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## Attitude of Teachers Towards the Teaching of Environmental Education in Primary Schools in Onitsha Urban

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By

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### Abstract

*Teachings with learning resources have positive results by way of enhancing academic achievement, retentions, transfer of knowledge and quality education. This paper discusses making learning real by using learning resources to enhance qualitative education. Transfer of knowledge can only be possible when curriculum content is made real to the learner during teaching-learning process. Learning resources make the teacher to be effective, efficient and practical in delivering the lesson. Learning resources include human beings and materials used in teaching and learning to achieve educational objectives and improve quality of education.*

A good environment promotes human health and helps to improve life. In the recent years, the increase in the consumption pattern, establishment of hard industries, high population density in urban areas, excessive burning, etc have posed serious problems to our environment. In support of this view, Okunlola (2011), pointed out that the factors that contribute to the loss of vital wetland resources in Nigeria are continuous increase in population size interfering with land use, unsustainable harvesting of timber and deforestation, farming pressure resulting from damming, pollution and climate change. These man made activities also threaten the environment that supports human living, he concluded.

Odedele and Egotanwa (2010), defined environment as the totality of our surroundings which either encourage or discourage and distort the development and survival of man (human-beings) Sada (1988), in Obasi (1995), saw environment as the sum total of all external conditions influencing the growth and development of an organism. He further explained that the environment is considered abused when injurious or corrupting element is introduced which by fouling it reduces the

satisfaction and utility derivable from growing and developing within it. According to him, those elements that insult the environment manifest themselves as wastes in different forms: gaseous, liquid or solid. Societal sensitivity to these forms of pollution tends to vary depending on differences in the levels of awareness, technology, socio-economic, developmental ideologies and philosophy. Thus if a society or nation is to take intelligent decisions about this, and register reasonable judgements, they must adequately introduce the study of environment to all, at all levels of education (Nursery to Tertiary Institutions) and to the public at large. This type of education is often referred to environmental education.

Environmental education generally refers to curriculum and programs which aim to teach people about the natural world and particularly about ways in which ecosystems work. It also aims at changing people's perceptions about the values of the natural world and to teach how to change environmental behaviours, such as getting people to recycle or how to build eco-friendly dwellings. Benes (2011), opined that children should learn how to recycle and keep from littering, study the effects of littering and the harms that come from the environment when they drop their candy wrappers on the ground.

Austrian Association for Environmental Education (2012), stated that the incorporation of environmental education into the school curriculum will help the students to: learn about the environment; develop skills to investigate and solve issues in the environment; acquire attitudes of care and concern for the environment; adopt behaviours and practices which protect the environment and understand the principles of ecologically sustainable development. UNESCO, Tbilisi Declaration (1978), stressed that environmental education is often used to imply education within the school systems, from primary to post secondary schools; and extends to all efforts to educate the public and increase people's knowledge and awareness about the environment and associated challenges. Furthermore, to develop the necessary skills and expertise to address the challenges and foster attitudes, motivations and commitments to make informed decisions and take responsible actions.

According to Okunlola (2011), the Nigerian Conservation Foundation was formed with the main objective of promoting environmental education and awareness amongst all strata of the Nigerian society. They embrace on three major thematic interventions to achieve the objective namely, schools conservation programme; community based education and promotion of environmental learning through publications, education materials, campaigns and other events. He further said that, through the nationwide school conservation programmes they have carried out various activities which include tree planting exercises campaigns, lectures and walks. All aimed at sensitizing young minds about human relationships and responsibility to the environment, he concluded. This implies that environmental education is not only

restricted to in-class lesson plans. New Zealand Council for Educational Research and Waikato University (2004), highlighted that to provide immediate and lasting benefits, there needs to be a whole school commitment to planning and integration, rather than relying on one or two enthusiastic teachers to drive environmental change. Hence, the need for teachers at all levels of education to include environmental lesson programmes in school activities. Thus, it will help to address and mitigate “nature deficit disorder” as well as encourage healthier lives.

