

MASS MEDIA, ENVIRONMENTAL WORKSHOPS AND SUSTAINABLE FOREST RESOURCE UTILIZATION IN CROSS RIVER STATE

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Abstract

The main purpose of this research was to establish the influence of Mass media, environmental workshops on forest resources utilization in Cross River State. Given the present threats posed by several old and emerging factors such as logging, this paper is meant to evaluate the influence of both formal and informal environmental education (EE) in enhancing sustainable utilization of forest resources in Cross River State. This paper reviews EE's development in Cross River State and, examines the characteristics and conceptual difficulties of EE, including the low-level of motivation to incorporate EE in different learning curriculum, the lack of environmental awareness, and contradiction between economic growth and environmental protection and sustainable development. Two research hypotheses were formulated for the study using variables of seminars/workshops and mass media. A research Questionnaire termed "Environmental Education, a Precursor for Sustainable Utilization of Forest Resources Questionnaire" (EESUFRQ) was used to collect data from 120 respondents in Oban, a rural Community in Akamkpa L.G.A of CRS. The data collected were analyzed using One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and the result showed that there is indeed a significant relationship between environmental education and sustainable utilization of forest resources in Cross River State. Recommendations were made among others that the fundamental framework of EE should gear towards providing adequate awareness, knowledge, attitude, skills, evaluation ability, and participation for EE and education for sustainable utilization of forest resources in Cross River State.

Keywords: Mass media, environmental workshop, Forest resources, sustainable utilization, Cross River State.

Introduction

Nigeria is recently plagued with high population density as the population is more than 120 million, yielding an average density of more than 120 persons per square kilometer (Omofonmwan & Osa-Edoh, 2008). The interaction of these multitude of persons in the society leaves extraordinary mark on the environmental landscape in the country especially through the manifestation of some anti-environmental acts such as poaching, bush burning, overgrazing, land degradation, indiscriminate dumping of refuse, unplanned urban development, deforestation, gas flaring, creation of noise,

overexploitation of natural resources and amongst others are prevalent in the country. However, various strategies had been proposed and implemented by the Nigeria government to curb these environmental crises and some of the strategies include abatement measures, environmental legislation, environmental policies, afforestation, creating game reserves, nature parks, establishing the environmental sanitation day exercise and provision of task force on environmental sanitation in some states (Jekayinfa & Yusuf, 2008). Although these efforts have been effective in curbing some of these environmental problems, new problems are emanating due to the fact that the basis of these problems have not been resolved.

The term "Forest" can be best described as vegetation dominated by trees while trees, are plants that can grow to heights above 10 meters and have woody stems (Nwoboshi, 1982). The forests influence the economy as well as environmental stability of an area (Cross River State Forestry Strategy, 1994). For instance, the forests provide medicines, fuelwood, building materials, farmland, protein (bush meat and fish), food etc. Over the last decades, Cross River State has lost about 19% of its tropical high forests due to inadequate funding of the Forestry Department, increase in population and immigration as well as plantation establishment (CRS, Forestry Strategy). The population of Cross River State is about 2.89 million (2006 census) with a land mass of about 21, 265km². There are about 2000 communities in the rural areas of the state which harbors 70% of the population. The main occupations of Cross Riverians include farming, hunting, extraction and gathering of timber and non-timber forest products. At present, the state has about 31% of the total remaining tropical high forests in Nigeria. These forests are made up of the Forest Reserves, Community forests and Cross River National Park forests.

However, there are great concern, worldwide about the trend in the existing rate of utilization of forest resources, as well as the consequences on the physical and socio-economic environment (Bisong and Mfon, 2008). Ukata, Akintoye, Ekeh and Ogar (2013) for instance carried out an appraisal of primate conservation programme by Pandrillus (Non-Governmental Organization) in Afi Mountain Sanctuary, Buanchor, Boki Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria. Cross River is rapidly developing its ecotourism potentials, and its internationally being acknowledged as a leading tourism destination in Nigeria. The ability to balance, utilization and preservation of species, especially those endemic to Cross River state, presents a sound foundation for environmental sustainability as well as great money spinning potential, in the not too distant future.

