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MANAGING ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION USING ENVIRONMENTAL CLUBS AND AMBIENCE ENVIRONMENT IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT

The study examined managing environmental education using environmental clubs and ambience environment in public primary schools in Rivers State. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. Descriptive design was used. The population consisted of 10,265 environmental clubs pupils in 961 public primary schools in Rivers State. Simple random sampling technique was used to draw 535 respondents. The instruments for data collection was Environmental Education using Environmental Clubs Questionnaire (EEECQ) and Ambience Environment Questionnaire (AEQ) with 20 items for independent variables and 20 items for dependent variable structured on a modified four point likert scale of very high extent (VHE), high extent (HE), Low Extent (LE) and very low extent (VLE). The instrument was validated by experts in Test and Measurement. The reliability of the instrument was determined through Cronbach method with 0.80 index. Simple regression was used to answer the research questions and t-test associated with simple regression was used to test. The findings among others showed that managing environmental education using environmental clubs predicted ambience environment with 54% and initiating environmental education using environmental clubs significantly predicted ambience environment in public primary schools in Rivers State. It was recommended among others that Government should include more topics on environmental education in the curriculum especially in the primary school because good childhood habits are hard to undo.

Keywords: Environmental Club, Environmental education, Global warming, Climate change.

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INTRODUCTION

The environment is currently one of the biggest and hottest issues of concern of the planet earth. Global warming occasioned by climate change are on everyone's mind. The term global

warming refers to rising global temperature while climate change includes other more specific kinds of changes. Warmer global temperatures in the atmosphere and ocean leads to climate changes affecting rainfall patterns, storms and drought, growing seasons, humidity, and sea level. These changes in the planet are sure to affect generations to come. Educating our children about environmental issues is crucial, the strategy adopted is even more crucial so that children can understand the potential of whatever changes that are taking place. The sooner they are educated about the environment, the quicker something may be done before it could be too late. Asodike (2011) stressed that if we want a more sustainable world and a better future, we must invest in the early years.

Environmental education (EE) is defined as a process aimed at developing a world population that is aware of and concerned about the total environment and its associated problems, and which has the knowledge, attitude, skills, motivation, and commitment to work individually and collectively toward solutions of current problems and the prevention of new ones. Flynn et al. (2019) define EE as “education focusing on the natural environment with the purpose of fostering not only a cognitive understanding of the natural environment but also a sense of appreciation and respect for the world of nature. EE refers to organised efforts to teach about natural environment function and, particularly, how human beings can manage their behaviour and ecosystem in order to live sustainably. Environmental education is a new field of education introduced into the educational system in order to enhance the awareness of the people on environmental issues at all level of education. EE is a new approach to education that hopes to bring solutions to the deteriorating relationship between man and the environment (Jekayinfa & Yusuf, 2020).

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study examined managing environmental education using environmental clubs and ambience environment in Public Primary Schools in Rivers State. The objectives sought to:

- Examine the extent the managing environmental education using environmental clubs predicts ambience environment in Public Primary Schools in Rivers State.
- Identify the extent initiating environmental education using environmental clubs predicts ambience environment in Public Primary Schools in Rivers State.

Research Questions

Two research questions guided the study:

- To what extent do the managing environmental education using environmental clubs predicts ambience environment in Public Primary Schools in Rivers State?
- To what extent does initiating environmental education using environmental clubs predicts ambience environment in Public Primary Schools in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

Two hypotheses further guided the study and were tested at .05 level of significance:

- Managing environmental education using environmental clubs do not significantly predicts ambience environment in Public Primary Schools in Rivers State.
- Initiating environmental education using environmental clubs do not significantly predict ambience environment in Public Primary Schools in Rivers State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Managing Environmental Education Using Environmental Clubs and Ambience Environment

Environmental education (EE) is a learning process that improves knowledge and awareness about the environment and associated challenges. It encourages the development of the necessary skills and expertise needed to address the challenges and foster attitude, motivations and commitments to make informed decisions and take responsible action (UNESCO, 2018).

It is important to educate children about the environment since they are less likely to have well established environmentally harmful behaviours to unlearn. They are also ideal target for EE because they are young minds who are always inquisitive about nature, and will be the vehicle of change in the future. Children learn quicker and retain new information longer than adults retain because they are still forming their opinions and determining their convictions about the world. Children may also serve as effective agents to promote environmentally responsible behaviour in others. Above all, EE education is important in primary schools because nowadays children are rarely outdoor compared to few years ago. Hence, if given the opportunity to directly experience nature they will have the inclination to protect the environment.

Environmental clubs (ECs) are a mainstay in schools and colleges. They reflect the school's commitment to community and pupils' eagerness to create positive change in the world. By establishing an EC, pupils will acquire skills to identify problems, investigate alternatives, and propose solutions that will contribute to a better school environment and tread lighter on earth (O'Neill, 2020).

