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RE-ENGINEERING ENVIRONMENTAL ADULT EDUCATION FOR GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS

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ABSTRACT

This paper sought to discover how environmental adult education could help Nigeria as a nation to link other nations of the world for global competitiveness. Environmental adult education is that aspect of education that exposes the populace to become aware of the relationship between man and other components of the environment such as the atmosphere, lithosphere, and hydrosphere (the air, land and water) as well as the abiotic and biotic components (living and non-living things). Therefore proper care should be taken as not to cry 'had I known'. Having the knowledge of the environment at all levels and becoming aware of the happenings around the world grant the individual opportunities to reign through the globe and know the happenings and thereby borrow a leaf from them and be able to tackle the challenges that bother Nigeria in this 21st century. This will effectively work out if environmental education is re-engineered at the primary and secondary levels and environmental adult education is at the tertiary level.

Keywords: Re-engineering, Environmental Adult Education (EAE), Role, Objectives, Global Competitiveness.

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INTRODUCTION

Global competitiveness can be referred to as the ability of nations to supply high quality goods and services at reasonable costs, resulting in satisfaction returns (Aiginger et al., 2013). One may ask how environmental adult education (EAE) could work in the area of global competitiveness. EAE objectives are the same globally as formulated in the Rio-de Janeiro and many other conferences held in 1972, 1992, etc. to expose the populace to become knowledgeable about

environmental issues and problems. It guides the individuals to come to the understanding of how they are related with the environment. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth and after creating the heavens and the earth, He made provision for the survival of mankind, knowing that man cannot live without the environment (atmosphere, hydrosphere, lithosphere with abiotic and biotic components) and knowing that the environment will not be balanced, He created Adam and kept him among other components of the environment to compliment it and asked man as a duty to dress, take care and make use of the environment (land, water, air, plants (flora), animals (fauna) for survival and maintenance for future use (Gen.1 and 2)

In God's idea and plan, man would live in the environment and with his cautiousness could continue to enjoy the proceeds from the supply which God made for man in high quality but man in his insensitivity in population got into overpopulation and with the quest for survival of his teeming population delve into excessive use of the proceeds. "A hungry man being an angry man" in his quest and zeal to ensure that his family does not starve, decided to mercilessly deal with the environment. After the actions that gave him what he has desired for, sat back to experience the very after effect of his acts and began to ponder on how to live the life of pain, trouble, disaster on every side. These actions are found everywhere in the world whether developed or developing nations even though they play their activities differently to create environmental challenges for themselves. The nations today are pondering and working to see the repercussion curbed, however, it has not been easy.

It is said that it is easy to destroy but not easy to rebuild. This is cautious enough to advise us not to destroy because we cannot make what God Himself made. It is on this premise that EAE is called up as a tool to help man reach out to the youths and adults who are the principal actors on the devastation of the environment to work in order to bring reduction to their actions against the environment. This we know that most nations especially the developed nations have been putting effort to ensure reduction of environmental challenges so the call for global competitiveness with EAE. This is believed that EAE is capable of opening the eyes of the individuals to see and know what they have done to themselves and buy the idea of joining other nations of the world to curb the activities that have taken Nigeria to where she has found herself today. EAE can expose the individuals on the strategies to link other nations of the world for competitiveness. It is therefore necessary for Nigeria to arise from her slumber and buy the idea of getting exposed through the study of EAE which is meant to start with the young running through the old and enjoy the global competitiveness to live a satisfactory life void of the suffering in ignorance.

Concept of Environmental Adult Education (EAE)

EAE in laymen's terms refers to effort in teaching environmental issues and how individuals and businesses can change their lifestyles and manage the ecosystem to live sustainably (Summer, 2003). It is the education ABOUT, IN and FOR the environment, Kimaryo (2011); an educational approach that moves the individuals to develop an attitude of concern, values and behaviour capable of protecting the environment in all areas of his dealings avoiding degradation and any form of devastation. It is a synthesis of environmental education and adult education. It is an applied environmental education within the context of adult education.