Ignorance of the relationship between man and his environment has been the bane of achieving environmental sustainability. Man's relationship with his environment especially land and its resources has always changed with time, depending on his understanding, technological capabilities and knowledge of the physical environment. Lack of understanding of the dynamics of the relationship has resulted in serious environmental problems. The increasing threat from offshoot of the ecological footprints of anthropogenic activities reinforces the need for concerted efforts toward achieving sustainable resource exploitation in all realms. Educating the public remains the most powerful instruments for creating awareness on the impacts of human activities and transforms his behaviour towards sustainable utilization of resources. Policies cannot work in a vacuum; environmental education remains the engine that can drive the lofty land management policies into meaningful actions, which require citizens' participation for awareness and sensitivity about the environment and environmental challenges; Knowledge and understanding about the environment and environmental challenges;

Attitude concern for the environment and help to maintain environmental quality; Skills to mitigate the environmental problems; Participation for exercising existing knowledge and environmental related programs. It has become imperative that educators and policy should take cognizance of our old traditions and ethics that reinforces the need to sustainably manage our heritage.

Theoretical framework

This study is anchored of the following theory:

Theory of planned Behavior and Reasoned Action by Icek Ajzen (1985).

The theory of planned behavior was propounded by Icek Ajzen in 1985 through his article "From Intentions to actions: A theory of planned behaviour". This theory states that attitudes towards behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control, together shape an individual's behavioural intentions and behaviours. The theory of reasoned action was in turn grounded in various theories of attitude such as learning theories, expectancy-value theories, consistency theories (Ajzen, 1988) and attribution theories (Ajzen, 1991). The theory was developed from the theory of reasoned action, and proposed that a person's behaviour is determined by his or her intention to perform the behaviour and that this intention is, in turn, a function of his or her attitude toward the behaviour and his or her subjective norm. It further proposes that if people evaluate the suggested behaviour as positive (attitude), and if they think them significant, others want them to perform the behaviour (subjective norm), this results in a higher intention (motivations) and they are more likely to do so. A high correlation of attitudes and subjective norms to behavioural intention, and subsequently to behaviour, has been confirmed in many studies (Ajzen and Fishbein, 2005).

The theories of planned behaviour and reasoned action as merged by Ajzen find their application to this study by way of behavioural change. It is confirmed that change in behaviour emanates from intentions towards the desired behaviour. Specific attitudes toward forest resource conservation can be motivated through environmental education. The form of education in this context has the goal or objective of altering desires and intentions, away from unsustainable exploitation to natural resource conservation. The idea is that if education is used as a tool, it could shape people's behavioural intention and their attitudes, making them more likely to imbibe conservation strategies and management of natural forest resources. Thus, people would willingly want to act according to their intentions that have already been shaped toward natural resource conservation by means of environmental education.

Intention is based on the attitude that an individual holds towards that behaviour, the perception of the individual to conduct the behaviour, and the awareness that one has the ability to conduct the behaviour. Overall the attitude is a function of the beliefs about personal control and actual control (Armitage & Conner, 2001). The beliefs that a person holds, as predicated by the attitudes he portray are influenced by awareness about the implication of such beliefs. Awareness however, isn't just a product of formal education; it is more a product of informal, traditional education and wide range of informal experiences. In the contexts of natural resource conservation, traditional societies have inherent control over resources, and these societies interact with their environment, utilize natural resources to the extent that their belief stabilizes their social systems and preserves the resource. Hence, their behaviour and attitudes tilt to their level of awareness, and more so, the perception created through that awareness (Bateman & Willis, 2001). Education therefore becomes a veritable tool for influencing the attitudes and behaviour of people, and tapping on the inherent belief system of people and

emphasizing the needfulness for their participation in natural forest resource conservation efforts.

Concept of environmental education

Unlike traditional forms of education, Environmental Education (EE) is a holistic, lifelong learning process directed at creating responsible individuals who explore and identify environmental issues, engage in problem solving, and take action effectively to improve the environment. As a result, individuals develop a deeper awareness and understanding of environmental issues and have effective skills to make informed and responsible decisions that lead to resolute the environmental challenges.

Hence Environmental Education (EE) has a significant role to play in creating such knowledge and positive attitude and behavior about the environment among the individuals in the society. As it helps enlighten individuals and give them greater insight into their own nature and the consequence of their actions. As education can help find novel ways of fostering positive attitude and attribute to overcome environmentally destructive behaviors (Thathong, 2012) thereby leading to the individual desire and willingness to take action for the environment.