The constitution of ECs can be described as a group of concerned people that are committed to a common purpose of raising awareness about what to do to preserve the environment, and to reduce our negative environmental impact as individuals, a school community, and as citizens of the world. Clearly, the more the membership, the more difficult the clubs' ability to create a unified vision, make decision and carry out task as is the case in clubs with large population. However, there is need for strategic sampling of pupils and teachers who have strong ties to other groups of pupils, administrative staff, and the school community to be part of the club. The EC activities are designed to involve different groups of people, both inside and outside school, to raise their awareness of environmental issues and solicit their cooperation towards the attainment of the club' goals.

Initiating Environmental Education Using Environmental Clubs and Ambience Environment

In this country, any reference to a club brings to mind social activities. Therefore, to successfully establish EC in schools, it must be given social dimension. Extra-curricular activities are easy access to learning through fun in schools. ECs can be established at all levels of the school system. The strategies for beginning environmental clubs in schools are the same, though with

slight modifications in different environments. This paper discussed three different groups of suggestions. The decision is yours to choose the ones that best suit your environment.

The first group of suggestions were adopted from suggestions made by Wisconsin Centre for EE (2018). They are discussed in phases.

Phase 1: Proposal

Begin programme initiation and adoption in schools by writing proposal to school administrators or managers outlining the purpose, potential activities, and group needs from the administration as the programme initiator.

Phase 2: Presentation

Arrange meeting with the school administrators to present proposal. Find out about the school policies and guidelines regarding extra-curricular activities. Find out about safety and liability requirements for taking pupils out of the school building. Review the proposal by adding or subtracting from it in agreement with school authority. After obtaining support from school administrator, begin to organise the group.

Phase 3: Planning for the Organisational Structure of the Club

This phase may include a charter, statement of the club, purpose, membership qualification, dues, meeting times, possible activities, club mascot or logo, duties of elected officers and election process.

Phase 4: Recruiting Membership

This could be done through general publicity by posters, clippings, and notices on classroom chalkboards, announcement during morning assemblies, and by already interested pupils giving short announcements in classroom during break period with registration of interested pupils. It is advised to first win the interest of most popular and influential pupils. They will carry the publicity beyond the four walls of the school. Time and venue of first meeting should be appropriately fixed and included in all publicity.

Phase 5: Meetings

Consider a time within the week or month when most pupils can attend and stay to avoid conflict or curriculum pressures. Agree on a regular meeting place and ensure its availability always. If possible, arrange to have some refreshment, as it is always a motivation for attendance in our society. During the first meeting, give a brief introduction to the group, present the proposed organisational structure and ideas for club activities as proposed. It is very necessary for everyone to be part of the decision-making process.

Subsequent meetings (official meetings), should be held on the same day and time every week or month as a routine. Discuss agenda with officers or pupils ahead of time to know what decision need to be made. Vote on the proposed organisation structure, club name, proposal, and plan for election. Circulate a sheet that has all of the members contact information.

Elective offices should be filled, that is positions for the Presidents, Vice President and Secretary so that the group has a direction and is organised, set up committee for organising and planning with the help of the adviser(s) how to execute generated activities and propose calendar of activities for the entire school year.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive design. The population of this study consisted of 10,265 environmental clubs pupils in 961 public primary schools in Rivers State. The sample of 535 respondents was determined using Taro Yemen's minimum sample formula. Simple random sampling technique was used to draw 513 respondents. The instruments for data collection was Environmental Education using Environmental Clubs Questionnaire (EEECQ) and Ambience Environment Questionnaire (AEQ) with 20 items for independent variables and 20 items for dependent variable structured on a modified four point likert scale of very high extent (VHE), high extent (HE), Low Extent (LE) and very low extent (VLE). The instrument was validated by experts in Test and Measurement. The reliability of the instrument was determined through Cronbach method. The reliability indexes are: Environmental Education using Environmental Clubs is 0.80 and Ambience Environment is 0.87 while managing environmental education is 0.85, Initiating environmental education is 0.81 respectively. The questionnaire was administered by the researcher with the help of two trained research assistants. Simple regression was used to answer the research questions and t-test associated with simple regression was used to test hypotheses using Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS) version 28.

RESULTS

Research question 1: To what extent does managing environmental education using environmental clubs predicts ambience environment in Public Primary Schools in Rivers State?

Table 1: Simple regression analysis on the extent managing environmental education using environmental clubs predicts ambience environment in Public Primary Schools in Rivers State

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Decision
1	.709	.540	.501	High Extent

Table 1 showed that the R was .709 while R square and adjusted R square were .540 and .501 respectively. The coefficient determinism was calculated to be 54% (.540 x 100). This means that to a high extent managing environmental education using environmental clubs predicts ambience environment in Public Primary Schools in Rivers State with 54%. By implication, managing environmental education using environmental clubs predicts ambience environment in Public Primary Schools in Rivers State.

Research question 2: To what extent does initiating environmental education using environmental clubs predicts ambience environment in Public Primary Schools in Rivers State?

