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**TEACHERS AND LEARNERS' INVOLVEMENT TOWARDS YOUTH FOR ENVIRONMENT IN SCHOOLS-ORGANIZATION (YES-O): BASES FOR POLICY RECOMMENDATION**

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**ABSTRACT**

The study was conducted to investigate the involvement of teachers and learners in Youth for Environment in Schools-Organization in San Rafael National High School, Schools Division of Iloilo during the school year 2022-2023. The results of the study revealed that teachers' involvement includes the following activities: tree planting and nursery establishment, waste management, clean-up drive, Environmental Awareness, and Symposia and Trainings. Teachers involved themselves in coaching and mentoring the learners, integrating environmental concepts and principles in lessons, and implementing the mandated programs of YES-O. Learners involvement in Youth for Environment in Schools-Organization includes cleanliness promotion, waste management, and YES-O camp. They involved themselves as members, officers, and participants. Policies recommended include planning, monitoring and evaluation, capacity building activities, synchronization of co-curricular activities in schools.

**Keywords:** *Involvement, Youth for Environment, Policy Recommendation*

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## INTRODUCTION

The Department of Education's Center for Students and Co-Curricular Affairs (DepEd-CSCA) was given the responsibility of overseeing and organizing environmental initiatives, events, educational programs, and awareness campaigns for students in private as well as public educational institutions in compliance with the guidelines established forth in DepEd Order No. 52 s. 2011. The "Enhancing Environmental Education in both Public and Private Schools" project emphasizes the importance of environmental education. DepEd-CSCA is also in charge of planning, developing, and producing various relevant materials for the Youth for Environment in Schools program, including those for the application, enrollment, institution, and appraisal, supervision, and assessment procedures.

Every organism thrives in its optimum environment, highlighting the importance of protecting the environment to avoid negative effects. While nature can persist in its unaltered state, human interference has had a profound negative impact on many ecosystems. Maintaining a safe and sustainable environment is essential for the survival of life on our planet.

As a result, providing environmental education is essential for arming people with the information they need to advance sustainability. This includes interacting with the natural world, realizing how important it is for maintaining life, promoting thriving communities, comprehending the social effects of food production, and developing a keen awareness of the settings in which people live, work, and learn (Contreras, 2014).

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There is a growing demand for an improved and persuasive way of imparting environmental education given the increasing ecological issues facing today's society. The significance of developing chances for extracurricular environmental learning has been underlined by local educational authorities.

The YES-O (Youth Environment in Schools Organization) is the first extracurricular environmental organization within the primary education sector that has received formal recognition, which is in line with this aim. With the use of this platform, students can take part in activities aimed at defending and maintaining the environment for the benefit of coming generations (Perez, 2019).

As a demographic, young people have particular environmental concerns and obligations. They are disproportionately affected by different environmental dangers and hazards, mostly because they get the effects of environmental issues that previous generations left behind.

Communities are significantly shaped by the educational sector, which is in charge of transferring knowledge to people. However, dealing with environmental issues has become a big concern for educators. There are many laws in place to protect the environment, but they haven't been put into practice very well. Young individual involvement, who make up a sizeable fraction of the world's populace, can aid in narrowing this implementation gap. With an emphasis on DepEd-mandated programs like the YES-O, this study intends to investigate how instructors and

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students participate in environmental activities within educational institutions. Gaining knowledge about their involvement and contributions to these projects is the purpose.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Research Methodology

This chapter presents the research method, research design, respondents of the study, data-gathering procedure, research instruments, and data analysis used in the study. The purpose of the study was to examine the practices and experiences of teachers and learners in their involvement towards Youth for Environment in Schools Organization.

### Research Method

The researcher gathered information on involvement of teachers and learners towards Youth for Environment in Schools Organization. In the study, qualitative research was used to provide insight into the informants' viewpoints, behaviors, cultural background, value systems, and way of life (Creswell, 2013).

### Research Design

The study utilized a phenomenological approach to delve into the experiences of teachers and students involved in the YES-O. This method aimed to uncover specific occurrences and shed light on aspects as perceived by the participants in the given context. By employing qualitative methods such as participant observation, conversations, and interviews, this approach sought to

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gain comprehensive insights and understand the viewpoints and opinions of the individuals involved.

The primary objective of phenomenology is to examine experiences from the participants' perspectives, free from preconceptions and automatic modes of perception. Through this approach, the study identified and explored significant perspectives and experiences of teachers and students concerning the implementation of required YES-O programs, projects, and activities.

### Participants of the study

The selection of the participants of the study was based on the strategy referred to as, "purposeful selection" (Maxwell, 2005). It is a "a selection strategy in which particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately in order to provide information that cannot be gotten from other choices".

The participants of the study were five (5) secondary school science teachers and five (5) learners at San Rafael National High School this school year 2022-2023.

### Sampling Design

Purposive sampling, also known as evaluating or expert sampling, was used in this study. Purposive sampling's main objective is to produce a sample that may be reasonably considered to be representative of the entire populace (Lavrakas, 2008). This sampling technique allows the researcher to rely on his own criteria and characteristics that will best provide the information needed in select members of populace to participate in the study.

