

## **CLIMATE CHANGE REALITIES AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

*Climate change as a new normal has brought immense challenges to human development globally. Scientific studies have pointed to the fact that the changes brought about by climate change are likely to have severe impact on efforts to achieve national goals and objectives. The goal of this paper is to discuss climate change realities and its implication to educational development in Nigeria. It also looked at education and climate change, implication for educational management, Impacts of climate change on educational development and finally, conclusion was drawn and recommendations were made on how to tackle the realities of climate change on education.*

### **Introduction**

Climate change is seen as the change that alters the composition of the atmosphere over a period of time due to natural environmental factors or human activities. The global attention has in recent times been focused on the issue of climate change. Current global concern has been focused on the impact of climate change due to human activities, the release of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse emissions into the atmosphere. The continuous burning of forests, falling down trees without replanting them, burning of fossil fuels, gas flaring, environmental pollution and deliberate deforestation is responsible for climate change conditions. In most cases, the term climate change is used interchangeably with global warming., a term used to describe increment in surface temperature. One of the factors responsible for climate change include man induced alterations of the natural environment.

The patterns of climate Climate has a significant impact on the environment and global ecosystem. According to the United Nations (2014), the world's climate is experiencing an increasing and disparaging changes at a pace that surpasses any recorded observations from the previous 2,000 years. The term climate change is used to describe an unprecedented increase in average world's temperatures. Human activities such as wood felling, soil excavation, exploration of natural resources and green gas emission have been found to be responsible for the increase in global temperature. Olaniy, Ojekule and Amujo (2013) stated climate change is caused by increases in greenhouse gases such as Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>). Today, Nigeria is experiencing severe climate conditions with huge devastating impacts on its population. This is evident in the reoccurrence of persistence flooding and offseason rainfall. The yearly opening of the lake Lado dame has often left devastating consequences on riverine communities with flooding. Currently, Bornu State one of the North Eastern states in Nigeria is heavily affected by flood. The impact of this flood has led to the closure of schools, markets and businesses in all affected areas.

Scientists have found that there is a significant change in climate and this change have bought about severe consequences on planet earth. The concept of climate change is becoming the most important environmental topic of discussion all over the world (Njoku, 2016). This is because of the environmental impact this issue has created in in the last two decades. As a result, there have been conferences, seminars, reports and empirical studies on the impact of climate change on every facet of life. Over the years, several declarations have been made such as the Rio Declaration 1992, the Copenhagen conference on climate change, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate change 2001 and 2007. All these gatherings were to finetune a workable policy that will guarantee a safe and friendly environment in the world. An excerpt from one of the conferences shows that world leaders concluded that only immediate and sustained action will halt climate change from further causing permanent calamitous harm to the planet's natural environment.

Over the years, climate change has manifested in various ways, such as flooding, high rising temperatures, desertification, droughts, persistent rain fall and precipitation. Also evident is rising sea levels, extreme weather conditions, extreme heat and cold. These extreme conditions brought about by impact of climate change has posed potential consequences for mankind. This includes, food shortage, malnutrition, water shortage, wide spread of waterborne diseases, ecological challenges, hunger and frustration. The impact of climate change is affecting every sphere of human existence such as health, environment, economies, education, entertainment and politics. Njoku (2016) stated that there is plethora of evidences that third world nations of world, of which Nigeria is among, are already facing the most hit through economic, social and environmental challenges and will suffer most greater environmental conditions such as flooding and droughts. The main suspect for all this havoc according to Olaniyi et al (2013) is Climate Change. Studies have revealed that great portion of ice in North Pole are disappearing, snows are also rapidly disappearing owing to the impact of climate change. It has been predicted at the 4<sup>th</sup> Session of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change IPCC that the continent of Africa will be the most affected by the impact of climate change.

Nigeria being one of the countries in Africa is not spared by the impact of climate change. The country depends largely on its natural resources and these resources are being threatened by impact of climate change. The devastating impact of drought have brought about shortage in food which has resulted in hunger and starvation. The chain reaction to this is that due to hunger most children who have been enrolled in schools have now dropout. Another case to consider is the unprecedented floods as a result of persistent rain fall. In the last 2 years, so many school buildings have been destroyed thereby sending school children back to their homes. As crucial as the concept of climate change is globally, its unclear whether Nigerians are fully informed of the what it is and its resultant effects on its environment. The implications of being aware of the impact of climate change is to be prepared and armed with intervention or policies on how to tackle such situation.

### **The Realities of Climate Change**

The realities of climate change are evident in the challenges it poses to sustainable development of human race. Francis (2014) asserts that the impact of climate change is likely to negatively affect the attainment of national developmental objectives if not taken seriously. Specifically, climate change may affect global commitment to eradicate illiteracy in third world countries of which Nigeria is one of them. Also, the MDG objective to reduce extreme hunger is under threat due to devastating drought which has swept farmlands and dried up irrigations, all these due to climate change. It has been forecasted in many fora that; climate change has the potential to impede efforts to increase food security. Furthermore, the impact of climate has led to degradation of the environment, scarcity of water, depletion of Ozon layer and the alteration of the global ecosystem. According to BNRCC Report (2011), climate change is the major causes of increasing human conflicts and challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Climate Change and Education**

The issue of climate change is no longer hoax, its evidences are now stirring at our faces. The educational system is not left out of the impact of climate change. The system itself is affected through the destruction of school facilities which have affected teaching, learning and overall school attendance. As critical as the impart of climate change is, there seem to be a relatively low awareness in the country. Stakeholders in the nation's environmental protection and sustainability must scale up awareness creation and information dissemination about the impact of climate change to Nigeria.

