

Actualizing the Sustainable Development Goals 2030: the Role of Environmental Education in Poverty Eradication and Tackling insecurity in Nigeria

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Received 13 December 2023; Acceptance 5 January 2024; Published 20 January 2024

Abstract

The main aim of the Sustainable Development Goals centres on the fulfilment of basic human needs and ending hunger around the world. Although the actualization of the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 in Nigeria within the context of current realities appears remote, this paper seeks to justify and promote the conceptualization of environmental education as a veritable tool for imbuing a sense of responsibility, awareness and intrinsic value for environmental conservation as a major contributor to sustainable development. This review shows that pro-environmental behaviours are critical for sustainable development and tackling poverty and insecurity. It is recommended that relevant stakeholders and institutions project the systematic acculturation of environmental ethics from a normative perspective beyond the walls of the classroom.

Keywords: Environmental Education, Sustainable Development Goals.

Introduction

The United Nations adopted the sustainable development goals (SDGs) in its 2030 agenda with the aim of promoting equity, stability, and prosperity among its member states. In 2015, these goals were established as a blueprint consisting of 17 global objectives to be achieved by 2040, replacing the previous millennium development goals that spanned from 2000 to 2015 (Aguene, 2021).

However, the achievement of these SDGs within the specified time frame in Nigeria is facing significant challenges due to the deteriorating state of insecurity and economic difficulties that have plagued the country in recent years. Despite the efforts of successive governments to embrace the principles of the MDGs/SDGs through various intervention programs targeting wealth creation, national unity, employment opportunities, and overall livelihood improvement, progress in development is being hindered and delayed. This can be attributed in part to ineffective leadership and a lack of efficient strategies to identify and address the multiple factors contributing to poverty and the escalating security concerns.

As a struggling third world nation, the unequivocal consensus is for economic stability, food security and improved livelihoods, howbeit the government's overreliance on oil, and the illegal use of natural resources by unpatriotic elements put enormous strain on the environment which is not without far reaching effects (social, biological, climatic). Another worrying concern is the conflict of interest implicitly enshrined in ecological imperatives which leads to discordancy in assumptions that industrialization and technological advancement have more intrinsic value to mankind holistically rather than the atomic views of

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How to Cite: Hassan and Umar (2024). Actualizing the Sustainable Development Goals 2030: the Role of Environmental Education and Tackling Insecurity in Nigeria, *Scholar J*, 2(1). <https://scholarj.com/index.php/sj/article/view/18>

environmental conservation. It is pertinent however to acknowledge the mutually sustainable system between conservation and production to avoid the danger of peripheralizing either of the components. The aim is to strike a holistic balance that will engender sustainable development.

Just as Jeffery Sachs (2015) rightly pointed, a good society is not only an economically prosperous society (with high per Capita income) but also one that is socially inclusive, environmentally sustainable and well governed. The actualization of socially inclusive economic development however, strongly impacts the Earth's bio-system and its carrying capacity. It is clear that poverty, insecurity and poor education contributes inextricably to ecological crisis which in turn creates an unbalanced in the socioeconomic ecosystems. This brings to the fore our challenges as over 40% of Nigerians live below the poverty line, the level of unemployment towering at 33.3%, over 10 million out of school children and the grappling after effects of covid-19 is still a huge scare, the risk of further exacerbating insecurity challenges becomes increasingly alarming (NBS, 2020). Moreover, the challenges of climate change induced droughts and flooding lead people to take up arms and engage in kidnapping and banditry among others.

