

SPIRITUALITY, EDUCATION, AND SUSTAINABILITY IN DEVELOPING ECONOMIES

By

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to undertake spirituality, education and sustainability in developing economies. It also determined the extent to which education for environmental awareness, peace education without frontiers, philosophy of curriculum for peace and peace culture, nurture and care for future generation, human values for peace, widening our religious horizon, celebration of religious life and education for transformation, where-taken together, would explain spirituality and education in Nigeria. Spirituality is concerned with the quality of spirituality and education in the process of teaching, training and learning in school and school less environment to improve knowledge and develop skills to do the productive work necessary for the warfare of a given nation. The paper recommended that a culture of peace calls for sharing and avoidance of greed or consumerism mentality at the expense of others. The paper concluded that our present educational system and its curriculum do not prepare young people for good and sustainable life on mother earth.

Keywords: Spirituality, Education, Sustainability, Justice, Universal awareness, Ethics

INTRODUCTION

One of the aspects that define any kind of education or training is the way in which it accounts for the meaning and purpose of human existence. Religion invented education and both can therefore play an essential role in education for sustainability, helping to tap into cosmologies, values, symbols, rituals and celebrations that can inspire our journey towards a sustainable and life enhancing world. Eyibe (2009) defined education as "a cultural, behavioral and developmental process of growth designed for children and adults and carried on in a school or schools setting". This definition of the author implies that education is a process that embraces culture, behaviour and development.

It is a cultural process because children and adults who are exposed to education are involved in a process of cultural transmission and cultural change in the school. Secondly, it is a behavioural process because school children and adults who are

benefiting from education are involved in a process of change of behaviour to do good. Thirdly, it is a developmental process because the beneficiaries of education are involved in a developmental process of growth from a lower level to a higher level of educational attainment.

This means that education and religion must be called upon to renew and transform themselves in order to face the unprecedented challenges of the technological well-being of the whole earth community and to discover and embrace their ecological dimension. Sustainability is not possible unless we overcome our worship of economic growth and our subtle identification of money with fulfilment. Religions have the power to open us up to something bigger than our individual selves as teachers and as Scientists. The Earth charter states that: we risk the destruction of ourselves and the diversity of life, and therefore fundamental changes are needed in our values, institutions and ways of living. The humility to open up to the experience of other educational systems and religions to become intercultural and interreligious is necessary for a viable human life on a sustainable planet. As Tucker, (2007) pointed out, sustainable development is usually regarded as an uneasy alliance of ecology and economics.

The contents of this paper will, therefore, be discussed under the following:

1. New educational programmes
2. Meaning and intention of social justice
3. Education for sustainability
4. Transformation of Education

NEW EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES

One urgent problem for us today in the developing nations is how to manage our local communities whose lives have been destructively re-arranged by colonialism and globalization (Achebe, 1958; Ngugi Wathiong, 1993 & Eyibe, 2014). Although counter-clash possibilities are noble, important and inevitable, they will not be achieved without enlisting the critical functions of new ethical educational programmes that effectively create such civic national and continental engagements.

The contents of the new education curriculum will therefore include:

- Concept of social justice
- Practice of social justice
- Achievement of social justice
- History of wars: world and national
- History of world cultures
- Human Aspirations/rights
- Educational research
- Purpose of schooling
- Learning to live together in peace
- Informal learning and
- Non-formal learning
- Life needs

The new educational programmes must serve to bring together men and women in a period of globalization and diffuse existing knowledge and encourage studies of the methods of harmonizing the introduction of sustainability and the concept of social justice in both developed and developing countries, with respect for their cultural values so as to ensure social progress and so change the world (Joshua, 2010). This means that education then, appears as a social instrument through which man can guide his destiny and shape his future towards a better life of international understanding and collaboration, not confrontation.

History is a vital subject that must be taught in this new education curriculum, provided that the apparatus at hand is used intelligently, forcefully and skillfully. Thus, the selection of content in the history curriculum is crucial so as to provide the youths of the world an adequate mental map of where we were and where we are, and where we are heading to. History is a subject that will examine the ethnic mix, languages and cultures of the world and how the effects of colonialism have their roots in the first and second world wars as well as how Nigeria's present political and social structures have their roots in the Nigerian civil war. The essential point for the philosopher to note is that everywhere ideas on the upbringing of the young stem from and reflect historical experiences, geographical conditions, and patterns of culture.