According to Summer (2003), environmental adult education is recognized as a hybrid outgrowth of the environmental movement and adult education, combining an ecological

orientation with a learning paradigm to provide a vigorous educational approach to environmental concerns. In the vein, EAE is referred to as efforts in teaching environmental issues and how individuals and businesses can manage or change their lifestyles and ecosystems to live sustainably (Ephraim, 2017).

Global Competitiveness

Global competitiveness is the ability of a country to achieve sustained high rates of growth in gross domestic product per capita. It could be referred to as an ability of a nation to supply high quality goods and services at reasonable costs resulting in satisfaction returns (Aiginger et al., 2013). This as it concerns the environment could be said to be all activities that measure, prevent, limit, minimize or correct environmental damage (OECD, 2008). Krugman in Usman et al. (2018) saw global competitiveness as the ability of a nation to maintain and increase the real income of its citizens, usually reflected in the standard of living of the nation under free and fair market conditions through foreign trade, production and investment. In the concern of EAE and global competitiveness, it implies that there should not be loss of any kind from disaster, degradation of the environment either from man's activities or natural assisted crisis. This is to clearly say that the environment must be well catered for by nation for the well-being of its citizens. By this it means that the nation should not claim to be ignorant of cases of environmental challenges the nation seem to be facing. Most nations of the world face environmental challenges like excessive flood, drought, deforestation, and many more; more so as they could be linked with the effect of climate change (Future-learn, 2021).

In Dunning words cited in Usman et al. (2018), global competitiveness could be said to be the ability to sustain in global economy, any acceptable growth in the real standard of living of the population with that of the future generation. This could easily be aligned with what the nation is expected to responsibly hold on for the benefit of its population and their future generation and not to be allowed to get drown while they are engulfed with disaster and environmental degradation like the case of Nigeria and its environmental state. EAE is a veritable tool that is capable of helping Nigeria to curb environmental disaster as it has the ability to employ ICT tools like the internet, World-wide web (www), mobile phones, satellite, telephones, radio, television, print media (such as newsletters, cartoons and graphic posters) and community communication initiatives (Ephraim, 2013). Through these avenues, Nigeria as a nation could monitor the inflows of environmental challenges, seek to know the cause, a way to curb them and check how other nations managed their environmental challenges and follow suit so as to rather compete with other nations on the best ways to curb challenges instead of sitting aloof to become victims all the time; especially like the experiences received on the issues of the ravaging flood such as it was 2019 and 2022 the recent ones among other environmental challenges. This step will help Nigeria to survive and live a better living standard and be able to sustain life even for the future.

Objectives of Environmental Adult Education

Eheazu (2013) identified objectives of Environmental Adult Education to include:

- Inculcating in adults the knowledge and understanding of their environment and the natural and man-made factors that contribute to its deterioration;

- Help the adult population to identify the socio-cultural, political, physical, psychological, chemical, biological and other elements that pose dangers to their day-to-day living;
- Develop appropriate curricula for the environmental education of adults which will reflect the circumstances and desirable actions for effective environmental management and harmonious relationship with their environment;
- Plan appropriate action programmes for mobilization of adults towards improvement of environmental quality and personal environmental aesthetic values;
- Promote the practice of sustainable development among adults through non-formal environmental education programmes in relevant fields of adults' socio-economic endeavours;
- Help adult citizens to acquire knowledge and skills useful for their understanding and avoidance of environmental abuses;
- Help adults to acquire basic conceptual knowledge of causes and effects of environmental challenges and their solutions.

To fulfill or be convinced of the purpose of choosing EAE as a veritable tool for effective global competitiveness, a look at the objectives of EAE will settle it as its objectives call for the inculcation in the adults the knowledge and understanding of their environment and the natural and man-made factors that contribute to its deterioration among other things as are outlined above. If the adults who are the principal actors of environmental degradation have the knowledge and understanding of their environment, they will be able to identify such elements that pose dangers to their day-to-day living and be able to develop appropriate curricula that would reflect the circumstances and desirable actions for effective environmental management and harmonious relationship and many more. In the same vein, this knowledge and understanding will go a long way better the lives of the populace and bring about better management of the environment for sustainable development.

