

GEOGRAPHY EDUCATION FOR JOB CREATION AND SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Every year, Geography graduates join other graduates from other disciplines to storm the labour market in search of employment. The consequence of this is the high rate of unemployment and waiting endlessly for jobs, which are not in sight. This situation is further aggravated by the lack of awareness among the Geographers of the potentials in them and ignorance among employers of what geography can offer the society. It is against this background that this paper seeks to examine the various areas where geographers can create jobs for themselves through geographic education as well as examine geography for sustaining national development. The paper concluded with a call for the continuous teaching of basic geographical principles and techniques in our educational institutions and the government to give more recognition to Geography because of its vital role to our national economy.

Introduction

Every year, a lot of graduates are turned out into the labour market in search of employment. Incidentally, Geographers are among these graduates. Unfortunately, the geographers wait endlessly trying to fix themselves up in the government employment forgetting that by their own

training, they are supposed to create jobs for themselves.

That there is high unemployment rate in the country is no longer new. Among the Geographers, there is the complaint of limited career prospects in geography thereby making them to cross

over to other disciplines. There is also great ignorance among employers about the purpose and nature of Geography (Ologe, 1990: 209). The Nigerian society is also very ignorant of the potentials in geographers (Sada, 1990: 192). Added to this is the inability of our government to meet the employment needs of her teeming population.

In view of the above, there is the need for this paper to enable the geographers not only to know their potentials but also create jobs for themselves and to let the government be aware of the capabilities of geographers.

Essentially, this paper will look at two aspects which are geography education for job creation and geography for sustainable national development. Before the first aspect is considered, it is proper that Geography Education is defined. Geography is the study of the locational and spatial variation in both physical and human phenomena on Earth. Education is defined as the process of educating or teaching. Educate means “to develop the knowledge, skill, or character of” From these definitions, it means education has a purpose which is to develop the knowledge, skill or character of students.

From the above, Geography Education may be defined as developing the knowledge, skill or character of students in the location and spatial variation of both physical and human phenomena on the Earth. Having defined Geography Education, the writers will now consider Geography Education for job creation.

Geographic Education for Job Creation

In geography education, the geographers acquire a lot of skills like intellectual, map reading, cartographic, computational and analytical and management skills (Abegunde, 1988: 34 – 36).

The acquisition of these various skills not only makes the geographers capable of taking up jobs with the governments, private companies but also create jobs for themselves. Unfortunately, most geographers only take up jobs with the governments and fail to realize that they can create jobs where others can also be gainfully employed under them.

In the geographic literature, career outlets for geographers have been discussed (Akinbode, 1988: 57 – 66), Abegunde (1987: 476, 1988: 36 0 42), Ologe (1990: 211 – 216).

At this point, it becomes necessary to look at areas where the geographers can create jobs for themselves and others in stead of waiting to be employed by either the government of other employers or labour.

a) Self Employment:

Here, the geographer can operate at the independent and sub-professional levels. Before he can be self-employed, he needs to have all the relevant technical know-how by taking certificate course in a school of survey and advanced cartography. Among the careers he can venture into after acquiring the technical know-how are draughtmanship in

surveying, cartography and engineering, etc.

b) **Professional Establishments:**

Here, the geographer goes into the partnership with other professionals in architecture, estate management, surveying, journalism and gets paid in the process.

c) **Specialized Professions:**

In these professions, the geographer after the first degree can proceed to get Masters Degree or even Ph.D in land and quantity surveying, estate management, architecture, urban and regional planning, cartography, business management, insurance, water resources management, etc. In fact, these are highly skilled professions. After becoming specialized he takes professional qualifying examinations. After becoming specialized and qualified, he can set up a consultancy firm to provide services to governments, private individuals, organizations, etc.

d) **Collaborative Efforts**

Here, the geographer can collaborate with people from other disciplines where he can borrow from others, that is, adopting the interdisciplinary approach or eclectic approach or with the government because of logistics to carry out a particular activity or project.

Even Ofomata (1990: 137) noted “trained geographers can now work side by

side with their colleagues from other disciplines in government and in business, in the public as well as in the private sector as urban (town) and regional planning officers, surveyors, rural development officers, administrative officers, business executive and research officers in various facets of our national life”.

