

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALABAR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAMME MODEL: A RESUME

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Introduction

This presentation briefly reviews the background to the installation of Environmental Education (EE) programme in the University of Calabar (UNICAL). It also summarizes the objectives, the current programmes, the progress, their relevant activities and crystallizes the prospects of the programme.

Contextual Background

Just like environmental concerns have vast international and global dimensions and time-space relationships so does the EE programme of UNICAL. It is with this premise in mind that one can adequately appreciate the linkages and networking surrounding the UNICAL EE programme model.

After the second world war (1939-1945) the need for environmental conservation became more pressing than ever before. Pockets of conservationists were found in the then industrialized continents in the 1950s. The strident outcries the world over in the 1960s for energy and natural resources conservation, greater pollution-free environment and cleaner energy sources became more disturbing. There was greater alarm about the depletion of non-renewable natural resources, population explosion and the threat on population-resource equation. In the late 1960s and the early 1970s major environmental disasters which occurred reinforced the need for greater awareness about environmental matters. The Torrey Canyon disaster of 1967 in-

volving an oil supertanker, the Santa Barbara Channel Oil-well blow-out of 1969 and the Sahelian drought of 1968 to 1974 are just three isolated cases that had devastating environmental effects of international and global dimensions.

International Action

This backdrop, among others, provided the stage for the United Nations Conference on Human Environment held in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1972. At this conference, a far-reaching political agenda was drawn up to include necessary steps to establish an international programme in environmental education using inter-disciplinary approach, formal and non-formal strategies to reach the general public. A follow-up to this was the famous Tbilisi (Georgian Republic) Inter-governmental Conference of 1977 which recognized EE as an integral part of the education process which should center on practical problems, build up sense of values, encourage public well-being and focus on global survival of species. Our Common Future and the World Conservation Strategy, two important documents that have shaped the direction of environmental sustainability since the 1980s, were the obvious results of those conferences.

It was therefore not surprising that eighteen years after the first World summit on the human environment at Stockholm, twelve Nigerians were trained at the International Centre for Environment Education, Faculty of Education, Jordanhill Campus of the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow as the nucleus of EE in Nigeria. Between 1990 and 1995 over twenty Nigerians have been so trained abroad. Locally about 65 postgraduate and 200 ordinary diplomastudents have been trained in the areas of Environmental Education between 1992/93 and 1994/95. Currently, over three hundred students are registered in the two programmes that have attracted international studentship.

This is in fulfillment of Recommendation 96 of the Stockholm Conference which emphasized that the United Nations should institute an international programme for education on environment questions.

National Strategy

In line with the World Conservation Strategy (IUCN, UNEP & WWF, 1980), the draft of the National Conservation Education Strategy was developed under the auspices of the Nigerian Conservation Foundation (NCF: 1988) supported by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). The National Council on Education (NCE) directed the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) to incorporate the elements of EE into the newly developed Citizenship Education Curriculum for implementation with effect from 1991 at the secondary, tertiary and later primary educational levels. Apart from the formal structure, conservation clubs were to be established in all secondary schools and teacher training colleges in all states of the Federation.

In 1991, the National Curriculum Review Conference in Kaduna resolved that the syllabuses for Religious Studies, Language, Creative Arts, Technical and Vocation Education be revised to include environmental education concepts (Petters: 1993). The need to provide instructional leadership and a clearing-house for EE matters therefore cannot be overemphasized. Thus came into existence the Environmental Education Unit of the Institute of Education, University of Calabar, co-sponsored by the University of Calabar, the Nigerian Conservation Foundation (NCF) and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). The unit was formerly commissioned on March 5, 1991.

Objectives of the Environmental Education Unit (EEU):

In order to properly appreciate the functions of the EEU which generates, supervises and evaluates EE programme in the University of Calabar, it is pertinent to highlight its objectives which are to:

- (i) develop training programmes for teachers and community extension workers in EE and run workshops and courses;
- (ii) take curriculum development initiatives in EE;
- (iii) develop resource materials:- teachers' manuals, teaching materials, pupils materials, and resources for community education;
- (iv) develop and publish resource materials in EE;
- (v) Provide support to community education in the support zone of the Cross River National Park and elsewhere;
- (vi) serve as a teachers' resources centre for the area;
- (vii) Use the Cross River National Park as a "resource" in the preparation of materials and the training of teachers;
- (viii) develop the institutional links already established with the Environmental Education Programme of University of Strathclyde, Jordanhill Campus.
- (ix) Provide in-service training for staff of establishments and institutions engaged in environmental conservation and protection;
- (x) Undertake as a co-curricular activity the establishment and overseeing of conservation clubs in educational institutions; and

(ix) offer sundry services to government and non-governmental agencies.

What EE involves

At this point it is important to point out emphatically that EE is global in nature. The programme incorporates the core educational courses, the core environmental science courses and management courses along with the traditional disciplines and field experience. It admits students from all areas of studies because nobody can exist without the environment. We all need awareness on environmental sustainability. Moreover, as an education programme it cuts across all subject areas which also provide the medium through which environmental sustainability concepts can be channelled. EE may mean different things to many people but essentially it refers to:

an area of study and life-long process concerned with the motivation and evolution of intellectual capabilities, skills, attitudes and commitments necessary for positively modifying human interaction with the biosphere in such a way that through developments in science, culture and technology, natural resources can be sustainably utilized and conserved at minimal cost for maximum benefit to the present and future generations (Inyang-Abia & Usang 1994:3).

