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X-Raying the Relationship Between Students Ethnicity and Their Perception of Environmental Health Course Content

KEYWORDS: Environmental health, instructional materials Students and Ethnicity Perceptions, School Environment

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ABSTRACT *The study examined ethnicity and students with regard to the development of environmental health content. The study also examined the differences between the variables of students and teachers as they affect their choice of requirements necessary for validation and development of environmental health content. In the same vein the influence of variables of objective content, teaching aids and teaching methods on the independent variables was also examined. The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consisted of health and physical education, geography, biology and agricultural science teachers and students in selected secondary schools in Edo State. The sampling method used was the multi-stage sampling technique which was employed to select 1000 participants for the study. The instrument used for the study was a questionnaire. The data collected were subjected to statistical analysis using Pearson Product Moment correlation, Spearman correlation coefficient for two independent sample mean, the Scheffe post hoc test. They were used to test the null hypotheses formulated to solve the problem of the study at 0.05 alpha level of significance. Results of the study revealed a significant relationship between students and ethnicity perceptions towards the course content of environmental health with a calculated mean of 1.9081, standard deviation 1.20724 and rho value of .880 (P<0.05). Conclusively, the identified culture by the students should be taken into consideration in the development of environmental health content. On the findings made, it was recommended that there is need to study the culture of the people since the content is expected to be a selection of issues from the people culture.*

Introduction

People need to live in a clean and safe environment. This means clean air, clean water, uncontaminated soil, and healthy buildings. The safety described here relates to environmental safety, rather than human ones. The emphasis on human needs does not mean ignoring the interconnected ecosystems involved. Recognizing a healthy environment as a fundamental human right has not yet been institutionalized nationally or internationally. However, this is what should be in the next frontier for sustainable development advocates. Admittedly, sustainable development has long been associated with environmental protection. There is a need for us to imbibe a sustainability orientation toward a clean and safe environment. The working definition of a sustainability strategy is that it does not remove the capacity for future generations to meet their needs, and it does not prevent current needs from being met. So the orientation toward a sustainable, clean and safe environment would be one where there is a balance with the other economic, social and governance needs being met.

Environmental health education has a major role to play in the area of information dissemination. This is a new approach that requires scientific accumulation of knowledge. Such knowledge involves climatic problems and identifies essential elements necessary for community mobilization and interdisciplinary and intersectional collaboration, appropriate training of students and making them relevant to the society (Briegar and Akpovi, 1982).

Until the 1700s, people did not have a huge impact on nature. There were fewer people in the world then for example, around 1650 the earth's population was put at 500 million. Stephen (1992) asserted that nature was still undisturbed in many places. There were large areas of the world where hardly anybody lived. Pollution was not a big problem, either. People did not know much about using chemicals. They had few machines to help them work. Blacksmiths were probably among the worst polluters, and they mostly made horseshoes or simple tools. The industrial revolution changed the relationship between people and nature. Technology in the 1800s improved at a fantastic rate. Advances in medicine gave more people longer lives. Advances in science gave these same people more control over their environment. Trains and streamships, and later, cars and airplanes, allowed everyone to move about more quickly than before.

Nature could not keep up. The old wilderness was vanishing. Natural resources were used up faster than they could be renewed. And the work of engines and factories was more than the weather could wipe away. All these need to be harnessed into a subject-based discipline that can fight the current climatic problem in the world.

Oxford Advanced Learner Dictionary (2000) defined perception as the way people notice things especially with their senses or the ability to understand the true nature of things. Cunningham & Cunningham (2004) stated that every student is calling for a basic knowledge that will make them understand environmental wisdom, environmental literacy that can help create a stewardship ethics and a sense of duty to care for and manage wisely our natural endowment. Environmental education is an important tool to prepare student in the next century. It will not be enough for some students to know what is going on while the rest of the students wonder in ignorance if the course is not included in the curriculum as a school-based subject.

Cunningham and Cunningham (2004) also stated that teachers are needed to understand the natural word and the effect of human activities on the environment, which

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are important to developing government and industrial policies, laws, and regulation to protect the environment. Most teachers see environmental health education as geography or integrated science which to many is an encompassing subject to tackle the issues of globalization, citizenship education, youth restiveness, environmental pollution, environmental degradation, and climate change which the experts have noted need to be included in the course of study that is required to protect both the health and the environment of people in the world. The purpose of this research is to x-ray the relationship between students ethnicity and their perception of environmental health course content.

Statement of the Problem

The place of culture in the national curriculum development is very important that most curriculum experts do not emphasise it but this have not been followed systematically. The reason is environmental health course lack cohesion, content and methods because the course is not available in the secondary school curriculum. Therefore, the problem of this study is: is our cultural behavior are not reflected in the school curriculum? So this work is therefore necessary to cover this gap in the educational system as it affect environmental health development.

