

# **A survey of the approaches used in the teaching of environmental education in upper primary in Kisumu municipality, Kenya**

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## **Abstract:**

This study was undertaken with the aim of finding out what teaching approaches the teachers of upper primary classes employ in teaching environmental education. Reasons and /or factors which influenced their choice of the preferred approaches as well as reasons and/or factors that contributed to their lack of preference for certain other approaches were sought. It was also the aim of the study to find out whether or not teachers used their various teaching subjects in teaching through, about and for the environment. The study was undertaken in seven (7) randomly chosen primary schools in Kisumu Municipality. The latter is a cosmopolitan urban centre where many communities of different ethnic backgrounds live. There is also a big Asian community whose children share some schools with African children. The teachers in the schools within the Municipality have equivalent qualifications and training as those in the primary schools elsewhere in the Republic. To obtain information relevant to the purpose of the study, a total of one hundred and five (105) lessons were observed in the upper classes (std IV-VII) of all the primary schools chosen. Lessons were observed in the subjects: GHC, Agriculture and science with each subject having five (5) lessons observed per standard (IV to VII) in each school. Lessons observed included those of environmental education-related topics such as soil conservation and pollution. Information that was not forthcoming through the observation checklist was obtained through an interview with each of the teachers whose lesson(s) was/were observed. A total of twenty-three (23) teachers were, therefore, interviewed. Data collected, both through the observation checklist and interview schedule, indicated that teachers mainly used teacher-led discussions and lecture approaches in teaching their established subjects (GHC, Agriculture and Science) in which environmental education-related topics were found. When they came to the environmental education-related topics the teachers' approaches were not adjusted. In other words, they continued to use the same approaches of teachers-led discussion and lectures. The approaches such as inquiry/investigation, field trips/out door lessons, debates, projects, and media which various studies have found to be effective for environmental education were hardly used. It is also to be noted that although teachers claimed, in the interview, that they used their lessons to teach through, about and for the environment this was not noticed in most of the 105 lessons that were observed. In the light of these findings it seems necessary to recommend that teachers be given an in-service course on how to use their subjects in teaching through, about and for the environment. It is equally important that they should be given an induction course to introduce them to the most appropriate and effective approaches of teaching environmental education-related topics in order to achieve the objectives of environmental education. Further, a rich and regular supply of literature on environmental education and environmental matters should be available to the teachers. Indeed pupils too need their relevant literature on the environment and environmental issues. The efforts of CIDA in this direction already exist in its sponsorship and supply of the children's environmental magazine, the 'Pied Crow', to the Municipality schools. This effort is commendable and should be emulated by both governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGO's).