

Grade Six Learners' Perceptions of Environmental Awareness: A Human Ecological Support Programme

Mantsose Jane Sethusha¹ and Mutendwahothe Walter Lumadi²

¹*Early Childhood and Development, University of South Africa*

E-mail: sethumj@unisa.ac.za

²*Department of Curriculum and Instructional Studies, South Africa*

E-mail: Lumadmw@unisa.ac.za

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ABSTRACT Research has shown that learners' knowledge and awareness of environmental concepts are relatively lower than would be generally expected. This article reports an investigation of learners' knowledge and understanding of conservation, recycling, ecology, pollution and environmental protection. A further aim was to gain an understanding of how the learners' conceptions are developed and how their knowledge of these concepts shapes their environmental awareness and practices outside the classroom. Such information is particularly important for teachers of Environmental Education and for those who develop support programmes for the protection, restoration and enhancement of the quality of the environment. This exploratory study involved 12 Grade 6 learners and was conducted at three primary schools in the North West province of South Africa. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to ascertain details of learners' knowledge and conceptions of environmental issues. The findings indicate that learners' knowledge and awareness of environmental issues are limited and that schools play a significant role in developing and enhancing such knowledge and conceptions in learners. This article emphasises the importance of using the learners' home environment experiences and their understanding of environmental matters in and around the home to make environmental studies at school more accessible to them.