Environmental Education is neither environmental advocacy nor environmental information; rather, Environmental Education is a varied and diverse field that focuses on the educational process that has to remain neutral by teaching individuals critical thinking and enhancing their own problem-solving and decision-making skills in a participatory approach. The guiding principles of Environmental Education include awareness, knowledge, attitudes, skills and participation. Environmental Education can be taught formally in schools classrooms, colleges and universities, or it can take place in informal learning contexts through NGOs, businesses, and the media, natural centers, botanic gardens, bird-watching canoeing, and scuba diving. Besides, Environmental Education takes place in various non-formal education programs such as experiential outdoor education, workshops, outreach programs and community education. Environmental educator should deliver Environmental Education in a unique way as it is not only based on science, but also concerned with historical, political, and cultural aspects with the human dimension of socio-economic factors. It is also based on developing knowledge on socio-ecological systems.

The concept of forest resources conservation and sustainability

Forest conservation is the practice of planning and maintaining forested areas for the benefit and sustainability of future generations. Forest conservation involves the upkeep of the natural resources within a forest that are beneficial to both humans and the ecosystem. Forest conservation acts to maintain, plan, and improve forested areas. Forests provide wildlife with a suitable habitat for living along with filtering groundwater and preventing runoff. Forests play a vital role in maintaining the environmental balance of a particular place

Today we face the significant challenge of protecting the environment while maintaining our quality of life. There is a need for professionals who care about the environment, have a broad understanding of natural resources, are creative and enjoy a challenge. If you want to make a difference in the environment and people, check out the Forest Resources and Conservation (FRC) major.

The FRC major introduces students and other forest users to a wide range of natural resource fields, including forest ecology, ecosystem management, economics, and environmental policy, modern technology applications for natural resource managers,

wildlife management and forest health. With this knowledge and understanding our graduates go on to help create solutions in a number of environmental areas including; ecological restoration, sustainable wood supply, alternative energy, global climate change, environmental policy and law, and clean air and water. FRC students spend significant time in the field gaining hands-on experience with ecological and management principles (Thathong, 2012).

The concept of poverty

The issue of environmental sustainability will not be complete without talking about poverty in relation to natural forest resources. Poor people all over the world will always encroach upon the forest. They view the forest as a God-given wealth which will never be depleted. With retrenchment and compulsory retirement of workers by government as well as the inability of government to provide basic needs for its citizens, the pressure on forests increases daily. For instance, the incessant scarcity and high cost of kerosene and gas has made many people to depend on fuel wood for cooking, leading to increased forest destruction.

Research Methodology

The study population comprised of the whole forest dwellers in Oban community in Akamkpa L.G.A of cross River State. The sample for the study comprised of 120 indigene in Oban community purposively selected based on their location in the area that is mostly pledged with excessive logging of wood and other forest resources

Research questions

Two research questions wear raised to give direction to this study as follows:

1. How des seminar/workshops influences the sustainable utilization of forest resources in Oban community
2. To what extent does mass media influence the sustainable utilization of forest resources in Oban community

Research hypotheses

Two research hypothesis were subsequently formulated to give answer to the research questions. They is stated as thus:

1. Seminar/workshops does not significantly influence the sustainable utilization of forest resources in Oban community in Akamkpa L.G.A of Cross River State.
2. Sustainable forest resource utilization is not significantly influenced by mass media in Oban community in Akamkpa L.G.A of Cross River State

Results/discussion

The data in both variables wear analysed using One-way Analyses of Variance (ANOVA), at .05 significant level and 2 and 118 degrees of freedom

Ho: 1 Seminar/workshops does not significantly influence the sustainable utilization of forest resources in Oban community in Akamkpa L.G.A n Cross River State. Result presented in Table 1.

Table 1: One-way Analysis of Variance of influence of seminar/workshops on the sustainable utilization of forest resources in Oban community in Akamkpa L.G.A n Cross River State

Seminar/workshops	N	X	S.D		
High	34	7.39	2.33		
Medium	29	6.32	3.27		
Low	57	7.54	2.11		
Total	120	21.25	9.68		
Source of variation	SS	Df	MS	F-ratio	P-level
Between	209.58	2	84.35		
Within	168.58	117	85.11	3.01	.000
Total	378.28	119			

*significant at .05 level. F-critical=3.29

The result of hypothesis one as stated in Table 1 shows that the F-calculated of 3.01 is less than the f-critical value of 3.29 tested at .05 significant level and 2 and 117 degrees of freedom. Sequel to this result, the null hypothesis was retained meaning that indeed seminar/workshop does not influence sustainable utilization of forest resources in Oban community. This implies that much or enough workshops and seminar is not given in Akamkpa to forestall the abnormal logging of forest trees and other forest resources in that area.

