The implication of this is that while education meets the need of the present generation let it not compromise that of the future generation. This never the less can be achieved through development of human capital education technological advance and physical capital (machine, tool). Educational programmes like the Early Childhood Education are therefore, veritable tools with which to achieve development and its sustainability in Africa. Osuji (2004) urged that development process that is equitable and sensitive to ecological and environmental

issues depends on the initiative, resourcefulness, and discipline of human beings who are the managers of developmental programs. The best period to inculcate this into the African child is at the early years through early childhood education program.

Education

Akinpelu in Okorosaye-Oribite (2005, p.19) stressed that the product of education is the educated man, who in the African context is one "who shows evidence of a well-integrated personality he is economically efficient, socially and publicly competent, morally acceptable and intellectually and culturally sophisticated. Ukeje (1986, p.8) summed it up when he opined that,

Education is power, it is a process of acquiring knowledge and ideas that shape and condition man's attitude, actions and achievements; it is a process of developing the child's moral, physical, emotional and intellectual power for his contribution in social reform; it is the process of mastering the laws of nature and for utilizing them effectively for the welfare of the individual and for social reconstruction; it is the art of the utilization of knowledge for complete living.

Education is indeed the veritable tool for all rounds development of the African child toward making him/her have a sense of responsibility to the society and a contributor to sustainable development.

Early Childhood Care Development and Education ECCDE

ECCDE is all the care and education given to nurture the physical, social psychological and mental growth and development of children at pre-primary school level. This type of education encompasses the Day-care, Playgroup, Crèche, Kindergarten and Nursery as posited by (Abdulrahman-Yusuf, 2011). ECCDE programmes caters for two age

groups children under 3 years and children from age 3 to primary school (usually by age 5+ or 6 years in the case of Nigeria).

Early Childhood Care Development and Education is also seen as any group program that is designed to promote children's intellectual development, socio-emotional development, language development, physical development and learning from birth to age 8 (Olowe, Kutelu, and Majebi, 2014). Sooter (2013) in support of Mahuta (2007) added that the aims of Early Childhood Care Development and Education include fostering proper development of children, identifying and addressing their problems, harnessing their potentials, molding their characters, enhancing their learning and equipping them for life so that their actions are channelled towards positive personal, communal and global development. It is important here to note that all Early Childhood Care Development and Education programs and its activities are geared towards imparting positive early experiences to children preparing them for the task lying ahead of them in the future. Early Childhood Care and Education is also defined as the education outside the home set up to provide care and support for the development and education of very young children from birth to the age of five years (NCCE, 2009). Which mean that ECCDE as a program can go alone way to meet the child's basic needs of health care, nutrition, security, stimulation, affection, social, physical, emotional and intellectual wellbeing of the child to mention but a few.

Early Childhood Care Development and Education Institutions' contributions to sustainable development

The importance of schools in contributing towards sustainable development cannot be over emphasized. Researchers and educators supported this fact as an indispensable tool that can be used for sustainable development. Okorosaye Orubite (2005), summaries the functions of the ECCDE school to include:

Training in basic skills as reading, writing and counting (arithmetic), providing the young ones with social and civil competencies to

make them useful adults in the society and teaching the young one scientific method with sharpened intellect. He further observed that children being curious are enabled to satisfy their curiosity through preservation of the community's socio-cultural practices and being an agent for cultural change/ progression, education accepts that nothing is static. The school must be aware of this and anticipate changes. Since these changes might occur, it would be better if the schools were prepared for them when the changes then occur; the school serves as institution for fostering and disseminating the ideas; provides children the opportunity for participation in healthy games and exercise; the opportunity to develop virtue and discourages all evil tendencies. In addition, education can achieve these by teaching the three "Es" - environment, economy and equity along with the traditional three "Rs" - reading, writing and, arithmetic. The teaching of the "Rs" in the African educational system has been associated with the Western Education introduced by the early missionaries.

McKeown (2002) further stressed that for our education to serve as a veritable tool for sustainable development, it must focus on the following points.

The ability to communicate effectively (both orally and in writing); the ability to think about system (both natural and social sciences); the ability to think in time- forecast, to think ahead, and to plan; the ability to think critically about value issues; the ability to separate number, quantity, quality and value; the capacity to move from awareness to knowledge to action, the ability to work cooperatively with other people. Or the capacity to use these processes: knowing, inquiring, acting, judging, imagining, connecting, valuing, and choosing; and the capacity to develop an aesthetic response to the environment.