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## Research Instrument

To gather information such as insights and experiences on the involvement of teachers and learners towards Youth for Environment in Schools, various questions were asked to the teachers and learners of secondary school using interview guide. The interview guide consisted of questions that focus on activities conducted, and contributions of teachers and learners in the conduct of programs, projects, and activities of YES-O.

### Validity of the Research Instrument

The instrument was subjected to content validation by the panel of experts. Since the questionnaire is researcher-made, it was subjected for correction and suggestion by the research adviser. After that, the same was forwarded to a group of experts in this field to do the validation of the researcher-made interview questions.

All validation-related comments and suggestions were addressed for the final draft to ensure that the questions gathered the necessary information to respond to the study objectives.

### Data Gathering Procedures

Permits to conduct the study was requested from various officials such as the research adviser and the Dean of the Graduate School to pursue the study. The researcher asked authorization from the Schools Division Superintendent and from the school head where the study was conducted. The manner of conducting the study followed the existing health protocols and

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guidelines prescribed by various agencies such as IATF, DOH, DepEd, and LGU as part of mitigating measures of the effect of COVID-19 pandemic.

The researcher met the participants personally to conduct the interview after recruitment processes has been put in place. The researcher required the participants to sign an informed consent form.

To gather the interviewee's responses, audio or video recordings were utilized with prior consent from the participant. The objective was to obtain the participants' perspectives on the research variables in the study.

Following a series of interviews, the researcher conducted thematic analysis to consolidate all the gathered information.

## Data Analyses

The acquired data was analyzed using a thematic method. Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis technique that is often applied to a collection of texts, such as transcriptions of interviews. The data was rigorously examined by the researcher to discover recurring themes—subjects, notions, and trends in importance that occur again (Caulfield, 2019).

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## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study was conducted to find out the involvement of teachers and learners in Youth for Environment in Schools-Organization in San Rafael National High School.

The participants of the study were 5 teachers and learners. A researcher-made interview guide was used to gather data. The instrument was subjected to validity test.

The following are the findings of the study:

As to what are the involvement of teachers in YES-O, the study revealed the following: First, teachers are involved in environmental protection activities – greening program and waste management and clean-up drives; second, environmental awareness.

As to how teachers involved themselves in the organization, the study revealed that: 1) coaching and mentoring learners in the different contests sponsored by YES-O; 2) integrating environment key concepts and principles in their lessons; and 3) implementing the mandated programs and activities of the organization.

Involvement of learners in YES-O can be summarized into: Environmental sustainability (1) clean-up drives; (2) Waste Management;(3) and Environmental camp.

The YES-O is a school-based co-curricular group founded to provide students with a substantial platform to take part in the preservation, protection, and safeguarding of the surroundings. The group takes the lead in developing rules and standards to encourage individual

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and collective environmental initiatives among governmental and non-governmental organizations.

Given the rising environmental issues, the YES-O Program has grown in importance since its inception in 2003. Through meaningful engagements, it has been at the forefront of persuading young people to take active roles in environmental protection.

The escalating ecological crisis in the modern world demands the implementation of effective measures by teachers, one of which is the adoption of a greening program.

The teachers at YES-O should continue to support the solid waste management program.

A fundamental trait that needs to be incorporated at all levels of educational institutions is stewardship of the natural world. Additionally, it is crucial that educators model this attitude and behavior.

Teachers can benefit from using coaching principles within and out of the classroom to increase engagement and empower students in their learning.

Teachers have a critical role in preparing children and young adults to become future environmental leaders.

They are also responsible for assisting and directing the implementation of mandatory initiatives inside the YES-O.

As individuals, it is vital to uphold the duty of preserving the intrinsic worth of nature, not merely for man's sake, but also in consideration of the welfare of future generations.

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Schools have employed waste management as a general mediation tool for student engagement in environmental education.

Learning to be a manager who promotes pro-environmental habits supports community sustainability initiatives in a variety of ways. Learners' participation in YES-O promote their personal development and provides them with substantive knowledge and practical skills.

Remember that the learners' empowerment or leadership may currently have certain limitations. However, this is just a starting point for growth. Keep pushing forward and exploring new ways to expand their potential!

## CONCLUSION

In view of the findings and insights of the study, the following recommendations are forwarded:

Learners are encouraged to take on more leadership and governance responsibilities by organizing, carrying out, and keeping an eye on the organization's programs, initiatives, and activities.

Recognizing the importance of these pursuits to their children's overall development, parents play a significant role in encouraging their children's academic, co-curricular, and extracurricular interests.

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Teachers should evaluate their roles and duties in managing DepEd-mandated programs, projects, and activities as well as how to effectively manage co-curricular organizations in their schools.

Assisting and supporting teachers, students, and other stakeholders in carrying out YES-O activities is the responsibility of school heads, who also ensure that these programs are seamlessly integrated into the school improvement plan.

When implementing YES-O initiatives, policy and decision makers can use the study's findings as crucial baseline data.

Other researchers should be encouraged to conduct further research about YES-O using different variables.

Reward system must be enhanced to recognize the contribution and effort of teachers and learners in the organization.

School management and technical working group must collaborate in looking for potential partners in conducting ecological programs. Proper harmonization and cooperation of all stakeholders, whether in school, community or offices are essential to the success of the program.

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