MEANING AND INTENTION OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

Nemesis, in Greek mythology, is the name of a Greek goddess of retribution. It is a deity responsible for ensuring that human beings do not get away with their misdeeds. The fundamental concept that underpins the intervention of nemesis is justice. Justice is basically the idea that there is a balance of forces in the universe. The concept implies the idea of equality in human existence: equality of educational opportunities equality of races, equality of opportunity in human affairs etc. (Eyibe, 2000).

Again, justice can be interpreted to mean giving each person his or her share. Justice demands that there is a correlation between human actions and the accompanying consequences and rewards for our deeds or misdeeds. It is akin to the law of whatever you do sow, you will reap. Some religious fraternities believe strongly that the law of sowing and reaping is a fundamental inexorable, cosmological and inescapable law of nature. Likewise, Jesus of Nazareth talked about justice and fair play when he asserted that 'what a man soweth, that he shall reap'.

The idea that we get what we deserve is a warning against abuse of political, economic, social, cultural, intellectual and military powers. Suffice it to say that justice, retribution, karma and other associated concepts are important in morality or ethics. If our present actions have no implications for our future, then one of the essential motivations for behaving well or ethically would be lacking. It is therefore, important that individuals, world leaders, and nations should believe in retribution, in Nemesis and in Karma so that they can maintain a keen sense of justice and equality in their interactions with their individual citizens, groups, states, minorities, and other nations in the world.

Where is social justice in our world today? Amazingly, in international politics, the superpowers behave like gangsters or wolves terrorizing the poor smaller countries. Unfortunately, smaller countries behave like women without husbands running from pillar to post in search of support and protection. And who will protect them?

The counter-individualistic saliency of African life vis-a-vis the systems of colonialism has distorted both the cosmologies and earth-bound locations of Africans themselves (Nyerere, 1968). Today, the weaknesses in global social justice are expanding across the world (Abdi, 2007) and liberal democracy belief systems which presumed survival of the fittest has derailed the lives of people who have been on the wrong side of the historical divide. The implication of this is that social justice has now become not what you have a right to, but what the system prescribed for you in the realm of the world system. In

such a situation, how can the victors be interested in engaging in some dialogue to lessen these pervasive cultural inequalities (Mann, 2006)?

Rahnema (1997) observed that in the postcolonial era, the banner of development and progress as bandied about by a tiny minority of local profiteers, supported by their foreign patrons set out to destroy the very foundations of social life. In this process a merciless war was waged against the age —old traditions of communal solidarity. The virtues of simplicity and conviviality of noble forms of poverty, of the wisdom of relying on each other, and of the arts of suffering were looked upon as forms of under development and backwardness.

Many educational efforts are couched in the language of social justice, but much of the exhortations are superficial. The lip service that is paid to global justice does not only betray the promise but it may also falsely convince us that everything is alright; and just multicultural relations are on course. Nothing could be further from the truth. To make progress in this direction, we need to examine critically issues of distribution, recognition, engagement and violence in order to make social justice education more rewarding and productive. We must bring into the process of enactment of longstanding biases of race, class and gendered hierarchies that continue to bedevil the world's cooperation and understanding through new events on the international scene.

Additionally, a global social justice education must engage learners and educators in deliberative engagement to address the macro-level discourse and the subsequent institutional structures that impact life in locales and throughout the world. How do we unlock the key to a shared future of global justice? Adam Kahane (2007) draws on his extensive work in post conflict negotiation and processes of change in Africa, Europe, Latin America and North America to adamantly claim that no change will happen without engagement and deliberative dialogue that addresses both love and power. As Toh (2004) pointed out, love, rights, and solidarity are key processes of reciprocity that can expand our path of relationship of recognition. As Martin Luther King Jr (1967) declared in a speech shortly before his assassination:

What we need to realize is that power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. It is precisely this collision of immoral power with powerless morality which constitutes the major crises of our times.

Let us end this section by saying that, without creating a new common forum for dialogue and understanding, the project of global social justice, even in states of Nigerian federation, may be farther away than ever.