Key Principles to Sustainable Development and Early Childhood Care Development and Education (ECCDE)

Roth and McGinn (1998) stressed the key principle to sustainable development and

ECCDE to include economic, socio-cultural environmental conditions and processes that are integrated into a whole with each other. Some of the key principles are: the economic process which follows our understanding in the children's survival and development in the early years - in families and communities. The families and communities that are supportive and empowered ought to ensure adequate care, protection and stimulation through enlarged access to health, nutrition, sanitation, and water provision among others to guarantee sustainability of the society. More attention should be given to improving the quality of early childhood education in the quest for sustainability. For instance, construction of up-to-date classrooms, designing of ECCE curriculum and pedagogy, welfare and salary structure of early childhood teachers, disadvantaged groups such as handicaps, low-income families, ethnic minorities, those living in rural and remote areas and urban slums should be adequately supported and encouraged. If these groups are not recognized as a concern, they might serve as barrier to achieving goal of the sustainability in early childhood education in the society.

The second principle is Socio-Cultural Practice: This point emphasizes and advocates that, going back to basics in our living and lifestyles by adopting appropriate traditional practices for our future leaders in order to create better conditions for sustainable socio-cultural practices. Traditional practices are rooted in family networks and immediate communities, whereby they provide mutual support to each other. However, it should be noted that not all traditional practices should be preserved, as some of them are indeed harmful for those concern. For instance, racial stereotypes are learned early and young children are able to pick up cultural messages about wealth, inequality, and gender role among others and they lived with it. The cultural values can be transmitted through village council meetings (elders meeting peer group, women council, market meeting, etc.) to elders, parents and guardians who will in turn transfer those

cultural values to children through songs, dance and role-playing, gymnastic, and storytelling, among others.

The third principle is Environment and Ecology: This emphasizes awareness of natural resources and fragility of the physical environment. Good and healthy environment that is conducive for learning is an environment characterized with quality teachers, available school facilities such as good and attractive school structures, relevant textbooks, stimulating activities (including extra-curricular), health facility, transportation, nutrition, water-sanitation-hygiene, toilet facilities (for both pupils and teachers), and security among others. A school environment that is well designed for the comfort of the school program will facilitate and stimulate teaching and learning within the pre-primary institution.

Early Childhood Care Development and Education for sustainable development

Researchers like Johnson, Christie, and Wardle (2005) see early childhood education as a critical period in a child's life when laying a sound intellectual, psychological, emotional, social and physical foundation for development and long-life learning begins. The importance of this early period cannot be overemphasized because it has an enormous potential for fostering values, attitudes, skills and behaviours in a child that support sustainable development. Evidence of this can better be seen in the Bloom's taxonomy of learning domains that involved the three basic domains (cognitive, affective and psychomotor). Marcon (2002) is of the view that early childhood education for sustainability should involve meeting the present needs and the unfolding needs of children, in order to bring about self-fulfilment and maturity.

Breiting (2007) argues that Education for Sustainable Development would be best favoured by encouraging the implementation of the existing school curricula especially the ECD. It is just a matter of sharpening the focus on ESD and establishing the appropriate

contexts and emphases in the curriculum. In that way, ESD would avoid becoming just another topic to be covered in schools' overloaded curricula.

Early Childhood Care Development and Education for sustainable development provides opportunities for children to engage in meaningful and intellectual activities regarding sustainability. It incorporates learning to be compassionate and to respect differences, equality and fairness as these are increasingly interdependent and interconnected. Marcon (2002) added that emphasis should be made on the application of 7Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle, respect, repair, reflect, and refuse) and the 3Rs (reading, writing, and arithmetic) which encourages scientific and technological literacy. Brunold (2005) supported early childhood education as having the capacity of helping children to acquire an identity firmly grounded in a culture closest to them as they live side by side in the mist of different nationalities and ethnicities. This helps them to learn how to respect the elderly, respect value and norms, appreciate diversity in early life through parents, community members, and early childhood programs.

Challenges of Early Childhood Care Development and Education towards the Realization of Sustainability

From all that has been discussed, it can be said that some of the challenges of Early Childhood Care Development and Education towards the realization of sustainability include: Incompetence on the part the teachers at this level of education, teacher-child ratio (1:25) which is abused, no proper monitoring and supervision to enforce the proper implementation of the curriculum, issue of funding (the bench mark of 26% of the countries' budget as approved by UNESCO is not always adhered to), issue of learning atmosphere for children's play and play material which is grossly inadequate in our ECDC, poor welfare package to teachers who are at the centre of interpreting the curriculum and the proliferation of ECE Centres as the government left all in the hands

of the private sectors who are out on a revenue profit mission.

