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The Importance of Environmental Education to Secondary Education Level in Akure South Local Government Area, Ondo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Every nation desires to achieve a state of development because of the benefit therein to be enjoyed within and outside the state. Yet, many nations are undergoing the process of development because of all that it entails for nation building and national development. The rapid societal transmission with its positive and negative effects is enough of a scenario for the stimulation of global reorientation of education and reduction of apathy especially in the developing world. Hence, this paper focused on the Importance of Environmental Education to secondary education level. It also discussed Environmental Education (EE) as a key to creating environmental consciousness/awareness, empowerment and participation in

decision-making regarding some of the world's vital environmental issues and challenges at secondary school level. Simple random sampling technique was adopted to select 400 respondents. Relevant data were collected using a self-made questionnaire titled "Environmental Education Questionnaire" (EEQ). Two research hypotheses were formulated. The findings showed that, there was no significant relationship among the respondents in their perception based on gender and class level (JSS and SSS). Based on these findings, some specific recommendations were made for implementation.

Key words: Environmental Education (EE), gender, nation building, empowerment, societal transitions global challenges.

Introduction

In the past, little attention was given to education in relation to a growing awareness of environmental problems and development. That is to say that the societal transition 'now' as a result of science and technology and its 'adverse' effect on the environment called for attention on Environmental Education in relation to moderating such problems. According to Ogueri (2004), Environmental Education is concerned with the quality of human environment for healthy development as well as for healthy life. It seeks to improve the quality of the realized perpetual environment, develop understanding of the influences which restrict or modify it, by raising the quality of information and improving the capacity of acting responsibly with it, and by heightening aesthetic awareness, improving sensitivity to its less tangible qualities and develop creative responsiveness.

Bricero & Pitt (1988) stated the following concepts on the components of Environmental education (EE)

- ❖ It is founded on the inseparability of the human subject and environment;
- ❖ It recognizes environment as encompassing physical, spatial, social and temporal components, along with their aesthetic, cultural, political and economic characteristics;
- ❖ It recognizes the enabling and constraining properties of energy and material resources;

- ❖ It recognizes the corresponding uniqueness of individual environments;
- ❖ It recognizes the uniqueness of the individual and selectivity to input and output.

The child socializes with the immediate environment and later with the extended environment. The values that are indirectly assimilated by the child are transferred to the demanding society (Obasoro, Ogungbemi and Adu-Peters, 2010). From the above assertions, it could be seen that environment and human being depend on each other for survival. Thus, any ‘education’ outside the environment lacks a solid foundation and can be likened to ‘a tea without sugar’. Man, is expected to take action on environmental quality for the future, and even for generations unborn.

Moreover, Ilesanmi (2006), stated that Environmental Education (EE) calls for the inevitable need of empowerment right from ‘youth’ and without Environmental Education (EE) in schools, the enhancement of empowerment with regard to world decision-making and/or problem solving (especially in the issues of global challenges – which have much to do with environmental issues) might be farfetched. Ogueri (2004) agreed with Ilesanmi (2006) by saying that Environmental Education (EE) bears in mind the environmental awareness, environmental ethics among others, as they have much to do with plans for effective community undertakings. Environmental issues and problems that face mankind are so broad that disciplines from all areas are concerned and relevant. On the other hand, Environmental Education (EE) provides for the cooperation of disciplines and professions in regard to matters of environmental quality. Students as leaders of tomorrow need to have experience in taking initiative relative to the urgent requirements of society in areas of global challenges. Such experience can be acquired through Environmental Education by planned development of the pupils and students capabilities.

Environmental Education is essential to developing a healthy and sustainable society. Many of our current environmental problems are due to wide spread or ignorance of basic ecological facts of life (Adesina, 1988). The importance of Environmental Education in relation to sustainable growth cannot be over emphasized. Education for environment touches all facets of human life; ecology, transport, energy, living conditions, nature/resources, regulation/innovation, working life, organization, population, food and

production. No wonder, many developed countries embraced Environmental Education in different levels of education in early twentieth century (Adesina, 1988). In the United States and in Germany, functional education refers to education that comes spontaneously from the influence of the environment; it is a kind of undirected, 'natural' education, that is different from deliberate, goal-oriented education, that is directed by man while in Western Europe, it refers to education that comes from the child's needs, and that uses the child's interest as a mechanism for activating him and towards his desirable activities; its purpose is to develop the life of the mind, that acts from the wholeness of organic life, with relation to practical life in the present and in the future(Zeilberger, 1999).

According to Ogueri (2004) on the perception of gender, more male respondents, rated high in the importance of Environmental Education as 'important' compared to female respondents. Also, Ilesanmi (2006) in his findings of the perception of respondents on the importance of Environmental Education among the JSS and SSS, 60 percent of the respondents strongly agreed on the importance of Environmental Education.

