

**Review Article***Copyright © All rights are reserved by Joseph Mosunmola Muraina*

Environmental Educational Policies in Africa: Impacts and Contributions to a Habitable Environment

Joseph Mosunmola Muraina**Department of Geography and Planning Science, Ekiti State University, Nigeria***Corresponding author:** Joseph Mosunmola Muraina, Department of Geography and Planning Science, Ekiti State University, Nigeria**Received Date:** March 30, 2023**Published Date:** April 14, 2023**Abstract**

This research takes a critical look into the environmental educational policies that are in force in Africa and the impacts and/or contributions of those policies to creating an environment that is habitable. The research looks into what environmental education is about and poses the question of what constitutes a habitable environment and seeks to provide ways in which enacted policies can create such an environment.

Introduction

Although new strides are being found in the field of science and technology, the field of environmental education is also recording some fascinating discoveries in the twentieth century. According to Le Grange [1], a rising awareness among humans is that the planet in which we live is one with finite resources. There are certain effects that go with exploiting the environment and awareness of these effects have been spreading since the sixties [1].

Literature Review**Environmental Education**

According to Gough [2], a precise definition cannot be given to environmental education in the same way that terms like "justice" or "love" cannot be described precisely because they are terms that will continue to be explored, speculated, and debated. Le Grange [1], supported that justification by adding that environmental education is a polysemantic and complex terminology that cannot be given a simple, fixed, and unambiguous definition. Over the years, there have been many changes to the definition of environmental education as well as the key principle of the subject [1]. The Tbilisi principles which were devised in 1977 did not impugn values to

environmental issues. However, the principles of UNCED NGO that were formulated in 1992, followed a value-based approach to environmental education. (Lotz, 1998) Environmental education is a wholistic learning process which has the objective of enhancing the literacy of learners about the environment. The main objective of environmental education is to develop a sense of responsibility in students towards the environment by making them engage actively in environmental conservation activities (Davidson-Hatzenbihler, 2018).

[2], while making an argument on environmental ethics, defines it as one of the branches of applied philosophy that is focused on the foundational concepts of environmental values. It is further concerned with issues that surround actions and attitudes in society as well as the policies that are set up for the sustenance of the systems of biodiversity and ecology. It sees to the application of ethical thinking to nature in the world and the relationship between human beings and planet Earth. Early introduction of children to reflections and questions that concern the environment as well as the actions and activities of human beings that affect it will help those children to start developing an attitude of care toward

their environment. Children are usually curious and inquisitive about their environment or surroundings and this curiosity can be taken advantage of by introducing philosophy during primary or secondary education. Thus, shaping the reasoning of the children and equipping them to take part in policy making and debates in the future [2]. The kind of education that eventually spurs sustainable development is the kind that gives citizens the power to make decisions and take actions responsibly based on adequate information for economic viability, environmental integrity, and a society that is just both for the present generation and for those of the future UNESCO, as referenced in [2].

Policy

Policy, according to Taylor (2002), is a framework that enables governance. In support of this definition, [3] added that a policy is a product of a process that moves through the stages of setting agendas, making decisions, and then implementing them. However, there are certain times where a policy is viewed as a document containing a set of regulations or rules which are to be applied instead of a process that allows shared actions and practices to be developed towards contributing to better methods of environmental protection and management.

Habitable Environment

Whether an environment is habitable or not boils down to its ability to support life in general – the ability of an environment to support, at least, a single organism [4]. The performance of an environment is measured in terms of its capability to provide its inhabitants with their needs (Binkley and Parker, 1978). Lantrip [5] adds that for an environment to be planned or built, it is necessary that the physical features that are necessary for satisfying the needs of the inhabitants to be identified, and then, included. An environment needs to be able to support reproduction – if it cannot, the future of the organism in that environment [4] will be limited. The future contributions that students can make in society depends largely on the kind of education that they have received – after all, it is education that shapes students' belief systems and characteristics. (Žalėnienė and Pereira, 2021). Damoah and Omodan [6] support this with the argument that compendious educational policy is what drives the effective implementation of policy. Gan [7] posit that original ideas that develop in the classroom and the development of the independent minds of learners to facilitate personal aspirations and confidence should be the basis upon which successful implementation of environmental education policy is based.