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY

One major definition of culture or civilization is the way in which it accounts for the meaning and purpose of human existence. Religions invented education and they can therefore play an essential role in education for sustainability. This means helping to tap into the cosmologies, values, symbols, rituals and celebrations that can inspire our journey toward a sustainable and life-enhancing world. Eyibe, (2014) defined education as a cultural, behavioral and developmental process of growth designed for children and adults and carried on in a school or schools setting. He maintained that education is a cultural processes because children and adults who are exposed to education are involved in a process of cultural transmission and cultural change in the school. This means that educational training and religions must be called to renew and transform themselves in order to face the unprecedented challenges of the technological well-being and cultural conflicts of the whole earth community and to discover and embrace their ecological dimensions (Helmick 2011&Toh, 2004), Sustainability will not be realized unless we overcome our worship of economic growth and our subtle identification of money with fulfillment Many individuals and nations think that happiness is a byproduct of money, when in truth, it is a byproduct of love. Love cures people and nations both the ones who give it and the one who receive it. Love, not hate, is the wisdom of the fool and the fool of the wise. Religions preach love everywhere. Both religious and love have the power to open us up to something bigger than our individual selves as world citizens (Joshua, 2010).

The Earth Charter-states that: "we risk the destruction of ourselves and the diversity of life" and therefore fundamental changes are needed in our values, orientations, institutions and ways of living. The humility to open up to the experience of other educational systems and religions, to become intercultural and interreligious is necessary for a viable, human life on a sustainable planet.

Tucker, (2007) pointed that religions have always helped to shape civilizations and cultures through their stories, symbols, rituals, and ethics faith-based traditions add a broader dimension to the more technical and pragmatic focus on sustainable development. In fact, religions invented education and they can therefore play an

essential role in education for sustainability. Tucker maintained that sustainable development is regarded as an uneasy alliance of ecology and economics. This is, however, a narrow conception of this idea because sustainability needs to be placed in a larger context that includes:

- i. Universal Awareness
- ii. Nurture and Care for Future Generation
- iii. Nurturing Cultures and local knowledge
- iv. Widening our Ethical horizon and
- v. Celebration of life

UNIVERSAL AWARENESS

It is becoming increasingly clear that all faith based traditions and cultures are gradually realizing that our common ground is the Earth itself. All religious traditions are being called to come together, without losing their identities, to renew themselves. We must learn to see people and the planet as not separate, but the same entity. This is why our technological inventions must be environment -friendly so that we can safeguard the future of our children and that of their environment. Although the current emerging universal awareness is new in many ways, religions have traditionally inherent values that are akin to it.

Three examples will do. First, Confucianism acknowledges the essential kinship of all living things among themselves and with Heaven and Earth, Kinship that finds its highest expression in compassion. The kinship is expressed in the famous words from Chang Tsai's Western inscription of the 11 century:

Heaven is my Father and Earth in my Mother and even such a small creature as I find an intimate place in their midst

The human, then, completes Heaven and Earth, and not separate from the Earth.

Second, Daoism stresses the Microcosm - Macrocosm relation between the human and the earth, which are seen interacting on a continuous and continuing basis .Clearly, then, many practices relate to Daoism and build on this kinship between humans and nature.

Third, Hinduism, likewise, expresses microcosm - macrocosm awareness in the concept of the Great Person or Cosmic Person associated with the maintenance of all life. Although modern Western Society has divorced matter from spirit, there is no such split in other traditions. In the new world of sustainability rather than living by "cogito ergo sum" man must traditionally understand that "it is the other who causes my existence": if the other doesn't exist, I don't exist; if the other suffers, I suffer." Suffice it to say that in this context other is not restricted to fellow human beings; it includes the oceans, trees, mountains, stones, water and even the whole of creation (Combes, 2007)

When the scientists manufacture drugs and the doctor administers them on human beings, they kill or threaten life on Earth. If these harmful drugs are poured on land, they will threaten terrestrial life. Again, if they are poured on ocean or river floor, they will threaten aquatic life. If an ignorant and carefree technological personnel invents an automobile that pollutes the environment with more carbon monoxide, the gas will threaten life and our ecosystem. This means that nothing is clearly independent or isolated. Our actions and intentions send ripples in different directions on our mother Earth (Sanuro, 2007, Eyibe, 2011, Adcbija, Ozumba, & Oni, 2010)

NURTURE AND CARE FOR FUTURE GENERATION

The training of technical/technological personnel must provide them with a positive mindset to reflect on the well-being of our children and the children of every continent and the young of every species. It is unfortunate that materialism has become the dominant faith of the new millennium and religions must now help to de-materialize our world view (Slaby, 2007). One way of countering consumerism would be to set limits to the advertising industry and to explicitly teach children and adults how to critically evaluate adverts.