Importance of EAE

For EAE to be seen as a veritable tool for solving environmental problem, it is therefore important to affirm this by recognizing the importance of EAE as follows:

- EAE helps the adults to become aware of and become sensitive to the total environment and its allied problem. This awareness and sensitivity will enable the adults to know what harm they may be doing to themselves and the environment through their various activities.
- EAE will help the adults to gain knowledge about the environment and be able to differentiate from their experiences and acquire such understanding that will discourage them from dealing with the environment in a manner that contributes to the problems the environment is experiencing now.
- Through EAE, the adults will begin to place values and develop a positive feeling of concern for the environment and be motivated to participate in the improvement and protection of the entire aspects of the environment.
- EAE will also provide to the adults the skills that will help them to identify environmental problems and be able to move to bring about the solution to the various environmental problems.

- Through EAE, adults will be provided with opportunities to be actively involved at all levels in working towards the resolution of environmental problems.

If adults and youths are exposed to the attendant factors of air pollution among many other things or elements that cause the deterioration of the environment, they will learn to safeguard their lives and the other components of the environment (Ephraim, 2017).

Reasons for Global Competitiveness

Global competitiveness according to World Economic Forum (WEF) as cited in Okanume-Onah & Ezeonwuka (2018) is seen as ‘the set of institutions, policies and factors that determine the level of productivity of a country. Here the level of productivity in turn determines the level of prosperity that can be achieved by an economy’. The concept therefore involves static and dynamic component. In this form, Global Competitiveness Index (GCI) sought ways to capture a weighted average of these various components each of which measures a specific aspect of competitiveness which are grouped into twelve pillars. Among these twelve pillars, technological readiness is involved and could be seen as one of the measures that EAE deem to use to synergize with the world. This will enable Nigeria to link with other nations of Africa in particular and other nations of the world in general to create relationship that would enable her learn how to solve environmental challenges. This will necessitate the move from the level of mediocrity, vulnerability and many more to the level of environmental creativity and sustainability.

It is always said that when you have not travelled to see other people’s place you will think your own place is the best. In the same manner if Nigeria could rise up to see other parts or nations of the world through the eyes of technology which makes the entire world a small village with the use of satellite, World Wide Web, mobile phones, wireless technologies (modern ICT tools) and many more of them (Ephraim, 2013), Nigeria linking with the entire world will grow with the inculcation of environmental knowledge and understanding to enable citizens become environmentally literate. These adult citizens with their level of environmental literacy will fight to restore the environment to a sustainable one. It is therefore the right time for Nigeria to rise up from her slumber to see what is happening in other nations globally so she will not continue to consider herself a champion on every side.

Roles of EAE for global competitiveness

It has been observed by UNESCO and other environmental bodies that the devastation of the environment would be blamed on the adult population who have in their vulnerability decided to degrade the environment (Usman et al., 2018) hence the need for EAE. EAE is introduced to educate the adult population about their activities and actions carried out against the environment. Yes, it is true that “man must work” but EAE is meant to make the adult to have the knowledge and understanding of what the environment is, how man is related to the environment, what he stands to gain from the environment and what he can do with the environment to destroy his own life and the life of his generation now and in the future. It is the same man who had overtime degraded the environment that when he now becomes environmentally literate that would now seek for ways which others who have come to the knowledge and understanding of the environment earlier to share ideas with them in order to

better the state of their own environment. This in effect is for a better living even in consideration of their future generations yet unborn.

EAE is capable of breaking the barrier of bureaucracy that stands against the inculcation of environmental knowledge and understanding among citizens (Ndulor, 2016; Ndulor & Mbalisi, 2019). According to Eheazu in Usman et al. (2018), EAE could redress all forms of barrier standing against the observance and bottle necks against environmental laws that are meant to protect the environment. In the same vein, Onyenemezu (2012) in his ideas could see EAE as a tool that is capable of breaking down the normal ideas of man being the highest and principal component of the environment and seek to eliminate such negligence about the injustice carried out against the environment. EAE is therefore a tool to bring about solutions to environmental problems. Since adults make up the formation of the government, it is therefore pertinent that the government become part of the decision-making along with the environmental educators in collaboration with environmental agencies in Nigeria and all over the world.