Conclusion

Education for sustainable development requires helping children from the very early years become conscious and active citizens contributing to a sustainable society. This can be done only when these children are nurtured through their early learning and by giving children opportunities to experience community and nature, and to develop their knowledge, values and concern for each other and for nature. There is the need for them to learn to be critical thinkers, creative and innovative, to be able listen to others, and to express themselves. Children should not be expected to solve the environmental problems for which adults are responsible, but rather be given experience and tools to use in decision-making and taking action for a sustainable future.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were proffered to help find solution to the aforementioned challenges:

1. Government and private sectors should join effort and resources together towards developing Early Childhood Care Education in Nigeria;
2. Government at all levels should look into the welfare of ECCDE teachers as well as encouraging Unqualified ECCDE teachers to go for further studies to obtain degrees and other higher certificates which will help them in their lesson/content delivery.
3. Government at all levels should as a matter of urgency empower machinery to ensure adequate monitoring and supervision of Early Childhood Care Centres so as to have a first-hand information on what is going on there with the view to encourage in achieving the provisions of the ECCDE curriculum;
4. Government and the community should employ/seek the services of qualified volunteers to equate the number of teacher/pupil's ratio of 1:25; this will best

help in achieving the sustainable national development;

5. Nigerian government at all levels should try and improve their education sector budget to meet up with the UNESCO bench mark of 26% of the total nation's/state budget so as to give room for adequate provision/upgrade of learning materials by the government, community and the private sectors to make the ECCDE learning environment conducive to motivate both the teachers and learners toward the realization of the sustainable national development.

References

- Abdulrahman-Yusuf, M. (2011). Early childhood care, development and education (ECCDE): A Silent, but Significant component of UBE. *Niger Delta Journal of Education*. 3(1&2), 153-160.
- Breiting, S. (2007). Is 'Sustainable development' the core of 'education of sustainable development'? In: I. Bjorneloo & E. Nyberg (eds.), *Drivers and Barriers for implementing learning for sustainable development in pre-School through Upper secondary and teacher education*. pp.19-23. Retrieved 18th June, 2007 from: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001509/150966E.pdf>.
- Brunold, A. O. (2005). *Global Learning and Education for Sustainable Development*. New York: Green Review Ltd, 78-89.
- Dakar (2000). *Framework for action: education for all: Meeting our collective commitments*. adopted by the world education forum, Dakar, Senegal, 26-28 April
- Ejeh, M. U. C. (2006). Pre-Primary Education in Nigeria: Policy Implementation and Problems Retrieved from <http://ikogretim-online.org.tr> on the 11th February, 2011.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004). *National Policy on Education (4th Edition)*. Abuja: NERDC publishers.
- Global Footprint Network (2007). Humanity's footprint 1961—2003. Global footprint etwork, advancing the science of sustainability. Retrieved 4th July, 2007 from: http://www.footprintnetwork.org/gfn/sub.php?content=global_footprint.
- Macron, R. A. (2002). Moving Up the Grades: Relationship between Preschool Model and Later School Success. *Journal of Early Childhood Research Practice*, 4(1), 1-24.
- McKeown, R. (2002). Education for sustainable development toolkit. Retrieved 7th July, 2007 from <http://www.esdtoolkit.org>.
- Okorosaye-Orubite, A. K. (2005). *Education and development In School and society (Eds)*, Agabi, G. O. Okorosaye-Orubite, A. K, Ezekiel-Kart, J, & Egbezor, D. E. Port Harcourt: Davidstones Pub. Ltd.
- Okorosaye-Orubite, A. K. (2007). Education and sustainable development in Niger Delta: the role of youths. *African Journal of Educational Research and Development (AJERD)* 1(1), 72-84.
- Olowe, P. K., Kutelu, B. O., & Majebi, O. I. (2014). Teaching social ethics in early childhood classrooms: A panacea for promoting peaceful Nigerian society. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 4(6.1), 263-268.
- Osuji, F. (2004). Our Youth Our Hope. Paper presented at the 47th session of the International Conference on Education Geneva, 8-11 September.
- Roth, W. M., & McGrinn, M. K. (1998). Knowing, Researching, and Reporting Science Education: *Journal of Research in Science and Technology Studies*. 35(2), 213-235.
- Sooter, T. (2013). Early childhood education in Nigeria: Issues and problems. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 3(5). doi: 10.5901/jesr.2013.v3n5p173
- Ugoh, S. C. (2008). Oil politics and crisis of development in the Niger Delta. *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*. 10(2), 91-115.
- UNESCO (2006). Promotion of a Global Partnership for the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014). Paris: UNESCO. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001473/147361E.pdf>.

- UNESCO (2007). Education for sustainable development. Retrieved 18th June 2007 from http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.phpURLID=27542&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html Utbildningsdepartementet. 1998. Lpfö 98. Laroplan for forskolan [Curriculum for Preschool]. Stockholm, Fritzes. Retrieved 2 July 2007 from:
- <http://www.skolverket.se/publikationer?id=1067>.
- UNESCO Global Monitoring Report (2007). *Strong Foundations: Early Childhood Care and Education*. Paris: UNESCO.
- UNESCO. 2006a. Education for Tomorrow's World. Education Today. February-May 2006. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001444/144403E.pdf>