Onitsha Urban is densely populated and full of refuse dumps in almost all the streets. Pollution abound in various forms – (i) Land pollution caused by excessive burning, indiscriminate dumping of refuse bins, flood, slums, etc. (ii) Water pollution caused by dumping waste into rivers, spilling of oil and gas into rivers etc. (iii) Air pollution caused by noise, human faeces, industrial fumes, smoke, etc. Individuals of all ages contribute in one way or the other to any type of this pollution. Children of primary school age most times drop waste indiscriminately, make noise in the schools, deposit faeces any how and even pollute the water they drink without the knowledge of hazards these things cause to human health. Some primary schools environments are not adequately taken care of. Refuse dumps are seen in school environments, adequate toilet facilities are not provided and the existing ones are not adequately taken care of. Some trees are cut down to provide spaces for more buildings and none is planted for replacement, noise making is not adequately controlled.

Perhaps this might be as a result that teachers who serve as medium of instruction in primary schools tend to develop unhealthy attitude towards the teaching of environmental education in primary schools. They pay little or no attention to the teaching of environmental education, not realizing that environmental education will help the pupils to develop factual knowledge about the natural environment, help them to start early in life to salvage the environment from hazardous elements.

Furthermore, it might be that the planning of some environmental programmes for primary schools is relegated to back-seat by primary school teachers. However these environmental programmes will help teach children from a very young age the progression of nature and environment, how to re-use items, so they won't end up in a trash dump, and what non-organic items do to the environment. Moreover it will help children learn about the necessity of protecting the environment and instill in them the sense of ownership and awareness of the world they live in. Therefore, the need for this study is to ascertain the attitude of primary school teachers towards the teaching of environmental education in primary schools.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The general purpose of this study was to ascertain the attitude of teachers towards the teaching of environmental education in primary schools. Specifically, this study will:

- i. Identify how primary school teachers understand the concept of environmental education.
- ii. Find out the attitude of teachers towards the teaching of environmental education in primary schools in Onitsha Urban.

### **Research Questions**

- i. What do primary school teachers understand to be environmental education?
- ii. What is the attitude of teachers towards the teaching of Environmental Education in primary schools?

### **Research Hypothesis**

There is no significant difference between the attitude of male and female teachers towards the teaching of environmental education.

### **Methodology**

This study is a descriptive survey research design carried out in Onitsha Urban of Anambra State, Nigeria. The population of the study consisted of 651 primary school teachers in the government owned primary schools in Onitsha urban. A sample of 180 teachers was drawn from the schools using simple random selection based on gender. Thus 120 females and 60 males formed the sample.

The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire titled "Environmental Education Survey" which was developed by the researcher. The instrument was divided into three sections: A,B and C. Section "A" sought the background information of the sampled teachers. Section "B" focused on the teachers understanding of Environmental Education, while Section "C" was concerned with statements to obtain information on attitude of teachers towards the teaching of environmental education. The research instrument was made of 21 items of a four point scale of Strongly Agree(4), Agree(3), Disagree(2) and Strongly Disagree(1). However, for negative statement, the reverse is the order of the weights assigned to them. {Strongly Agree (1), Agree (2), Disagree (3), strongly disagree (4)}

### **Reliability**

The reliability co-efficient of the instrument stood at 0.78 when computed. This was done through pilot study with 100 teachers teaching in Nnewi Urban Primary Schools. Data collected were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha to obtain the reliability co-efficient of the instrument.

### **Validity of the Instrument**

The validity of the instrument was established by a lecturer in Psychology and two lecturers in Measurement and Evaluation. They vetted the instrument to assess its relevance, coverage of the content areas, appropriateness of language used and

adequacy of the items to solicit answers for the research questions and hypothesis. They made useful suggestions which were incorporated into the final construction of the instrument. The initial version of the present instrument consisted 23 items but when vetted, two items were discarded because they were faulty.

### **Method of Data Collection**

The questionnaire was administered by hand by two assistants employed by the researcher and collected back by them. The respondents were requested to express their opinion in line with the items of the questionnaire. They were required to tick (x) to any option that corresponds to their opinions. The items were scored thus: strongly Agree (4 points), Agree (3 points), Disagree (2 points) and strongly disagree (1 point), for positive questions, while reverse is the order for negative statements.

### **Data Analysis**

The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation while the hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level using t-test statistics.

### **Decision Rule**

Mean score below 2.5 was rejected while mean score of 2.5 and above were considered acceptable.

### **Results and Interpretations**

#### **Research question one:**

What do primary school teachers understand to be environmental education?