Re-engineering EAE for Global Competitiveness

Overtime, there have been the cry for environmental education (EE) to be included in the Nigerian schools' curriculum but has been to no avail even when environmental issues have become a global issues and indeed problems. In the era when Nigeria has become a vulnerable nation on the stage of environmental challenges, most universities in collaboration with agencies that could be termed lovers of the environment have brought forth EAE to help individual citizens and the nations to have a little light about the issues and problems of the environment. Even though EE has not been given a place in the schools' curriculum and everyone is experiencing the heat from the effects of man's reckless activities, it is important that EAE be re-considered a tool that can help Nigeria to link with other nations all over the world to bring about solution to its repercussionary effects on the citizens. Re-engineering EAE for global competitiveness should be received and welcomed because it helps; irrespective of complexities around the world (of which Nigeria is not an exception) to link and synergize with the outside world to make way for solutions to environmental problems. EAE helps in the building of partnerships, link to promote friendly dialogue, negotiation, togetherness, partnership with the outside world and gender plans for decision-making to link up and key in to the possible strategies for the expected solution (Okanume-Onah & Ezeonwuka, 2018).

Despite the fact that EE has not got its place in the schools' curriculum where children would have had the knowledge and opportunity to campaign and also create awareness for a sustainable environment; it is therefore very important to prove wisdom in re-engineering the state of EAE in order to re-strategize the adult populace on the very effort to break the barrier posed against environmental sustainability which arise as a result of man's negligence and recklessness towards the environment. These attitudes as observed by Gbamenja in Kwale (2011) said "Nigeria may lose as much as five billion US dollars' worth of natural resources to environmental degradation". He cited example with the South East region where erosion has almost swallowed the communities and has also denied the people farmland for agricultural purposes. Apart from erosion in the South East of Nigeria, Akintunde in Kwale (2011) also mentioned the degradation in the South South as a result of oil spill, gas flaring and many more hazardous effects of environmental degradation in the area. In the same way, he also discovered that drought has ravaged the Northern Nigeria because of shortage amount of rainfall. The middle belt and the Niger Delta are not exempted as flood and several effects of climate change

such as deforestation, biodiversity loss, black soot, rise in sea level, changes in seasons, reduction in access to food and drinking water (Ephraim, 2017) have eaten up the livelihood of the people and render them impoverished. These environmental challenges have landed them to the level of homelessness, poverty and helplessness; loss of properties, farm lands, loss of lives and domestic animals. These problems arose due to man's reckless dealing with the environment and the negligence on the part of the government to enforce environmental laws and policy enactment (Adebisi, 2003).

CONCLUSION

As it is observed by bookboom.com (2011), it could be said that globalization has impact on Global competitiveness which could be likened to when a company produces with less cost and sells at a cheaper rate, it is able to increase its market share. In EAE this could be said that when a country acquires the knowledge about the environment, it will enable the country to become a no match with other countries and will now be a focal point for reference which will drag other nations to come seeking for avenue to learn from them. This is the very reason why EAE should be seen as that tool that sells Nigeria in the global market of competitiveness

Way Forward

Having seen EAE as a viable means that would take Nigeria to the market of global competitiveness, it is very important to bring EAE to the focal point of recognition by creating a place in the curriculum of tertiary institutions and environmental education in the primary and secondary schools curriculum in Nigeria. To this end, children will acquire environmental knowledge that they will grow with and stand as environmental advocates in their homes and in the larger society where they may find themselves. In this way, the adult population who are the principal actors in the case of environmental degradation will develop from one level of environmental literacy until they become environmental advocates and catalysts.

In the same way, the government or stakeholders in the government should monitor the activities of citizens, create avenues for the populace to be mentored on their attitude towards the environment through seminar and workshop. Environmental laws should be re-enacted to reduce man's reckless actions on the environment and fines levelled on defaulters for deterrent to others. Alternative means that will help the populace curb the effects of their change in attitude or activities that helped their survival in a way of palliative or incentives should be made available to motivate, sensitize and enable them key into the idea. Representatives from the people could also be allowed to be part of the decision making on how to develop a friendly attitude towards the environment in order to avoid environmental challenges and foster better living standard.

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