In his recent remarks, the UN secretary general Anthonio Gutierrez said that regions that are vulnerable to climate change also suffer from insecurity, poverty, weak governance and terrorism. He further added that Boko Haram has been able to gain new recruits in the lake Chad basin particularly from local communities disillusioned by a lack of economic opportunities and access to essential resources (Vivian chime, 2021) Furthermore, the Eastward rapid encroachment of the desert in Northern Nigeria poses threat to sustainable livelihood: and for the Niger Delta people it is 'hell on earth', as cumulative practice of environmental degradation arising from pollution of land, air and water characteristic of oil exploration in Nigeria has made the region a flash point of conflict in the agitation for environmental justice and resource control (Agbu; T, 2005, Saka; L, H. A. Salau, Ali; A. A., 2007) in (Jackson,2013)

These circumstances put Nigeria as a nation in dire straits stemming from the imbalance between the quest for economic advancement and the cataclysmic results of unsustainable environmental practices. Are we on course to clinch a place among the above average performers as far as meeting the SDG 2030 targets? Do we have the moral and financial wherewithal to make giant strides towards achieving the goals or are we mere pretenders? While the government from all indication is doing its practical best to meet up (as shown by the presentation of its Voluntary National Review (VNR) on the implementation of the SDGs at high level political forum on national development among 44 member states in 2017) there seems to be serious concerns as to the possibility of meeting the targets in time.

With regards to these issues, it is in the best interest of our nation to Make environmental awareness a part of It's political ethos so as to enshrine relevant attitudes and values necessary for ecological, environmental and societal well-being. This reflects the point aptly made by Musitu-Ferrer et al (2020) that to deal with the different environmental issues, we must raise people's awareness to take action. Given this, it is imperative to prioritize environmental education for a more pragmatic approach towards actualizing the SDG 2030.

The need for this discourse particularly in the context of environmental education as a tool for meeting the SDG targets cannot be overemphasized. It is hoped that issues drawn out from this paper can offer some exploratory views for further proactiveness in fast tracking the actualization of SDGs.

Clarification of Concepts

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

The concept of sustainable development is a multidimensional and holistic approach to prosperity encompassing the environmental, economic and social aspects of man's endeavors. Sustainable Development rejects the Oliver Twist mentality of always asking for more without taking responsibility. It embodies the adage "as you lay your bed, so you lie on it." It calls for proactive actions, wise resource management, and a holistic approach to shape a better future for ourselves and generations to come. In a

nutshell it is that important balance of economic growth, environmental Stewardship and social progress for the benefit of society and the world at large.

Additionally, sustainable development practices enhance societal resilience by building adaptive capacity, reducing vulnerability to shocks, and promoting sustainable livelihoods (Adger, W. N., Hughes, T. P., Folke, C., Carpenter, S. R., & Rockström, J., 2005)

Components of SDG and Implementation progress in Nigeria

The SDGs are referred to as transforming our world; The 2030 Agenda for sustainable development (United Nations, 2015) or the global goals (Akinloye, 2018). Sustainable development means better ways of doing things without compromising the health status of the people. Thereafter sustainable development includes economic growth environmental stewardship and social inclusion (Ignatius, 2021)

The SDG comprises 17 global goals and 169 targets. The program is a successor to the MDG (2000-2015) and is hinged on building on the achievements of/and filling the gaps in the MDGs. As a policy guiding blueprint with a 15year agenda (2015-2030), it's aims and objectives are tailored at poverty eradication, addressing social inequality and promoting world peace and environmental.

These goals according to UN publication 2015 includes:

1. *No poverty*
2. *Zero hunger*
3. *Good health and well-being*
4. *Quality education*
5. *Gender equality*
6. *Clean water and sanitation*
7. *Affordable and clean energy*
8. *Decent work and economic growth*
9. *Industry, innovation and infrastructure*
10. *Reducing inequality*
11. *Sustainable cities and communities*
12. *Responsible consumption and production*
13. *Climate action*
14. *Life below water*
15. *Life on Land*
16. *Peace, justice and strong institutions*
17. *Partnerships for the goals*

The central focus of the SDGs is improving the standard of living of all people. The UN through its 197 member states proposed a balance between economic growth and the conservation and judicious use of natural resources for sustainable development (poverty alleviation, women empowerment, equality, environmental justice and the boosting of human development index).

The SDG progress report for 2022 as per sdgindex.org shows that Nigeria's index rank is 139/163with an index score of 54.2. so far Nigeria has achieved strongly and is on track in SDG-12 (Responsible consumption and production) with good results in waste management (municipal, electronic, plastic, So²). Also, in SDG-13 (Climate action) Nigeria is on track to maintain its achievements in the area of managing CO2 emissions from fossil fuel combustion and cement production.