Has the Japanese advertising conglomerate not confused and diffused the peoples of the developing countries particularly the oil producing nations of the third world that the expensive and high fuel consumption of the Jeep automobiles are better and more prestigious than the simple easy-to-maintain present cars that take us from place to place? Prestige indeed! It appears that the peoples of the Third World have swallowed line, hook and sinker these advertisement gingles through their massive importation of these cars into their respective countries. Suffice it to say that prestige, ostentation, exploitation, individualism and poverty are emerging unsuspecting phenomena of our

developing nations today. In contrast with modern individualism, traditional sustainable societies had a sense of care for ancestors and for future generations (Eyibe, 2010).

NURTURING CULTURES AND LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

It is estimated that about 7,000 languages spoken today in the world, nearly 2,500 of them are in danger of extinction. We must nurture local cultures and languages as a way of preserving the ecological integrity of a bioregion. In the South East region of Nigeria, for example, we must nurture and preserve the Igbo language for generations yet unborn. The contemporary science and education needs to be complemented with local knowledge as a way of preserving traditional cultures of indigenous peoples. In this way, we can rediscover a sense of belonging to our place and reconnect with the cycles of nature and the seasons. This means that sustainability requires the affirmation of local, place-based cultures and languages. Schnuttgen (2007) observed that education for sustainability must take into account the cultural aspirations, identities, different ways of life, knowledge systems, values systems, religions, traditions and beliefs while nurturing the creative capacities and cultural expressions of human beings and their ways of living together. In fact, sustainability is best practiced by indigenous peoples and societies that are unfamiliar with such a term and are still rooted in their traditional culture, land and spirituality.

WIDENING ETHICAL ISSUES AND EDUCATION

Social justice has been an important concern in the world of Abraham's religion. The contemporary world is called upon to extend her notions of justice to embrace the sacredness of all forms of life and granting rights to other species, ecosystems, and the Earth as a whole. This wider ethics calls for solidarity with the entire Earth, ecological sustainability, lifestyles of sufficiency, and a more participatory politics. There is need for the renewal of our notions of progress, prosperity, and development. Combes (2007) noted that development needs to embrace well-being and spirituality. One way of ensuring this is to replace our pursuits of a higher GDP that knows of no other end than money, with a more humane compassion and aspiration. The Gross National Happiness launched in Bhutan has four pillars viz:

1. Good governance
2. Cultural autonomy

3. Environmental justice and a
4. Buoyant economy for sustainability

Sustainability is strongly related with our sense of place in the cosmos. We need a new relationship with ourselves, with nature, and with the wider scheme of things. Religions provide a sense of belonging to the cosmos and can play an even greater role in changing lives, changing nations and changing the world towards sustainability. (Gicira, 2007; Joshua, 2010; & Eyibe, 2011)

A western expert observed that the West has plundered the world and that it is, therefore, hypocritical that we should preach sustainability to other cultures. One might think that it would be totally immoral to tell people in the poor developing nations not to have cars and hi-tech gadgets unless one could grow out of ones consumerist lifestyles. Good governance is about problem-solving. To create employment, the governments of developing nations must establish an enabling environment for sustainable development: address the high cost of governance, develop infrastructure, empower small businesses through the provision of regular electricity, encourage manufacturing through the promulgation of industry-friendly regulations, resuscitate the textile industry, encourage agriculture to produce food and agricultural products for import and export (Eyibe, 2010).

Clearly, the people of developing nations need cultural Autonomy, light, water, good roads, working industries, quality education, good healthcare, food, employment, affordable transportation and more. The governments of these countries must sit up and address the question of rampant corruption and plough back the money saved from the various leakages into capital development. The technological personnel in these countries must rise up to develop and manufacture their own cars and hi-tech gadgets that will be environment-friendly (Eyibe, 2011). This is one of the ways we can grow out of our present consumerist lifestyles. Those who have plundered the world are now plagued with a host of psychological problems and new illnesses which science has no answer yet. This means that people who are wealthy and are consuming more are no longer happier. According to Gandhi of India, freedom arises from self-rule: learning to rule our own selves. Sustainability, likewise, must start in our own selves. We must learn to be the change we want to see in the world. We can no longer wait for Presidents and Leaders to lead us. World bodies such as UNO and UNESCO can push initiatives forward but these need to be initiated by the indigenous people (UNESCO, 2002).