**Table 1:** Mean and Standard Deviations of Responses on how the primary school teachers understand the concept of Environmental Education.

S/N	Items		SA	AD	SD		$\Sigma$	x	SD	Remark
1.	Environmental Education is the inculcation of environmental values and habits in peoples.	n	84	84	12	-	180	3.4	1.8	Agree
		x	336	252	24	-	612			
2.	It is a subject to be taught	n	78	60	30	12	180	3.2	1.7	Agree
		x	312	180	60	24	576			
3.	It is about the removal of refuse bins in	n	24	48	78	30	180	2.4	1.5	Disagree
		x	96	144	15	30	426			
					6					
					5					

	the environment.									
4.	It is concerned with the recycling of some waste.	n	18	48	60	54	180			
		x	72	144	12	54	390	2.2	1.4	Disagree
					0					
5.	It deals with the planting of trees.	n	18	36	60	66	180			
		x	72	108	12	66	366	2.0	1.4	Disagree
					0					
6.	It is concerned with creating environmental awareness.	n	108	54	18	-	180			
		x	432	162	36	-	624	3.5	1.8	Agree
7.	It teaches people about the natural world.	n	102	60	16	-	180			
		x	408	180	36	-	624	3.5	1.8	Agree
8.	It deals with building eco-friendly dwellings.	n	12	30	10	36	180			
		x	48	90	2	36	378	2.1	1.4	Disagree
					20					
					4					

Where: n = Number of Respondents; x = Score.

From the analysis of data in table 1, teachers understand the concept of Environmental Education to be inculcation of environmental values and habits in people, subject to be taught, creating environmental awareness, and teaching people about the natural world. The findings revealed that teachers have idea of environmental education.

### **Research Question 2**

What are the attitude of teachers towards the teaching of Environmental Education in primary schools?

**Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviations of Responses on the Attitude of Teachers towards the Teaching of Environmental Education.**

S/N	Items		SA	AD	SD	$\Sigma$	x	SD	Remark	
9	Environmental education is not a primary school subject.	n x	12 12	6 12	102 306	60 240	180 570	3.2	1.8	Agree
10	It is of little benefit to primary school pupils.	n x	84 336	72 216	18 36	6 6	180 594	3.3	1.8	Agree
11	There is no need of teaching environmental education at primary school because the pupils are tender.	n x	6 6	24 48	60 180	90 360	180 594	3.3	1.8	Agree
12	The Government Environmental Education workers have to sensitize the general public on the need for Environmental Education	n x	54 216	96 288	12 24	18 18	180 546	3.0	1.7	Agree
13	Pupils are not the major causes of Environmental hazards.	n x	12 12	42 84	66 198	60 240	180 534	2.9	1.7	Agree
14	It will help the pupils to be aware of the environment.	n x	102 408	72 216	6 12	- -	180 636	3.5	1.8	Agree
15	Pupils cannot recycle the waste in the environment.	n x	30 30	60 120	54 162	36 144	180 456	2.5	1.5	Agree
16	It will help the pupils to be aware of what causes hazards in the	n x	132 528	30 90	12 24	6 6	180 648	3.6	1.8	Agree

environment.

17	Pupils cannot understand the effects of environmental education on human life.	n	6	24	66	84	180				
		x	6	48	198	336	588	3.2	1.8	Agree	
18	Primary school teachers are not concerned with the teaching of environmental education.	n	12	6	78	84	180				
		x	12	12	234	336	594	3.3	1.8	Agree	
19	To help the pupils preserve the environment early in life.	n	84	90	6	-	180				
		x	336	270	12	-	618	3.4	1.8	Agree	
20	Environmental education is not included in the school time table.	n	18	-	72	90	180				
		x	18	-	216	360	594	3.3	1.8	Agree	
21	To help inculcate environmental values and habits in children.	n	132	36	-	12	180				
		x	528	108	-	12	648	3.6	1.8	Agree	

Where n = Number of respondents; x = score

The analysis of data in table 2 shows that some primary school teachers show positive attitude towards the teaching of environmental education because of the following: It will help the pupils to be aware of the environment, it will help the pupil to be aware of what causes hazards in the environment; help the pupils preserve the environment early in life and to help inculcate environmental values and habits in children. Whereas some show negative attitude towards the teaching of Environmental Education because Environmental Education is not a primary school subject, it benefits the pupils little, the pupils are tender, it is the duty of government workers to sensitize the general public on the need for Environmental Education, pupils are not the major causes of environmental hazards, pupils cannot recycle the waste in the environment, pupils cannot understand the effects of Environmental Education on human life;



primary school teachers are not concerned with the teaching of Environmental Education and finally it is not included in the school time table.