Next to be considered is geography and sustainable national development

Geography and Sustainable National Development

The contributions by geographers can help sustain the national development. Development takes place with people in the environment. The efforts by geographers therefore in exposing the spatial-temporal nature of developments over our space so as to know where there is even distribution of developments and then bridge the gap where there is uneven distribution can be said to aid a great deal in sustaining our national development. A few examples will illustrate the above thus:

In national planning, the physical planning of resources is one important aspect, but before the resource can be planned for a better use, there is the need to know where the resources exist and what potentialities there are for improvement or what uses to which the resources can be put into in addition to having information about the desirable goal of the society. Thus, the geographer has as one of his tasks in national planning to embark on a land-use survey along with an inventory of resources, present and potential (Ofomata, 1990: 134).

Anikweze (2004: 61) observed that geography has contributions to make towards the efficient management of resources in Nigeria in the areas of information and data base provision and their application in the fields of agriculture, forestry, water resources, land-use, census surveys and population estimation, cartography and mapping, weather and climate and most importantly, in environmental protection and disaster sensitization. According to him, the knowledge of geography could be exploited for environment impact assessment and sensitivity index mapping, cropland identification and farm-land appraisals, inventory of forest resources and timber-land appraisals; detection of water pollution and assessment of wet-land capabilities, delimitation of population centers into enumeration areas, monitoring of land-use changes over time in both urban and rural areas, detection of nature – related disasters and damage assessments due to storm, floods, drought, erosion, fire, etc and monitoring of transportation issues such as traffic assessment, allocation of parking spaces and bus stops, port decongestion and planning of new route-ways with reference to settlement.

According to him, in addition to this policy satisfying the balance in regional economic development of the country, it is likely that by involving the products of geographic education and discipline in government, it will draw the attention of democratic leaders to equitable distribution of development projects such as building of new settlements, construction and maintenance of route

ways, establishment and localization of industries, expansion of municipal utilities, expansion of food production, expansion of communication systems and the “intensification of inter-regional trade and greater spatial interaction among people (Areola and Filani, 1981). Furthermore, with this policy, there will be integration of environment such as parks and reservation areas for tourism, the improvement of man-made uncomfortable but rich environment (e.g. oil-pollution in Niger Delta and overcrowding in urban centers), coping with aversive environment (e.g. fighting desert encroachment and desertification in the northern fringes), and protection of national resources for regional development which will also cover the control of wastes and the conservation of resources for sustainable development.

The environment today is seriously endangered because of its exploitation by man with little or no efforts at mitigating the effects arising from its over-exploitation. As a result of this exploitation, the call now is that as the environment is being used, the needs of future generations must not be compromised, that is, sustainable development.

From the above, we can see how geography has been very useful with the environment being its laboratory. Adalemo (1990: 169) showed why despite the stigma attached to environmental determinism, geography cannot and should not run away from its responsibility in the area of environmental studies – a responsibility which many expect

geographers to perform and for which they are known to have the capability especially in environmental education, monitoring and management.

Olofin (2000:9) on the importance of environmental monitoring said "environmental monitoring is watching over or checking the environment in order to warn against, or control deterioration and advice in favour of quality. In carrying out this, the geographers use instruments and techniques that can ensure the measurement of environmental variables of concern on a regular basis and on a permanent basis.

According to him, the proper monitoring of environmental variables is useful first, in detecting the spatial and temporal trend of particular variables whether negative or positive. The knowledge of this trend is important in evaluating the environmental quality at any particular point in time and for a particular place. Thus, this evaluation enables us to know whether the overall quality of the environment is deteriorating or improving. Much more, this knowledge is important because it aids man to maintain the environment properly to achieve the desired sustainable use.

So far, we can see here that geography plays a very significant role in sustaining our national development apart from the fact that its acquisition can assist the geographers realize the potentials in them in relation to job creation.

Conclusion

Having examined the various areas where the geographers can create jobs for

themselves and others as well as sustain our national development through geographic education, there is no doubt that there is the need for the continuous teaching of geographical principles and techniques to geographers in our institutions of learning in order to create the awareness in them for job creation and hence, less dependent on government for employment and also make the employers aware of the societal relevance of geography.

Unfortunately, according to Areola (1994: 29), these principles and techniques are not given much prominence in our curricular in many of our institutions in the department of geography. Furthermore, there is even there is the tendency in many departments towards the abandonment of the pursuit of these practical geography domains to physical geographers as if the techniques were not of much relevance to human geographers who interact more with policy formulators, development planners and decision-makers in government.

The need for the government to give more recognition to geography as done in the advanced countries of United States, Great Britain, Canada, etc. becomes necessary in view of the vital role it can play in the spatial analysis of our national economy.

Until the above is done, the Geographers may not realize their potentials in terms of job creation for themselves, and others in the sustenance our national development.

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