CELEBRATION OF LIFE

Festival and ritual celebrations can enhance our awareness of the cycles of nature, the sun, and the moon. Having fun is a good way of countering individualism and competition. Faith-based traditions offer us a sense of beauty and harmony, often expressed through inspiring aphorism and stories that need to be integrated into sustainability. Again, spiritual celebrations strike very deep into the heart of people. Without ritual activities, I cannot see how to achieve sustainable living. If religions are alive, they have to keep renewing themselves by addressing the specific needs of the day, of the people and of the poorest of the poor. This is particularly true in our age of unprecedented challenges everywhere.

This means that our focus today will be on feeding people who go to bed hungry; on providing primary education to girls and boys, destitute^ orphans, physically challenged people; on providing homes to the homeless and rejected people of our local and urban environment; on healing people with HIV/AIDS and cancer; on addressing tuberculosis, malaria, hunger, poverty, violence, racism, inequality, religious intolerance, ethnic conflict, political instability, war; on sustainable development; on peace at home and peace in the world, personal and religious transformation for the sake of sustainability and on the worship of God for spirituality. This focus can only be achieved through cheer fullness, love and compassion.

TRANSFORMATION OF EDUCATION

We need a new education, formal and non formal, in the new millennium that fosters the five values discussed above: universal awareness, compassion, environmental nurture, local knowledge, ethical horizon and celebration of life.

The United Nations should be called to support these efforts in this direction with more financial resources for a better world. We need to collect more success stories of education for sustainability (Toh, 2008&Eyibe, 2014).

But, how can we introduce sustainability into formal education, when the curriculum is overloaded and teachers are severely overworked, when current formal educational system is geared towards quantifiable results, rather than towards real learning for personal transformation for the sake of sustainability and when there are vested interests in ministries of education, schools management board and the book industry? These problems can be overcome by having continuous dialogue with curriculum

planners, writers and creating multimedia tools for children to create their own educational materials.

Again, non-formal education is easier, faster, and more adaptable and free of the constraints that affect formal education (Schnuttgen, 2007)

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Formal or non-formal education for sustainability should aim at learning to transform oneself and society and to love the natural world. Likewise, we must remember that children and all people need to make sense of what they are learning (Toll, 2004)

One of the characteristics of the internet is that it is a tool with many possibilities, and there are today thousands of web pages devoted to sustainability. However, website-based knowledge can be abstract living us into a cyberspace that covers or destroys the life of specific real places while ecology has to do with feeling rooted in the land and connecting with actual plants and animals. Besides, the World Wide Web is not truly worldwide because it only reaches the globalized world. We must remember that in many parts of the developing world, there is no electricity, so e-materials would be of no use there. This means that e-materials should be used in teaching sustainability to those living in highly developed world, where there is a major use of the internet (Eyibe, 2009&Manabete, 2004).

Traditional cultures practiced sustainable lifestyles over the years through oral, and non-formal education. On the other hand, formal education arrived with colonialism and still embodies aspects of colonial characteristics, teaching the ways of the West without the respect for the local culture, history and languages, thereby removing educated natives from their most cherished natural environment or bioregion (Ton, 2004)

Ishizawa (2007) observed that traditional indigenous authorities in the Andes attribute the present lack of well being and harmony in their schools and communities to a generalized loss of respect among all beings in their local world. The same is true of many African communities today. It is a matter of lack of respect towards human beings, towards deities, and towards nature as a whole. The local indigenous authorities see schooling as the major contributor to this situation: the school in the Andean region has spread the modern ideology of progress and has replaced traditional ways of life by westernization disguised as modernization. They realize that their present educational system does not prepare young people for a good and sustainable life. Similarly, Eyibe

(2006) noted that without a conception of doing good in the society, education, formal or informal acquired in school or schoolless setting, makes no sense. Before, we conclude, let us say that one counter proposition against sustainability is that the lifestyle of the overdeveloped 20 percent of the world, besides consuming 80 percent of the Earth's resources, generates greed, envy, hostility and crime.

Finally, the chief premise of sustainability is that the suffering of one is the suffering of all. The wound of one is the wound of all. The wound of mother Earth is the wound of our bioregion and we must do everything in our joint effort to reflect on the well-being of our mother Earth and the well-being of our children everywhere. Clearly, then, we need collaboration, cooperation, love, compassion, dialogue, forgiveness and reconciliation in a world of globalization where our destiny is bound together more than ever so that we can move freely to work, study, and do business anywhere on Mother Earth that *Il faut gerer notre business nimporte ou dans le monde*, of the French poet.

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