From this perspective, these respondents opined that Environmental Education should be seen as a key to empowerment and participation in decision-making regarding some of the world's vital environmental issues and challenges, at any level whatsoever-hopefully a step towards future sustainable development.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to identify the importance of Environmental Education to secondary school level in Akure South Local Government. Specifically, the study determined the students' perception by gender and class level.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses guided this study:

1. There is no significant relationship between male and female respondents in their perception of the importance of Environmental Education to secondary school level.

2. There is no significant relationship between Junior Secondary School (JSS) and Senior Secondary School (SSS) students in their perception of Environmental Education to secondary school level.

Population and sample

Four hundred students constituted the sample from Akure South Local Government Secondary Schools. The sample was drawn through simple random method. The researchers administered the questionnaire personally with two research assistants. Face-to-face method was adopted to ensure that the filling of the questionnaire was done by the participants meant for it.

Instrument

A four Likert-scale questionnaire titled 'Environmental Education Questionnaire' (EEQ) ranging from Strongly Agree (SA) to Strongly Disagree (SD) was used to elicit responses from the respondents. It consisted of Sections A & B. Section A deals with biodata of respondents. Section B consists of 31 items which sought information on the importance of Environmental Education to secondary school level.

Validation of instrument

The instrument used in collecting the data was found valid because it was subjected to face and content validation from test and measurement experts. A test-retest assessment was done with 25 students from Osun State secondary schools. A correlation co-efficient index of 0.70 was accepted significant at the alpha level of 0.05. The results of the data analysed are presented in subsequent discussion. All the two hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

The various results of the research hypotheses of the study are presented below:

Hypothesis 1: *There is no significant relationship between male and female respondents in their perception of the importance of Environmental Education to secondary school level.*

Since the calculated r-value (0.986) was greater than the critical r-value (0.195) at 0.05 level of significance, $df = 198$. The null hypothesis was rejected. The result revealed that there was significant relationship between male and female in their perception of the importance of Environmental Education to secondary school level in Akure (See table 1).

Hypothesis 2: *There is no significant difference between JSS and SSS respondents in their perception of the importance of Environmental Education to secondary school level in Akure.*

The calculated r-value (0.950) was greater than the critical r-value (0.195) at 0.05 level of significance, $df = 198$. The null hypothesis was rejected. The result in table 2 revealed that there was significant difference between JSS and SSS respondents in their perception of the importance of Environmental Education to secondary school level in Akure.

Discussion

The result of hypothesis one showed that there was a significant relationship between male and female in their perception of the importance of Environmental Education to secondary school level in Akure. A possible explanation could be that both male and female respondents are interested in knowing more about their environment. Ogueri (2004) in her research consistently supported this hypothesis when her finding revealed that there was a significant relationship in the relevance of Environmental Education to secondary school level in Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two showed that there was significant difference between JSS and SSS respondents in their perception on the importance of Environmental Education to secondary school level in Akure. A possible explanation could be that both the JSS and SSS in this Local Government are interested in knowing more on their environment and how to take care of it. Ilesanmi (2006) in his research consistently supported this hypothesis when he opined that Environmental Education is one of the main ways of responding to environmental advancement at all levels of education.

Conclusion

In this write up, Environmental Education have been explored and have been seen to touch all areas of life one can think of, man is to environment and environment is to man. The issue of nature and nurture has its foundation in

environment. Unless man understands, himself, his fellow human being and most especially his environment, he will not be able to solve his problems and contribute his/her quota to national development. In view of this, Environmental Education should be introduced to all levels of education in Nigeria and students in higher institutions should be made to take the course as one of the general courses also known as GST /GNS/GSE.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made since education is the life-wire of all human activities on the planets;

- (i) Environmental Education should be taught at all levels. That is from primary to tertiary levels
- (ii) Seminars and workshops should be organized for all teachers at all levels on the importance of Environmental Education.
- (iii) The Government and non-governmental organizations should create their awareness in the society.
- (iv) Ministry of land, culture, natural resources and tourism should create an avenue where students that is, the interested brilliant ones would have opportunity of reading courses in environment and education on scholarship or fellowship.

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Table 1: Relationship between gender and perception of Environmental Education (EE)

	Variables	No	df	r-cal value	r table value	Result
Gender's perception of Environmental Education	Male	200		0.986	0.195	Sig
	Female	200	198			

$P \leq 0.05$

Sig = Significant

r-calculated (0.986) was greater

Table 2: Relationship between secondary levels' perception of Environmental Education (EE)

	Variables	No	df	r-cal value	Crit, r table value	Result
Importance of Environmental Education	JSS	200		0.950	0.195	Sig
	SSS	200	198			

$P \leq 0.05$

Sig = Significant