However, in terms of SDGs 2,3,4,7,8,9,14, and 16 which represents Zero hunger, good health, affordable and clean energy, economic growth, industry, innovation and infrastructure, life below water, peace, justice and strong institution, major challenges remain with scores stagnated at less than 50% of the required rate. For SDG-15, 11 and 1, the scores are decreasing indicating a crisis and regression. SDG 10 report shows there's still a significant challenge. What is most troubling is the current state of education as far as SDG performance is concerned. With the country still grappling with a high illiteracy level, low quality of education and lower secondary completion rate, reaching the 2030 SDG target is a major challenge. It is therefore imperative to prioritize education for sustainable development as it is the fulcrum for our progress as a nation and for achieving SDGs

Environmental Education

Environmental Education can be described as a holistic learning approach that highlights the intricate relationships between people and their surroundings, as stated by UNESCO in 2017. It encompasses diverse educational methods aimed at fostering the acquisition of knowledge, abilities, attitudes, and principles crucial for individuals and communities to actively participate in sustainable behaviors and make well-informed choices concerning environmental concerns. In accordance with the research conducted by Cheng, J. C.-H., Monroe, M. C., and McConnell, A. R (2020), environmental education imparts crucial information to individuals regarding environmental systems, ecological processes, and the consequences of human actions on the environment. This knowledge empowers individuals to develop a well-rounded comprehension of environmental issues and their interrelationships, enabling them to make wise choices and engage in responsible behaviors.

Furthermore, Environmental education aims to cultivate a sense of awareness and sensitivity towards the environment. It fosters an appreciation for the intrinsic value of nature and the importance of its conservation. By instilling empathy and concern for the environment, environmental education encourages individuals to adopt sustainable practices and become stewards of the planet (Krasny& Delia, 2018).

The importance of environmental education and protection in Nigeria cannot be overstated, as they are crucial for achieving environmental sustainability, self-reliance, and positive development. Nigeria's environment faces significant challenges due to human activities that contribute to its degradation. Therefore, prioritizing environmental education and implementing protective measures are essential to address issues such as soil erosion, landslides, environmental degradation, global warming, deforestation, biodiversity loss and population explosion amongst others. (Kwale,2011).

Environmental Education: A Normative for Achieving SDGs

The ecological crisis and its associated problems in the social, cultural, political and economic spheres is in part, the product of ignorance and as such knowledge of our global dilemma is a prerequisite for addressing it. Indeed, there is need for new ecologically based enlightenment and orientation around the needs of the challenges of unsustainability as a global reality (Barry,2012)

Therefore, environmental education is like an invaluable ingredient in the development of a functional society with responsible citizens that can make sensible compromise in their relationship within the ecosystems. The importance of EE has been broadly reflected in a wide range of national strategies and policy instruments in Nigeria. Nigeria's National Report to the Rio +20 conference, as well as the 2020 Voluntary National Review, specifically identify the aim of the Nigerian government to support a number of implementation imperatives and mechanisms to advance the attainment of all of the SDGs (Babalola et al,2021)

However, actualizing the SDG, is contingent upon pursuing environmental sustainability and economic stability. From this perspective environmental education is key to imbuing the populace with ideals that

forms pro-environmental behaviors and acculturation necessary for sustainable development. To this end, the propagation of environmental ethics based on normative theories and traditional axiology is necessary for sustainable development. Environmental problems stem from a large part from human behavior. In an effort to mitigate the negative consequences of such environmental problems, large scale changes in behavior need to take place (IPCC, 2018). The multidisciplinary approach in environmental education involves environmental psychology which is crucial in developing the environmental identity, altruistic and biospheric values of individuals especially young kids to whom the baton of sustainable development is passed on to. We have a further reminder that central to environmental issues is the manner of our consciousness of them- that we need to conceive of sustainability not simply as a policy designed to achieve a certain state of affairs but as an attitude of mind (Michael Bonnette, 1999).