Hypothesis

1. Ethnicity and students' perception of the course content of environmental health course would not be significant.
2. Age and students' perception of the course content of environmental health course would not be significant.

Methodology

The descriptive survey design was used for the study. The population of the study consisted of health and physical education, geography, biology and agricultural science teachers and students in selected secondary schools in Edo State. The sampling method used was the multi-stage sampling technique which was used to select 1000 participants for the study.

The data collected were subjected to statistical analysis using the Pearson Product Moment correlation and the Spearman correlation coefficient of two independent sample mean.

Instrument

The instrument used for the study was a questionnaire. The instrument was an adoption from Mills (1996) and the West African Examination Council (WAEC) 2003 syllabus, content on health science, biology, agricultural science, geography and physical education. The research instrument was divided into six sections. These include: Section A for demographic data, Section B which focused on curriculum objectives of environmental health, Section C which dealt with the content of environmental health, Section D which addressed objectives and content that were observed by the invigilator, Section E dealt with teaching aids and Section F which contained items related to teaching methods employed in teaching environmental health. This instrument had a reliability coefficient of 0.84 using Cronbach's alpha. The instrument was administered to the sampled respondents in the selected ten (10) secondary schools from the three (3) Senatorial Districts in Edo State personally with the aid of four research assistants

Results and Discussion

Hypothesis:

There would be no significant relationship between ethnicity and students' perception on the course contents of environmental health course.

Table 1: Spearman rank order analysis of significant relationship between ethnicity and students perception on environmental content

Variable	N	Mean	Std	rho	Df	t_{cal}
Ethnicity and students' perception of content	675	1.9081	1.20724	.880	674	-99.330

P<0.05

Post Hoc Test of Significant difference in mean

Variables	Post hoc test (F)	
	Value/Group	Sig.
Bini	40.3878	.004
Esan	9.3878	.379
Ora	31.000	.047

Table 1 above shows the rho results for the responses on ethnicity and students in environmental health education course content, a calculated mean of 1.9081, standard deviation 1.20724 at alpha (α) level of 0.05 and a rho value of .880 which shows that there is a relationship between ethnicity and students. This therefore shows that there is a relationship between the various ethnic groups that made up the area and students towards the content of environmental health. Hence, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between ethnicity and students' perception on the course content was rejected, indicating that there is significant relationship between ethnicity and students on the course content of environmental health.

Hypothesis 1 sought to find out if there is a significant relationship between ethnicity and students' perception on the course content. From the table analysis, it was discovered that there is a high relationship between ethnicity and students perception towards content development. This is necessary because various communities have different input towards curriculum development, because without human behaviour being studied human developmental studies are incomplete. Behaviours of communities vary, so also the belief of the people about their environment varies. From the above, the students and the community agreed that the stated content by the researcher is highly valid to be included in the environmental health curriculum which are itemized below.

- What is Environmental Health?
- Different types of pollution
- What is pollution?
- What is environmental sanitation?
- Who are the agents of sanitation?
- Disposal of waste
- What is earthquake?
- What is tsunami?
- Types of earthquake
- Occupational hazards
- Public health agencies
- What is housing?
- What are the criteria for good housing?
- What is vegetation?
- Different type of vegetation
- Objectives of environmental health education

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Omobude-Idiado and Adegbenro (2010) agreed with the findings above that the nature of diseases was not known in the 18th century that illness was attributed to various causes such as smell emanating from decayed organic matters, evil spirits, gods, departed ones and witches. However, the situation has changed with the present time because it is the responsibility of the individual, families and community to strive to be healthy, this shows that the communities and family setting is a necessity to be studied when developing a curriculum. Green (1979), Omobude Idiado and Adegbenro (2010) also agree with the above perception.

Owie (2005) agreed with the findings and posited that community and environmental health is a broad area in health education that it deals with the environmental health role of the individual in the community and the relationship among schools, society and the home in promoting health. This means that the teacher is fully equipped with the environmental health role of the individual in the community and this is subsequently transferred to the students, it will help the students to appreciate their roles as individual prospective parents in their communities, if they understand the belief of the various ethnic group that made up their areas.

Conclusion

That the understanding of the culture of the people is necessary in the selection of environmental health curriculum, that curriculum is an extraction from the culture of the people, so without the cultural believe of the people it will be difficult for education to achieve its ultimate aim behavioural change. It was also concluded that the age variable should be taken into consideration in the development of environmental health curriculum.

Recommendation

- First and foremost, issues bordering on the meaning of environmental health, public health agencies, housing, pollution, earthquake, tsunami, sanitation, vegetation, hazards and waste disposal should form core issues of concern in environmental health education curriculum.

- There is need to study the culture of the people since the content is expected to be a selection of issues from the people's culture.

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