

## Chapter 35

# Taking Action from Awareness: Pre-University Student Perspectives, Programs on Climate Change Issues, and Environmental Education

Carolyn N. Stevenson

*SeaTrust Institute/Open College@Kaplan University, USA*

### ABSTRACT

*Increasing awareness of climate change issues is a critical issue for all individuals in today's society. Environmental education is important to not only creating awareness of these issues, but taking action towards fostering positive change. Pre-university students have a strong voice on environmental issues that needs to be heard. Environmental education programs such as SeaTrust Institute's AWARE (Action Within a Resilient Environment) assist teens in learning about issues that directly impact their communities. AWARE combines environmental education with hands-on experiential learning projects in their communities. This program also connects high school students with other high school and college students enrolled in SeaTrust Institute's Global Internship.*

### INTRODUCTION

Research and a review of the literature conclude that there is a need for promoting environmental education at the pre-university level. Youth have strong concerns about climate change issues and want to not only increase individual awareness, but take steps toward improving their communities. The purpose of the case study presented in this chapter is to describe and explain pre-university perspectives on climate change issues and ways to take awareness into action. The findings of the study will inform pre-university administrators, teachers, environmental youth group leaders, and other environmental educators of ways youth can have an active role in creating positive change. The findings will also inform current and future environmental educators of ways to integrate environmentally-based service learning projects into the curriculum. The study will provide the basis for greater understanding of the ways a pre-university environmental programs can assist in promoting both individual and community awareness of climate change issues.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-0803-8.ch035

## ***Taking Action from Awareness***

The exploratory questions that guided the study are:

1. What elements constitute pre-university student perspectives on climate change issues and environmental education?
2. What variables influence this perspective on climate change issues and environmental education?
3. What beliefs do these pre-university students hold which support or negate this perspective?

This chapter discusses ways environmental education for pre-university students is essential for creating change and fostering awareness in local communities. A case study based on the perspectives of four teenage youth from a large urban city in the United States is presented. The teens' perspectives of not only creating awareness of climate change issues but taking action toward making local change is also provided. The chapter describes SeaTrust Institute's AWARE environmental education program and ways youth can directly impact their communities. While there is no panacea to resolving issues related to climate change issues, individuals can adapt to these changes and take action towards improving individual communities.

## **BACKGROUND**

As the earth's temperature continues to rise, climate change is an issue of great concern for individuals of all countries. These changes can be seen in the large amount of floods, drought, and extreme hot and cold temperatures. The results of climate change are great and impact human health, ecosystems, agriculture, transportation, forests, coastlines, adaptation, and migration of people. There is a need to become resilient or build "the capability to anticipate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from significant multihazard threats with minimum damage to social well-being, the economy, and the environment," (United States Environmental Protection Agency, 2014, p.1). The world is faced with an increased vulnerability and is susceptible to, or unable to cope with, adverse effects of climate change, including climate variability and extremes (United States Environmental Protection Agency, 2014). As a result, environmental education for pre-university students is imperative to help plan and prepare for the environmental changes in the future. It is important to inform future generations on ways to meet the challenges of climate change issues through education and awareness.

Providing pre-university students with education, training, and field research can expose youth to the impact of climate change issues and learn first-hand how they can make a difference. As Priyanto, Fanani, and Sasmitojati (2013) state, "sustainable development can be achieved through education, because education is a means to change the perceptions, attitudes, and human behavior"(p. 7). It is through education that youth can learn to shift behavioral patterns to help promote a more sustainable future. The U.S. offers many formal education programs for pre-university students. "More than 200 charter schools in the United States call themselves members of the Green Charter Schools Network, a consortium and clearinghouse that was founded in 2008," (Grayson, 2011, p.26). The schools become members by adhering to the network's "green print," or list of core practices (Grayson, 2011, p.26). "The network facilitates communication among educators, parents, and policymakers alike, connecting them to resources and other schools that might want to adopt their own eco-focused programs," (Grayson, 2011, p. 26). In addition to formal training in school, environmental clubs, community programs,

19 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

[www.igi-global.com/chapter/taking-action-from-awareness/165319](http://www.igi-global.com/chapter/taking-action-from-awareness/165319)

## Related Content

---

### Atmospheric Processes and Climate Change

Jaya Yadav and Dyvavani Krishna Kapuganti (2024). *Advanced Geospatial Practices in Natural Environment Resource Management* (pp. 1-25).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/atmospheric-processes-and-climate-change/342208](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/atmospheric-processes-and-climate-change/342208)

### Nigeria's Legal Instruments for Land and Water Use: Implications for National Development

David O. Omole and Julius M. Ndambuki (2017). *Natural Resources Management: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications* (pp. 634-653).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/nigerias-legal-instruments-for-land-and-water-use/165312](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/nigerias-legal-instruments-for-land-and-water-use/165312)

### Review of Climate Change Adaptation and Social Protection Policies of Ghana: The Extent of Reducing Impacts of Climate Change and Heat Stress Vulnerability of Smallholder Farmers

Kwasi Frimpong, Eddie Van Etten, Jacques Oosthuizen and Victor Nufam Fannam (2017). *Natural Resources Management: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications* (pp. 159-173).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/review-of-climate-change-adaptation-and-social-protection-policies-of-ghana/165290](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/review-of-climate-change-adaptation-and-social-protection-policies-of-ghana/165290)

### Improving the Understanding of Climate Change Factors with Images

Geoff Russell (2017). *Natural Resources Management: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications* (pp. 1597-1616).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/improving-the-understanding-of-climate-change-factors-with-images/165363](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/improving-the-understanding-of-climate-change-factors-with-images/165363)

### Climate Change Effects on Human Health with a Particular Focus on Vector-Borne Diseases and Malaria in Africa: A Case Study from Kano State, Nigeria Investigating Perceptions about Links between Malaria Epidemics, Weather Variables, and Climate Change

Salisu Lawal Halliru (2017). *Natural Resources Management: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications* (pp. 1075-1093).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/climate-change-effects-on-human-health-with-a-particular-focus-on-vector-borne-diseases-and-malaria-in-africa/165336](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/climate-change-effects-on-human-health-with-a-particular-focus-on-vector-borne-diseases-and-malaria-in-africa/165336)