Values and norms play a critical role in environmental education, serving as catalysts for the achievement of sustainable development goals. Values shape our attitudes and behaviors towards the environment, guiding our decisions and actions. Environmental education promotes values such as stewardship, conservation, and respect for nature, fostering a sense of responsibility and empathy. Norms, on the other hand, establish societal standards for behavior. Through environmental education, norms can be established that prioritize sustainable practices, motivating individuals to adopt environmentally-friendly habits and actively engage in collective efforts for sustainable development. By integrating values and norms, environmental education paves the way for a society that embraces environmental conservation and contributes significantly to the attainment of sustainable development goals.

The writer contends that combining formal and non-formal approaches to environmental education can be highly effective in fostering a culture of pro-environmental behaviors and cultivating an inherent appreciation for the environment and sustainable development. By adopting a social learning perspective, environmental education can contribute to the development of a collective sense of obligation within society. This goes beyond the confines of the classroom or the realm of environmental activists, instilling a broader cultural responsibility. Undoubtedly, approaching environmental education from a normative standpoint holds great potential for making a significant impact.

Poverty

Poverty is a complex issue encompassed by socio-economic challenges, unequal distribution of resources, and systemic barriers that perpetuate inequality. It is a state of lack of basic amenities, lack of education, proper healthcare, food, clean water, clothing and shelter. The multidimensional nature of poverty is evidenced not just in the low quality of life but the state of mind. This is in Accordance to Ucha (2010) who summarized the various dimensions of poverty as a lack of opportunity, lack of empowerment and a lack of security. Most Nigerians have unwittingly accepted the toga of poverty as it is common place to see people refer to themselves as poor owing to their handicap situation in the prevalent economic hardships. The high infant mortality rate, polio, cholera and other endemic diseases ravaging people are misinterpreted as the will of God or fate when indeed it is a fundamental problem of poverty.

Nigeria, often referred to as the "poverty capital of the world," continues to grapple with a persistent poverty situation. The root causes of this ongoing challenge are multifaceted and can be attributed to various interconnected factors. One significant factor contributing to Nigeria's high poverty rate is the issue of income inequality. Despite the fact that Nigeria is blessed with both abundant natural and human resources, and is the 6th highest exporter of crude oil in the world, income inequality and poverty have been on a perpetual increase perpetuating a cycle of poverty crisis. (Adebayo, 2018).

Insecurity

Insecurity, on the other hand, refers to a state of vulnerability, uncertainty, and the absence of safety and protection. Within a scholarly context, it can be defined as a state of being exposed or vulnerable to potential danger or threats of harm. It involves a condition of susceptibility to harm or injury, where individuals may find themselves uncertain, anxious, and at risk. This state of insecurity highlights the uncertainty and vulnerability that individuals face within a given society. (Olise&Emeh, 2020) According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943), insecurity can arise when fundamental needs such as safety, belongingness, and self-esteem are unmet. Poverty and insecurity create a vicious cycle, as they reinforce each other. Boko Haram insurgency, Fulani herdsmen attacks, kidnapping, armed robbery and ritual killings are some of the securities challenges in Nigeria.

Food insecurity and the environment:

Insecurity, food insecurity, and the environment are intertwined in a complex relationship, particularly in the context of climate change. Climate change poses a substantial threat to global food security, impacting agricultural productivity and exacerbating existing insecurities. Extreme weather events, such as droughts, floods, and heatwaves, disrupt agricultural systems and reduce crop yields, leading to decreased food availability and increased food prices. In insecure environments with limited resources and infrastructure, these impacts are particularly pronounced (Cline, 2007; Nelson et al., 2010).

Moreover, the environmental consequences of insecurity and conflict contribute to food insecurity. Environmental degradation, including deforestation, overexploitation of natural resources, and soil erosion, reduces the resilience of ecosystems and exacerbates the impacts of climate change. Insecure environments, characterized by conflicts and resource scarcity, often witness increased environmental degradation, leading to further challenges in sustainable food production. Displacement and migration resulting from insecurity and environmental stressors also contribute to heightened food insecurity, as disrupted livelihoods and limited access to food and resources strain the capacity of host communities (Barnett & Adger, 2007; Black et al., 2011).

