

# **A survey of the role of primary school women teachers in environmental education and awareness building in Nairobi, Kenya**

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## **Abstract:**

This study was a survey of the role of Primary School Women Teachers in Environmental Education Awareness and building in Nairobi. The word teacher(s) in the text is used with special reference to Women Teachers. The main objective of this study were to find out whether teachers are aware of the problems and possible solutions related to the selected themes: water and sanitation, housing and garbage; to find out whether these teachers incorporate these issues in their lessons and how effective the lessons are. To find out what teaching/learning resources are used with specific reference to posters. Lastly to find out whether these women participate in environmental awareness building in the informal sector. Data collected by means of teacher's questionnaire and classroom observation schedule for G.H.C, Home science and Science teachers. The population of the study consisted of thirty women teachers from ten different schools out of the total of one hundred and seventy (170) primary schools of Nairobi Province. The schools were selected on the basis of their geographical location/division. At least one school from each of the eight divisions. Descriptive statistics mainly tables and percentages were used in data analysis and presentation. According to the findings, most of the schools involved in the study were situated in residential areas which faced problems related to water and sanitation, housing and garbage. However teachers neither used the local communities as teaching laboratories nor referred to them in their lessons as was expected. The majority of the responding teachers were below 36 years of age. Although these were trained and had a long teaching experience, they had not undergone in-service training in the environmental education as was expected. Most teachers were aware of the environmental problems in Nairobi and even solutions to these problems but some did not incorporate these issues in their lessons and club activities. Those who did indicated that what they taught was not adequate for the environmental needs of the city. Lecture/class room teaching featured as the most popular method of teaching over shadowing the student activity orientated methods such as project work and field trips which are recommended for environmental education. Out-of school activities such as scouting, wildlife club, home economics club etc, were not utilized due to the loaded 8-4-4 curriculum which could not allow for the practice of these activities. Many teaching aids, mostly audiovisuals were not used as the cost prohibited schools from buying them. Teachers and pupils could prepare however there were other teaching aids such as dioramas, sculptures, puppets etc, which were not used but which. Most teachers used posters for teaching but the type of posters mostly used were teacher-made. Also very few posters were supplied by the ministry or donated from other non-governmental organisations or individuals. Textbooks used for environmental education were found to be inadequate. The available books did not give special emphasis on environmental issues. Teachers did not have any guidebooks or modules on environmental education. As regards evaluation, the majority of teachers did not use project work to impart or evaluate Environmental Education knowledge, attitudes and skills. Teachers experienced problems in the teaching of environmental education including lack of money for resources and large classes which hindered effective out-of-class teaching. Teachers' environmental activities to improve the environmental in their local areas with regards to water and sanitation, housing and garbage were minimal. Less than half the teachers (43%) were involved in offering counseling services in health care, hygiene, home management etc. Only 20% of the women

trained the youth in environmental protection. Following the above findings, the researcher made several recommendations including the following: there is need for in-service of teachers on a regular and rolling basis to update their environmental awareness of environmental problems and methodologies for teaching environmental education. There is need to review environmental education curriculum to broaden its content. The subject topics should also be made compulsory, i.e. part of the core curriculum. Youth should be actively involved in environmental activities to provide them with practical experience in conservation and ecological tasks as well as improving quality of life for their own locality. The participatory experiences of the pupils should be enhanced through field trips and group activities, both in the immediate vicinity of the school and far a field. There should be supplementary readers to recommended textbooks and guides. There is also need for UNESCO-UNEP international Education Programme (IIEP) to prepare the following modules: a teaching module on Human Settlements both for rural and urban settlements; module for Pre-service Training for Primary Schools; Module for In-service Training of Social science teachers and Supervisors for Primary Schools; Module on the role of women in Environmental Education and Training activities; Module on women's activities in Health/Hygiene Education in Water and Sanitation, Housing and Garbage Disposal. There is need to encourage teachers and students to make simple but effective posters through the use of community resources such as those developed by the researcher. (See Appendix G) Some of the low-cost equipment for teaching about the environment, made by teachers and pupils themselves are pedagogically the best. To encourage effective evaluation of environmental education, a critical survey should be made for the purpose of evaluation aimed at measuring learning outcomes. There is need for mobile environmental units for dissemination of environmental information. It is also recommended that media channels should be utilized in order to enhance national and regional understanding of environmental concerns. There is also need for resource centre, what happened to the schools Equipment Production Unit (SEPU)? Women should be trained in environmental education at community level through workshops/seminars/conferences, women's groups, lectures, demonstrations, role-play, drama, music movies and print media etc. The study concluded by proposing that future environmental researchers should carry out several other studies arising from the findings of this study. Among other proposals/suggestions, the researcher suggested that an in depth study be carried out on the role of women in the protection of the environment both in the urban and rural settlements in Kenya. The proposed study should investigate the attitudes of women towards the environmental problems.