



Participation and Empowerment in Eco-Schools: Voices of Eco Warriors

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Abstract

Eco Warriors is an initiative of the Eco-Schools International Program that encourages students to actively engage in sustainability practices and environmental protection. Conducted between September and October 2025, this study involved 115 students of diverse age groups and genders, representing the early years foundation stage, primary, secondary, and additional learning needs departments at Pearling Season International School in Doha, Qatar. Using a survey with closed- and open-ended questions, the study explored students' prior involvement and motivations, their understanding of environmental topics, their interest in decision-making, and their preferred sustainability practices. Results showed that students expressed strong interest in hands-on environmental and sustainability activities, with 60% prioritizing planting, watering, and clean-up campaigns, and 23% highlighting recycling initiatives. Additionally, 70% of participants indicated a desire to learn more about climate change and sustainable practices through practical, engaging lessons. Importantly, 83% of students, including those with additional learning needs, emphasized the significance of sharing their ideas and participating in decision-making related to school environmental and sustainability activities, underscoring the value of participatory approaches in their learning. Regarding participation context, 73% of students reported engaging in related activities both at school and at home, suggesting willingness to contribute to sustainability efforts beyond structured lessons. Overall, the findings indicate that students value programs that are action-oriented, educational, and community-focused, fostering individual responsibility and collective engagement. The study highlights the importance of integrating student voices in designing and implementing environmental and sustainability initiatives to support empowerment and lifelong positive engagement.

Keywords: climate change; hands-on learning; school-based initiatives; sustainable practices; youth engagement