The Nexus Between Poverty and Insecurity: The Impact of Environmental Education for Achieving SDGs

All over the globe, poverty and insecurity are mutually related and interconnected, with poverty increasing vulnerability to various forms of insecurity such as economic instability, food scarcity, inadequate healthcare, and personal safety concerns. In turn, insecurity can deepen poverty by limiting opportunities, undermining social cohesion, and hindering economic development. A close observation of the Nigerian situation over the years shows that poor people are more inclined to carry out crime related activities with most of the insecurity crimes perpetrated by those living in the poorer regions of the country. There's no gainsay in the fact that poor people are the most vulnerable and therefore their survival mechanism is open to dastardly tendencies. Due to lack and hunger, indigents are easily recruited by terrorists and unscrupulous elements to carry out crimes against humanity and stoke the embers of religious discord for vested interests. This echoes the assertions of Ighodalo (2017) in Ugo Chuks Okolie, Okwu A. Onyema, Ugo S. Baseey (2019) that Poverty is the direct cause of sociopolitical and economic conflicts in the country.

Poverty and insecurity are the most challenging global problems which adversely affects sustainable development in the developing countries. The rate of poverty and insecurity is a source of concern to policy makers, scholars, state and non-state actors, including NGOS, social groups and the poor themselves (Duze, Mohammed and Kiyawa 2008). The poverty level in Nigeria is Such that many people live below the

poverty line. The economic growth in the nation's GDP has not translated to reduction of the number of people living below poverty line. Poverty in the Country is more pronounced in conflict-prone areas while insecurity is rife in poverty-stricken areas which generate the question of the relationship between poverty and insecurity as well as their implications for development (Angela, Ugwoke2014)

According to available data from the World Bank, as of 2020, Nigeria exhibited a high poverty level with an estimated poverty rate of 40.1% (World Bank, 2020). This figure suggests that a significant proportion of the Nigerian population, approximately 83 million individuals, lived below the national poverty line especially in the Northwest and northeastern parts of Nigeria. The reason is not far-fetched considering that these zones are riddled with conflicts (Yakubu,2019). It has also been observed that despite the massive oil deposits in the Niger-Delta region, poverty levels are paradoxically high. An NDDC report of 2008 states that over 70% of the locals live below the poverty line.

The increasing population is another factor that has triggered poverty induced conflicts as more people grapple for scarce resources leading to devastating environmental outcomes. Furthermore, in recent times there has been marked changes in climatic elements as occasioned by human influence on the environment (Peter,2011). Climate change-induced variations in annual rainfall patterns have been identified as a significant driver of insecurity and farmer/herder clashes in Nigeria and around the lake Chad region (Ehiane and Moyo, 2021). These variations, characterized by increased unpredictability and shifts in intensity and timing, directly impact agricultural practices, which heavily rely on rainwater. The implications of such rainfall variability are manifold. Farmers face challenges in effectively planning and managing their agricultural activities, resulting in reduced crop yields and economic losses. This leads to food insecurity as agricultural productivity declines, posing a threat to achieving sustainable development goals related to hunger eradication and poverty reduction. (Kelechi JohnMary Ani, Vincent OkwudibaAnyika, Emmanuel Mutambara, 2021)

Moreover, the unpredictable rainfall patterns disrupt traditional herding practices. Herders are compelled to move in search of suitable grazing lands and water sources, often encroaching upon farmlands and triggering conflicts with farmers. These clashes over land use and resource access are accompanied by violence, loss of lives, and destruction of property, exacerbating insecurity in affected regions. The impacts of these issues on the actualization of sustainable development goals in Nigeria are profound. Sustainable Development Goal 13 (Climate Action) emphasizes the need to combat climate change and its impacts. However, climate change-induced conflicts impede progress towards other goals such as SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 1 (No Poverty), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). The occurrence of climate change induced farmer/herder clashes hinders agricultural productivity, exacerbates poverty and hunger, and undermines peace and stability.