Impacts and Contributions of Environmental Educational Policies in Africa

South Africa

According to Mosidi (1997), the very first effort towards the institutionalisation of environmental education in South Africa was the White Paper which was published in the year 1989. The White Paper incorporated certain concepts that were developed in international conferences which broke the limited conceptions of environmental education that had been prevalent until that time

[8]. Despite this effort, the funding that was provided towards formal education was limited on the grounds that the process of the policy was not inclusive (Deenanath, 2004). The year 1992 saw the establishment of the Environmental Education Policy Initiative (EEPI) which was geared towards the facilitation of collecting and developing policy choices of environmental education for schools in South Africa. The result of which was the inclusion of environmental education as a core principle in a new White Paper created by the government of South Africa on education and training in the year 1995. According to Principle No. 17 on the White Paper, environmental education which implies an integrated, active, and interdisciplinary approach to learning, must be included in all training and educational programmes. Environmental education is given priority in the White Paper of the South African government of 1980 because of the comprehensive suggestions on policy that relate to this area [6]. The government of South Africa then made a pledge to carry out the proposal in another White Paper in the year 1989. These requirements are documented in the Environmental Conservation Act of 1982 (precisely, Act 100 of 1982) and in the Environmental Conservation White Paper [6]. The establishment of an environmental education curriculum effort was driven by the 1996 transition from the formulation of a national policy for education to the development of curriculum. This was what led to the Environmental Education Curriculum Initiative (EECI) with the mission of adapting the policy of the EEPI to develop a curriculum. Since then, chance was given to the EECI to make a formal contribution to the new curriculum. It was the efforts that the EECI made that led to environmental education themes being incorporated into the specific outcomes of the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) curriculum and curriculum 2005 [1].

Angola

Due to the functionality of an environmental education policy in Angola, the country started to work towards a development of a strategy environmental education. Certain schools were selected and encouraged towards the development and implementation of environmental policies in school. The country's curriculum at the primary school level started to face revisions in order for environmental education to be taught in the primary level of education. As a result of this resource materials that support the process of environmental education were produced. (Obol et al., 2003).

Botswana

Environmental education is being infused in the educational curriculum in Botswana following the Botswana Vision 2016 for Environmental Management [9]. Primary school resource materials are in production and projects are undertaken to support the implementation of environmental education in the classroom. Trainers in environmental education are also put through training and a Botswana Environmental Education Network was established for that purpose [3].

Lesotho

In Lesotho, the integration of environment into all areas in the educational curriculum is being supported by the Lesotho

Environmental Education Support Project and the National Curriculum Development Centre [10].

Malawi

The impact of environmental education policy in Malawi saw to the integration of environmental education into the initial training that teachers receive. An environmental education course for industry is also being implemented to establish partnership between the government and the national university [3].

Namibia

The development initiative of an environmental education curriculum in Namibia was established by the National Institute of Education Development. The focus of the project was to include environmental education into the educational curriculum in the country and to provide a platform for teachers and advisers to be developed professionally.

Analysis

Much effort has been made towards the development and implementation of policy for environmental education in Africa. Forty-six percent of studies that have been carried out on environmental education show that the implementation of educational policies and the outcomes of environmental education and training led to students' participation in one environmental activity or the other while undergoing an environmental education programme. Majority of these activities were geared towards limiting environmental degradation such as planting trees [11], cleaning school yards and beaches [12], or removal of invasive species of plants [13]. An instance is with Madagascar, where students were reported to have built tree nurseries and planted more than five thousand native seedlings around their villages and schools. The students used these mediums to restore the land which was degraded in their neighbourhoods and establish a protective buffer that allowed for the building of a national park [14]. Thirty-nine percent of studies on environmental education show that environmental education programmes increase the capacity of groups or communities to address issues regarding conservation. The environmental education programmes which stem from environmental education policies were successful because of the improvement in the relationship and communication among various groups of stakeholders. Other reasons for their success include increased participation of communities in conservation projects, enhancement of the professional skills and knowledge of formal and nonformal educators, and establishment of groups of local governments [15].