Table 2: Simple regression analysis on the extent initiating environmental education using environmental clubs predicts ambience environment in Public Primary Schools in Rivers State

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Decision
1	.715	.460	.508	High Extent

Table 2 revealed that the R was .715 while R square and adjusted R square were .460 and .508 respectively. The coefficient determinism was calculated to be 46% (.460 x 100). This means that to a high extent initiating environmental education using environmental clubs predicts ambience environment with 46%. By implication, initiating environmental education using environmental clubs predicts ambience environment in Public Primary Schools in Rivers State.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Managing environmental education using environmental clubs does not significantly predict ambience environment in Public Primary Schools in Rivers State.

Table 3: t-test associated with simple regression on prediction of managing environmental education using environmental clubs on ambience environment in Public Primary Schools in Rivers State

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	Alpha Level	t	Probability value
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1 Managing environmental education	3.007	2.140		0.05	1.405	.162
2 Ambience environment	.859	.060	.709		14.378	.000

Table 3 revealed that the probability value of .000 ($p < 0.05$) is less than the alpha level of 0.05. Therefore the hypothesis is rejected. This implied that managing environmental education using environmental clubs significantly predicted ambience environment in Public Primary Schools in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 2: Initiating environmental education using environmental clubs do not significantly predict ambience environment in Public Primary Schools in Rivers State.

Table 4: t-test associated with simple regression on prediction of initiating environmental education using environmental clubs on ambience environment in Public Primary Schools in Rivers State

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	Alpha level	t	Probability value
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1 Initiating environmental education	2.124	2.169		0.05	.979	.329
2 Ambience environment	.887	.061	.715		14.592	.000

Table 4 revealed that the probability value of .000 ($p < 0.05$) is less than the alpha level of 0.05. Therefore the hypothesis is rejected. This implied that initiating environmental education using environmental clubs significantly predicted ambience environment in Public Primary Schools in Rivers State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Managing Environmental Education Using Environmental Clubs and Ambience Environment

Table 1, reveal that managing environmental education using environmental clubs predicted ambience environment in Public Primary Schools in Rivers State with 54%. The finding of the study is supported by Yenken et al. (2019) who believed that school environmental clubs are means of promoting environmental literacy and good habit the cohabitation of Gods earthly creation. Pupils will have access to practical EE, as they are involved in different activities in the club like tree planting, opening blocked drain, kindness to other creatures and so on. Pupils can learn about the environment by exploring areas of interest beyond what is offered in the school curriculum. For example, the trees as a windbreaker to prevent the strong wind form pulling down houses. They can appreciate that the orange tree beside the house serves some other purpose than producing edible fruits. Summarizing the responses from ECs' advisors about the purpose for their school's EC, Wisconsin Centre for Environmental Education (2018) came up with the following as the objectives of EC. They are to:

- Provide students with the opportunity to learn more about their surroundings, participate in service projects at school and in the community.
- Promote environmental awareness, and develop social and life skills.
- Increase students' awareness of environmental issues and empower them to make change.
- Provide opportunities for student have to become directly involved in a variety of projects relating to the environment.
- Promote environmental awareness and empower students to take actions and work towards building a sound environmental ethics.

The above underscore the goal of environmental education as practical ways of helping pupils to become environmentally knowledgeable through well-structured activities in ECs. However, managing environmental education using environmental clubs significantly predicted ambience environment in Public Primary Schools in Rivers State.

Initiating Environmental Education Using Environmental Clubs and Ambience Environment

Table 2 revealed that initiating environmental education using environmental clubs predicted ambience environment with 46%. The finding is in agreement with Amelia (2020) who opined that there is need to advertise EC activities to show why pupils should be involved. Make the activities attractive, popular, and worthwhile. This could be done in school year book, creating posters, sending memos to school communities that include pupils, teachers, non-teaching staff

school boards, school administrators, school staff, PTA and community leadership, local clubs and associations. Within this community, there could be knowledge base and experience that the EC may benefit from. Among them also may be some industrialists who can spare some time to pass some knowledge to the club.

Braus and Wood (2013) added that another excellent way to gain recognition and publicity is through local media. Information can be included in school newsletters, and where available through e-mail and school website. This could attract local and international suggestions. In addition, planning presentations or lectures can be opportunity to educate others in the school or community, and they are ways to recruit more members. However, initiating environmental education using environmental clubs significantly predicted ambience environment in Public Primary Schools in Rivers State.

CONCLUSION

Environmental clubs (ECs) in school enhance and thrive within a caring school community where the views of others are valued and actions taken in response to these views. The school becomes a place to make positive changes and to make a difference. EC is an umbrella project that the whole school can work towards its formation. It provides an ideal focal point for work across different peer groups. It improves students/staff lines of communication and unites the whole school community behind a common cause. By encouraging pupils to take responsibility for the environmental management of the school, they are helped to develop an increased sense of responsibility for the surroundings.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following two recommendations are:

- Government should include more topics on environmental education in the curriculum especially in the primary school because good childhood habits are hard to undo.
- Awareness of environmental issues should be created to prompt pupils' interest.

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