Furthermore, the 'resource curse' or what could be termed the paradox of plenty has become the bane of Joy for the Niger-Deltans on whose land oil is drilled. The environmental degradation, infrastructural deficit, and limited local participation has plunged many inhabitants into perennial poverty owing to the oil spills and gas flaring that has taken away their agrarian means of livelihood. The resulting militancy and insecurity has further deepened the paradox of poverty with many involved in oil sabotage which has ultimately hindered development.

According to Peter (2011) these practices have contributed to lack of peace in potentially environmentally precarious areas such as the Niger-Delta region where armed militancy and agitations have erupted in recent past by the locals who bear the brunt of indiscriminate waste disposal, oil spillage, habitat devastation and ultimately unemployment.

To effectively address these challenges and promote sustainable development, a holistic approach is required. This includes implementing climate change adaptation strategies, adopting sustainable land and water management practices, establishing robust conflict resolution mechanisms, and promoting dialogue and cooperation between farmers and herders. Additionally, investments in climate-resilient agricultural

practices and alternative livelihood options can mitigate the impacts of climate change, reduce resource-based conflicts, and contribute to the achievement of sustainable development goals in Nigeria.

In view of the foregoing, enormous efforts have been put in place to stem the current tides of insecurity and poverty which is seen as a twin problem in Nigeria. Particularly, the actualization of the SDGs has prompted the government to initiate strategic implementation Programs tailored at alleviating poverty and improving quality of life. In recent times, over 24 billion naira has been disbursed across 23 states and the FCT from the Conditional Grant Schemes as incentive to invest more of their resources into areas of national development priorities from 2015 till date. The grants were targeted at education, health, water and sanitation projects and aimed at executing pro-poor projects in a consultative manner with the beneficiaries. (Leon Usigbe, 2020)

Despite the optimism, it is clear that a more holistic national outlook on sustainable development is critical with environmental education (EE) as an active force. The billions of dollars invested into security of Nigeria could have yielded more with a practical more inclusive strategy involving all stakeholders. Environmental education can help citizens to contribute as regards the social and environmental impacts of developmental milestones as much as equipping the locals with a balanced sense of resource utilization. Environmental education in a holistic fashion can work to encourage sustainable population growth rate and proper

Relevance of Environmental Education in Addressing Poverty and Insecurity Poverty Alleviation:

Environmental education has a direct bearing on poverty alleviation efforts. By promoting sustainable practices and responsible resource management, it helps communities develop alternative livelihood strategies that are environmentally friendly and economically viable. Additionally, environmental education can enhance individuals' entrepreneurial skills, empowering them to seize opportunities in green sectors, thereby contributing to economic growth and poverty reduction (Umoh, 2010).

One practical way environmental education can help in the alleviation of poverty is the acculturation of indigenes to the ideals of maintaining a proper balance in the use of limited resources. As far as Nigeria is concerned, the major challenge of the ordinary man is the availability and affordability of food. Therefore, the mutually existing relationship between the use of resources for livelihoods and environmental conservation must be maintained in a balanced way such that hunger will be eliminated and our resource base sustained.

Fighting Insecurity

Environmental education plays a vital role in addressing insecurity, particularly in contexts where conflicts and resource scarcity are intertwined. By promoting a deeper understanding of the complex relationships between environmental degradation, competition for resources, and social tensions, environmental education can contribute to conflict prevention and resolution. It encourages dialogue, cooperation, and the equitable management of natural resources, fostering stability and reducing the likelihood of violence (Leal Filho et al., 2020).

As concerns grow among Nigerians regarding the skyrocketing prices of food commodities, ranging from tomatoes to onions, one of the reasons attributed to this phenomenon is the ongoing insurgency and banditry in the northern region (Ayo Baje, 2016).