From the above explanation it is obvious that EE is not the same thing as Environmental Science. The former focuses on changing human attitude towards the biosphere while the latter sharpens its focus on the scientific components and responses to the biosphere. The former subsumes and encompasses the latter and much more.

Educational Thrusts

To provide the expected instructional leader-

ship on EE matters, the objectives earlier specified are achieved through two main educational thrusts: the formal and the non-formal strategies.

The Formal Educational Strategies

So far, four major curriculum development initiatives have been taken, two of these have been fully implemented by the EEU with the assistance of the NCF and the WWF. One other initiative has been awaiting implementation while the fourth is at the planning stage. The four are:

a The Postgraduate Diploma in Environmental Education (PGDEE)

This one-year diploma programme is designed for degree holders and their counterparts. Students are trained for major decision making positions in areas related to education, development and the environments.

b The (Ordinary) Diploma in Environmental Education (ODEE)

This is a two-year diploma programme designed for holders of Senior Secondary School Certificate or its equivalents with four or more credits. They are trained for a wide variety of functional areas associated with education, environment and development.

(c) The Bachelor of Environmental Education (B.Ed/Environment)

This programme that has been awaiting implementation covers the three-year and the four-year options. It was jointly developed with the Faculty of Education and will soon take-off, by the special Grace of God, to bridge the existing gap between the ODEE and the PGDEE while providing growth opportunities for many young environmentalists.

(d) The Short Courses:

Short courses for different categories of people

involved in the area of environment and development have been mapped out for the near future.

The formal educational strategy covers a wide variety of courses including among other: Environmental Impact Assessment, Management of Natural Ecosystems, Environmental Perception, Research Methods, Community Health, Community and Rural Development Practicum and Field Study, Curriculum development and Evaluation. See Inyang-Abia, Oji, Obi & Noibi, (1994) for more details.

All the programmes can be very beneficial to a wide variety of individuals and establishments including the oil companies, banks, schools, manufacturing companies, construction companies, agricultural establishment, tourism boards, FEPA and its state and local government equivalents, non-governmental organization (NGOs), among others.

THE NON-FORMAL THRUST

Three major approaches adopted in this direction are briefly explained below:

(a) Conservation Clubs: This is a very fertile and promising strategy capable of inculcating awareness, knowledge, skills, commitments and individual development, presently and in the future. They are purely students-oriented, non-formal but critical catalysts in the areas of environmental sustainability. Their activities are varied, only limited by the imaginative ability of the club members and leaders. The benefits of the clubs are numerous including exposure and networking, national and international competition opportunities, travel and skills development. About 250 Conservation Clubs existed in secondary School throughout Akwa Ibom and Cross River States as at July, 1995 when they were handed over to be managed by the State Ministries of Education.

(b) Environmental Awareness Seminars: This is another non-formal strategy designed to create awareness among the non-school masses, sensitizing various communities consciously to environmental friendliness and the need to sustainably develop. The target audience includes people in management and administration, the armed forces, the local government, the media, government parastatals and agencies among numerous others. Over 5000 beneficiaries were recorded by July, 1995.

(c) Resources Development:

Apart from the human resources development, the unit is also challenged with the development of instructional materials of various forms. Instructional games, posters and textbooks related to environmental education and sustainable development are also being developed for local, national and international use. Only on July 19, 1995 was a series of eleven volumes co-ordinated by the Environmental Education Unit of the Institute of Education, University of Calabar presented to the public by the NCF and WWF, the co-sponsors. This bold attempt was designed to provide the much needed textual materials to the expanding student population in the area of EE. Presently, there is a mini-library for the students and the staff offering the programme.

The Way Forward:

The 1990s had long since been declared a decade of EE and training. Nigeria, being a member of both the UNESCO and UNEP and a signatory to various international environmental convention and agreements, will continue to encourage greater environmental awareness, especially now that "going green" is the in-thing, the world over. The EEU will continue to be looked upon for a wide variety of socially responsive EE programmes. The role of universities in providing the required expertise and instructional leadership will gradually expand to meet the expected pressure arising from increasing demand and student

population. Greater international and inter-state co-operation and net-working activities are envisaged. With the full development of the short courses and Environmental Education Resources Centre, the EE will provide varied technical and educational services to the growing environmentally-related sectors of the economy. We are committed to providing the instructional leadership in the West African sub-region in matters of Environmental Education.

Conclusion: There can be neither development nor humans without the environment. Environmental problems are multifaceted, interdisciplinary and international. The solution of such problems demands team functioning which focus is sharpened on positive attitude change and better commitment to the course of humanity through sustainable development. It is therefore pertinent we think globally, act locally and be committed personally to the course of sustainability so that the earth, our habitat and our home, can be sustained eternally.

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