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ABSTRACT

The environment is being degraded and disturbed continuously by the activities of man. This has lead to the threat of the environmental health and quality. The quality and health of the environment is determined by man-environment interaction, which depends on the knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and ethics man has about and towards the environment. This is basically the concept of environmental literacy.

Environmental literacy entails the ability to perceive and interpret the relative health of environmental systems and to take appropriate decisions and actions to restore, maintain and improve the health and quality of those environmental systems. Therefore, environmental literacy serves as the key to the improvement and protection of the health and quality of the environment by man. It also provides people with elementary knowledge, skills and motives to cope with environmental needs, and contribute to sustainable development. Environmental literacy may be developed through Environmental Education, which may be offered either formally or informally.

This study describes what environmental literacy is, its main types and how it may be developed among people. This is when the concept of Environmental Education is introduced. The main purpose of Environmental Education is to develop awareness, knowledge and skills among people, in order to be able to work, defend, improve and sustain the quality and health of the environment on behalf of the present and future generations of all living organisms.
This study also assesses the necessity of environmental literacy among community leaders to enhance their contribution towards the improvement and protection of the health and quality of the environment of Malamulele location. Qualitative and quantitative research methods were used for the collection and analysis of data to assess the necessity of environmental literacy among community leaders. Thereafter, conclusions were drawn and recommendations were made regarding the findings. Concepts that form part of environmental literacy were also discussed in this paper. These concepts include Environmental Awareness, Environmental Ethics and Environmental Education. The concept of Caring for the Earth was also discussed as it consists of the principles of sustainable development.
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