Conclusion

The definition of environmental education given by Davidson-Hatzenbihler (2018) is that it is a wholistic process of learning with the aim of enhancing the knowledge of learners about their environment. The point of this is to create a sense of responsibility in the students towards the environment and get them to become active participants in the efforts to conserve the environment.

To this end, environmental education policies were formed to instil in young students the need to pay careful attention to their

environment. It wasn't until 1980 that the government of South Africa decided to give environmental education priority in their educational curriculum [6]. The large impact of environmental education policies across the various countries in Africa has led to the incorporation of environmental education into all areas of educational curriculum. The environmental education programmes which were set up after the policies were implemented spurred some kind of environmental action or activity among students. The instance of students in Madagascar planting tree nurseries is a definite example [16,17].

Acknowledgment

None.

Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest.

References

1. Le Grange L (2002) Towards a 'language of probability' for environmental education in South Africa. *South African Journal of Education* 22(2): 83-87.
2. Nneji B (2020) Childhood philosophy: a CASE for environmental ethics at basic education in Nigeria (Africa). *International Journal of Ethics Education* 5(2): 197-210.
3. Obol C, Allen I, Bach HS (2003) Environmental education policy processes in the southern African Region. *Southern African Journal of Environmental Education* 20: 22-38.
4. Cockell CS, Bush T, Bryce C, Direito S, Fox-Powell M, et al. (2016) Habitability: a review. *Astrobiology* 16(1): 89-117.
5. Lantrip DB (1997) Defining habitable: a performance-based approach. *Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design* 24(5): 647-668.
6. Damoah B, Omodan BI (2022) Determinants of effective environmental education policy in South African schools. *International Journal of Educational Research Open* 3, 100206.
7. Gan D (2021) Environmental education leadership-the perceptions of elementary school principals as expressed in their drawings and explanations. *Environmental Education Research* 27(10): 1440-1466.
8. UNESCO U (1977) The Tbilisi Declaration. In *Intergovernmental Conference on Environmental Education*. Tbilisi, Georgia: USSR, pp. 14-26.
9. Kethoilwe MJ (2003) Vision 2016: A Viable Tool for Environmental Education, Conservation News Botswana.
10. LEESP (Lesotho Environmental Education Support Project) (2001) Model schools in environmental education. Maseru: LEESP
11. Harder MK, Velasco I, Burford G, Podger D, Janoušková S, et al. (2014) Reconceptualizing 'effectiveness' in environmental projects: Can we measure values-related achievements? *Journal of environmental management* 139: 120-134.
12. Uneputti P, Evans SM, Suyoso E (1998) The effectiveness of a community education programme in reducing litter pollution on shores of Ambon Bay (eastern Indonesia) *Journal of Biological Education* 32(2): 143-147.
13. Krasny ME, Lee SK (2002) Social learning as an approach to environmental education: Lessons from a program focusing on non-indigenous, invasive species. *Environmental Education Research* 8(2): 101-119.
14. Dolins FL, Jolly A, Rasamimanana H, Ratsimbazafy J, Feistner AT (2010) Conservation education in Madagascar: three case studies in the biologically diverse island-continent. *American Journal of Primatology* 72(5): 391-406.

15. Ardoin NM, Bowers AW, Gaillard E (2020) Environmental education outcomes for conservation: A systematic review. *Biological Conservation* 241: 108224.
16. Binkley JL, Parker JA (2016) Specifying for user needs in office environments. In *Facility Programming*, Routledge, pp. 245-264.
17. Gough N (2000) Studying research methodologies and methods in education. Le Grange L (co-ordinator). *Leadership in Education Study Guide for Unit, 2*.