Ho: 2 Sustainable forest resource utilization is not significantly influenced by mass media in Oban community in Akamkpa L.G.A n Cross River State. The result of the analysis is stated in Table 2

Table 2: One-way Analysis of Variance result of influence of mass media on the sustainable utilization of forest resources in Oban community in Akamkpa L.G.A n Cross River State

Mass media report	N	X	S.D		
High	40	6.39	4.31		
Medium	46	6.11	2.98		
Low	34	5.54	2.11		
Total	120	21.25	9.68		
Source of variation	SS	Df	MS	F-ratio	P-level
Between	191.58	2	86.03		
Within	168.58	117	86.15	3.23	.000
Total	360.16	119			

*significant at .05 level. F-critical=3.29

Similarly, the result of hypothesis on as stated in Table 2 showed that the F-calculated of 3.23 is less than the f-critical value of 3.29 tested at .05 significant level and 2 and 117 degrees of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis was equally retained meaning that indeed mass media report on need or importance of sustainable utilization of forest resources does not influence sustainable utilization of forest resources in Oban

community. This implies that much or enough report is not made or rather many have no does not have the means of hearing these reports which brings the context of poverty and forest reliance to mind.

Discussion of findings

From the result of the study, it is obvious that though Cross River State have enough policy to combat the challenges of unsustainable utilization of forest resources, but these policies are just in paper as much effort have not been made to truly fight this scourge due to poverty and some major environmental “politics “ by some elites. Cross River State is naturally endowed with a lot of forest resources rich in biodiversity. The importance as well as threats to these forests has been highlighted. Therefore, all hands should be on deck to ensure that the rich biodiversity of the state and Akamkpa specifically is conserved, especially when one considers the fact that, environmental problems are not localized. That is, the consequences of an environmental problem can be felt in an area several thousand kilometres from the source.

Nigeria like any other African country is confronted with myriads of ecological crisis. The lost/degradation of the rain forest, the savannazition of her environment, the erosion of soil fertility, acute poverty and many more are recognized as being due to human unsustainable practices or to be ‘anthropogenic’ (to give a simple idea classical dignity). Prominent among the litany of ecological crisis is land degradation which is perpetuated directly or indirectly from the long held philosophy of ‘taking’ from the earth. Man’s onslaught on land resources is exacerbated by unprecedented population growth in the country.

Agriculture is, in fact, a human activity that affects the greatest proportion of the earth’s surface, is the single biggest user of fresh water (Pagiola & Holden 2001), and is still by far the largest single source of livelihoods and income (Ohlsson 2000) especially in Africa. Just as our collective land use practices are increasingly degrading ecological conditions across the globe, we have become dependent on an ever-increasing share of the biosphere (Vitousek, Ehrlich & Ehrlich 1986). Global croplands, pastures, plantations and urban areas have expanded in recent decades, accompanied by large increases in energy, water and fertilizer consumption, along with considerable environmental degradation and losses of biodiversity (OTA, 1987). Even though it has been recognized that biodiversity is important for the functioning of all ecosystems, and that excessive loss of biodiversity imposes real costs on resource users (Heywood 1995), short term benefits are realized at the expense of long term environmental services that we depend on.

Recommendations

To fight the problem of poor awareness of environmental challenges and equally reduce the unsustainable use of forest resources in Oban, and by extension the whole Cross River State as envisaged in the study, the researcher made the following recommendations:

1. The issue of poverty should be addressed by the government to create other jobs especially for those in the rural communities in Cross River Stats.
2. Developed countries should sponsor reforestation Programmes in third world countries whole heartedly. Cross River State which has a high percentage of biodiversity should be well considered
3. Bush burning should be discouraged and where it is unavoidable, then fire tracing should be employed to prevent the fire from spreading beyond the proposed area.
4. Nongovernmental organization and government agencies should show more will in fostering or increasing environmental awareness in the country

5. It is imperative to accelerate the legislation process and enforcement of environmental law. The major aspects of environmental education law should be equally be studied in all level of Nigeria Education system.

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