

Charting Nature's Terrain: Building Climate-Conscious Land Surveyors and Geospatial Analyst Professionals through Conservation Education

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SUMMARY

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As climate change and biodiversity loss accelerate in the Anthropocene, higher education institutions play a pivotal role in shaping the knowledge, ethics, and professional capacity required to address these challenges. This study explores how Nigerian university students perceive “wildness” and examines the relationship between academic exposure, environmental awareness, and conservation attitudes. Using survey data from 1,042 respondents across 34 tertiary institutions and 45 disciplines, the study reveals a significant disconnect between environmental knowledge and conservation practice. Many students perceive wildlife as dangerous or irrelevant, reflecting broader societal detachment from nature and underscoring the question: “How do we protect what we do not know?”. Findings highlight that limited curricular integration of conservation and climate education contributes to poor biodiversity awareness and disengaged attitudes. However, analysis also shows that students with earlier exposure to nature-based or sustainability-focused learning exhibit stronger pro-conservation values. These results demonstrate that education remains a transformative tool for shaping ethical and professional responsibility toward environmental stewardship. The study advocates for the incorporation of biodiversity and climate literacy within tertiary curricula, linking local ecological knowledge to global sustainability frameworks. By embedding conservation education within higher learning institutions, institutions can equip future professionals not only in ecology but across disciplines with the knowledge, skills, and ethical grounding necessary for sustainable decision-making. This research contributes to the dialogue on future-proofing education systems and professions for a rapidly changing planet. It argues that fostering ecological consciousness in tertiary institutions is a fundamental step toward achieving sustainable societies and resilient environmental governance beyond the SDGs.

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