### **Research Hypothesis**

There is no significant difference between the attitude of male teachers and female teachers towards the teaching of Environmental Education.

**Table 3:** t-test comparison of the Attitude of Male and Female Teachers Towards the Teaching of Environmental Education.

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<b>Variable</b>	<b>No</b>	$\bar{X}$	<b>SD</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>t-cal</b>	<b>t-crit</b>	<b>Decision</b>
Male	60	40.45	6.36				H <sub>0</sub> <sup>1</sup>
Female	120	41.79	6.46	178	1.32	1.96	Accepted

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t - test calculation in table 3 reveals that the value (t-crit) is greater than the calculated value (t-cal), therefore the null hypothesis is accepted. This suggests that there is no significant difference between the attitude of male and female teachers towards the teaching of Environmental Education.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The study found out that primary school teachers understand the concept of environmental education to include the inculcation of environmental values and habits in people, creating environmental awareness, teaching people about the natural world and a subject to be taught in schools. These findings seem to agree with UNESCO, Tbilisi, Declaration (1978), which stressed that environmental education includes education within the school systems and extends to all efforts to educate the public and increase people's knowledge and awareness about the environment and associated challenges.

The study also revealed that some primary school teachers show positive attitude towards the teaching of environmental education because it will help the pupils: to be aware of the environment, and what causes hazards in the environment, start early in life to preserve environment and to inculcate environmental values and habits in children. Whereas some other teachers show negative attitude towards the teaching of Environmental Education because it is not a primary school subject, benefits the pupils little, pupils are tender, it is the duty of Government environmental workers, pupils are not the major causes of environmental hazards, pupils cannot recycle waste, pupils cannot understand environment effects on human life, it does not concern primary school teachers and it is not included in the school time table. As a result, the pupils are not adequately taught environmental effects. New Zealand Council for Educational

Research and Waikato University (2004), highlighted that to provide immediate and lasting benefits, there needs to be a whole school commitment to planning and integration rather than relying on one or two enthusiastic teachers to drive environmental change.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

The incidence of much deposits of wastes in and around primary schools in Onitsha Urban led to this Study, to ascertain the attitude of teachers towards the teaching of environmental education in Primary schools. Environmental Education survey was used to identify the teacher's understanding of the concept of Environmental Education and to ascertain their attitude towards the teaching of Environmental Education so as to start earlier to develop environmental love and need to preserve the environment in children. Eventually, the findings indicated that teachers understand environmental education to include the inculcation of environmental values, subject of study, creating environmental awareness and teaching people about the natural world.

Furthermore, some primary school teachers show positive attitude towards the teaching of environmental education because it will only help the pupils to be aware of the environment, know the causes of environmental hazards and preserve the environment. Some primary school teachers have more reasons of showing negative attitude to the teaching of environmental education. Among the reasons are: it is not a primary school subject, it benefits the pupils little, and they are tender, it is government's environmental workers duty, pupils are not the major causes of hazards, it is not included in the school time table, pupils cannot recycle, ecetra. However, there is no significant difference between the attitude of male and female teacher towards the teaching of Environmental Education.

### **Recommendations**

The study recommends as follows:

1. Teachers should be trained to effectively teach and incorporate environmental studies in their curricula.
2. School administrators should include Environmental Education in the school time table.
3. The Nigerian conservation foundation should extend the formation of conversation clubs to primary schools in all the primary schools in Nigeria.
4. Campaigns, lectures and walks should be organized from time to time by government environmental workers for primary school teachers to sensitize their minds on the importance of teaching Environmental Education.
5. Schools should promote green school and green facilities promotion.
6. Government should emphasize and encourage the celebration of Environmental Education week at least once a year in all the schools at all levels in Nigeria.

7. School administrators should emphasize that Environmental Education should form part of other extra-curricular activities carried out in primary schools.

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