Given the prevailing insecurity challenges, particularly in northern Nigeria, it is imperative for the government to take concerted efforts in educating local farmers about sustainable agriculture and promoting the adoption of green technology. These measures aim to enhance productivity, combat climate change-induced insecurity resulting from poor agricultural yields. Equally important is the need for farmers to stay updated on the utilization of high-yielding, disease-resistant, and early maturing hybrid seedlings. Building

upon the research conducted by Mamo (2016), it is evident that a deeper understanding and increased awareness of the intricate relationship between human activities and climate variations can lead to more effective strategies in addressing insecurity. For instance, conflicts between herders and farmers often arise from migration patterns driven by drought conditions, leading to cattle rustling. In this regard, environmental education plays a crucial role in curbing insecurity by reducing the anthropogenic impact on the environment and mitigating climate-induced conflicts.

Attaining Sustainable Development Goals

Environmental education serves as a catalyst for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Its multi-faceted approach, encompassing knowledge, awareness, skills, and values, empowers individuals and communities to address poverty and insecurity effectively. By integrating environmental education into educational curricula, policy frameworks, and community programs, we can pave the way for a sustainable future that prioritizes social, economic, and environmental well-being (UNESCO, 2017).

Environmental Education for Sustainable Development: The way forward

Environmental education plays a crucial role in achieving sustainable development goals in Nigeria. To effectively address the pressing issues of poverty, insecurity, and environmental degradation, it is essential to integrate environmental education into formal education curricula at all levels and across various disciplines. By incorporating environmental education into the education system, students can develop a deep understanding of the interconnectedness between environmental issues, poverty, and insecurity (Obasi &Ogwuche, 2016).

In order to actualize this integration, government should build partnerships and collaborations between institutions, local communities, and relevant stakeholders to create awareness campaigns and outreach programs which would raise public consciousness about the links between environmental degradation, poverty, and insecurity. This would help create a collective understanding of the importance of sustainable practices so as to encourage individuals to take action towards addressing these challenges, as well as developing their adaptive skills to combat environmental issues.

Furthermore, it is evident in several previous studies that there are not so many competent teachers in the field of EE in Nigeria especially those who understand the intricate linkages between the environment, socio-economic prosperity and sustainability. It therefore behooves on us as a nation to encourage the comprehensive training of educators to equip them with the necessary knowledge and teaching strategies in the field of environmental education. There is no gainsay that Educators need opportunities to update their understanding of environmental concepts, sustainability practices, and the complex interrelationships between poverty, insecurity, and the environment. By empowering teachers, they can effectively impart this knowledge to their students, inspiring them to become environmentally conscious citizens and agents of change. (UNESCO, 1987)

To enhance the effectiveness of environmental education, schools should emphasize hands-on experiences, fieldwork, and problem-solving activities. These practical approaches allow students to develop practical skills and environmental stewardship. Engaging students in community-based projects that address poverty and insecurity through environmental initiatives can foster a sense of responsibility and ownership, as well as encourage critical thinking and creativity in finding sustainable solutions.

In order to institutionalize the importance of environmental education, it is crucial to include it in national and regional policies and frameworks related to poverty reduction and security enhancement. By recognizing the role of environmental education in addressing these complex challenges, the government can prioritize and allocate resources accordingly. This integration will facilitate a comprehensive approach

to sustainable development, poverty alleviation, and security enhancement, ultimately creating a more resilient and prosperous Nigeria.

Conclusion

In this paper, the writer submits that in the quest to actualize the SDGs 2030, environmental education is a national imperative. With eight years left on the clock and the challenges of insecurity and poverty posing an undermining threat, it suffices to say that prioritizing (goal 4) education as an instrument for environmental awareness will strategically have a ripple effect across other goals. The purpose of environmental education is to instil the principles and methods of sustainability in both formal and informal sectors. It aims to reduce the politicization of sustainable development and promote a harmonious balance between socio-economic factors and ecology. This includes empowering women, addressing unsustainable population growth, environmental stewardship and enhancing the overall quality of life for all individuals. It is the hope that this work has contributed to the efforts of other scholars towards sensitizing the people of Nigeria and re-echoing to the government of the need for a conscientious adoption of the ideals of (EE) as a formal and non-formal pivot towards actualization of sustainable development.

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