As we continue to witness the devastating effects of change in global climate, there is need for authorities in the country to increase public understanding about the probable consequences of the situation to education and other sphere of the economy. Above all this, stakeholders of education in the country have a crucial role to play by rising up to the occasion. This can be achieved through deliberately designing programmes and formulating policies that far reaching implication on curbing the menace of climate change in the country. One of such effort could be intensifying efforts to create public awareness through paid radio/television advertisements. Also, educational planners can also include climate change awareness into the country curriculum design. Through this medium, learners at all educational levels will become enlightened about the impact of climate change and be prepared to handle it.

Evidences abound that points out to the fact that impact of climate change is prevalent in most in all parts of Nigeria. For instance, the high volume of rain fall be experienced in all parts of the country has resulted to flooding causing houses and school buildings to be immersed. The Report by BNRCC (2011) has revealed that Nigeria and others within the Sub-Saharan region of Africa are in great risk of the impact of climate change.

Sambo (2010) has stated that the effects of climate change on education and other sectors is beyond borders and as such, it threatens global efforts for sustainable development and human efforts to live in peace. Education has been described as the foundation of which all other human endeavour is laid. It is on this backdrop that nations all over the world have come to place high premium value on education. Most countries have invested heavily on the development and sustainability of education with the believe that it will bring about all round societal development. Ogundare (2017) stated that education plays a cardinal role in nation building and as such, many nations of the world are making policies that will improve the quality of education in order to meet the growing need of the society. Regrettably, the education sector in Nigeria is facing a lot of challenges which threatens previous efforts made to provide quality and sustainable education in the country. According to Save the Children Report (2008) cited in Ogundare (2017), it is projected that children of school going age will be the most affected by the impact of climate change.

According Bangay and Blum (2010), the sever effects of climate change can be seen in the increasing cases of unembellished weather conditions such as drought, heat waves, flooding high sea levels, desertification, erosion and hash environmental condition currently been faced across the world. All these developments have the potentiality of affecting the livelihood of people thereby cause untold hardship and hunger which may affecting school attendance. In the last one decade, there have rural-urban migration due to flood prone areas and the need to move to a safer area for settlement. The movement comes with economic and social challenges for the new areas being settled. This implies that school buildings and other educational resources will be stretched beyond limits considering high population of learners as a result of such movement. Also, migration due to flooding has severely affected children enthusiasm to attend school.

### **Implication on educational management**

Climate change threatens the existence of man and his environment. The school as a social organisation is not spare by this development. In Nigeria, especially in riverine communities, many school children are always affected by heavy down pour of rains. Some of the children are always absent from school when it rains very hard. This absenteeism and abandoning school activities due to flooding obviously impact negatively on learners' academic success. Based on literature, the major problem confronting all stakeholders is how to respond rapidly to this global menace. Educational mangers in this context include those saddled with responsibility of making decisions that will reduce the impacts of climate change on education. These include; the Federal Government through the Federal Executive council, the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Education, Educational Planners, Curriculum experts, teachers at all levels, parents, media and the general public.

The Federal Executive Council is the highest executive body in the land. It comprises the president, ministers and heads of MDAs. Its main responsibilities include, implementing laws made by the Legislative arm of government. Its role also includes formulating policies for the good of the people. FEC haw the obligation to project on the impact of climate change and make efforts towards addressing issues identified. In the last two decades, Nigeria has been signatory to many conventions, conferences and declaration on climate change. Yet, Federal government has failed to implement the decisions of these conferences thereby putting the country at risk of the impact of climate change.

The Ministry of the environment is a very important organ of government responsible for coordinating and implementing policies of the federal government on environment related issues. Most schools in the South East and other locations in the country that are sited near erosion site are at the verge of being destroyed. Hence, the ministry of environment ought to make assessment of these sites and provide relief through the Ecological Funds. School sited in these areas should be relocated to avoid loss of lives. The Ministry of Education on the hand is responsible for making policies that affects the development of education in the country. As part of its duties, the ministry is to laisse with relevant stakeholders in making policies that will address the impact of climate change. This could be done through analysis situational reports on school locations before siting schools. The nation's curriculum should be designed in such a way

that it takes into cognisance rainy season. So that, during such rainy period children should be at home to avoid loss of lives.

To education planners, climate change is a wake up call all in the educational industry, especially education planners. The future of education in the country is hinge on how educational planners are able to brainstorm on possible solutions to curb threats of climate change. The challenge to climate change in Nigeria has been identified as lack of awareness. The media should help publicize its to media users so all may understand the impact of climate change. The general public is called upon to adjust their lives by indulging in practices that friendly to the environment. These practices include disposing waste at the designated centres, avoiding the temptation of building houses on floor prone areas or on drainage, avoiding the burning of bushes, etc.

### **Conclusion**

The reality of the impact of climate change here with us and only deliberate actions by government, communities and individual that can stem the tide of this global peril. Fascinatingly, climate change is a global challenge brought upon us by our actions or inactions. To this end, every hand must be on deck (governments and civil societies) must make concerted efforts in extenuating the challenges of climate change in Nigeria various strategies.

### **Recommendation**

Based on relevant literature and opinion of scholars on the subject matter, the following recommendations were made.

1. Curriculum planners should design curriculum in such a way that it will address climate change effect and finetune a way to ensure adaptation at all levels of education
2. Capacity training programmes should be organized to train teachers on the impact of climate change
3. Schools located near erosion sites should be relocated to safe locations
4. Adaptation to the new normal brought about by climate change in education should tackled by all stakeholders in the sector
5. Government should initiate tree planting project to help arrest deforestation caused by the impact of climate change. By this, trees should be planted in all schools.

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