

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS BY CURRICULAR AND CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AMONG STUDENT TEACHERS

By

Monika Bajaj

Assistant Professor, MIER College of Education, Jammu, Jammu & Kashmir, India.

Abstract

Even though growing public awareness about environmental issues is evident but lack of adequate environmental knowledge is an obstacle towards achieving a sustainable future for humankind at both global and local levels. The education sector plays a very important role in creating environmental awareness by exposing the younger generation to the data, issues, analysis and interpretations on environment and development. Also by conducting various activities on environmental issues, we can create awareness and help in finding strategies to overcome these problems. The present study aims to find the role of curricular and co-curricular activities in creating environmental awareness among student teachers. A sample of 300 student teachers was taken from different colleges of education in Jammu city. Self made questionnaire was used for data collection. Purposive sampling technique was used. Mean, S.D. and t-test was employed for data analysis. It was found that the level of environmental awareness was high among student teachers studied environment education as a subject and participated in different environment activities conducted in colleges. The study revealed that environmental education must be encouraged where at first student become aware of environment and also get firsthand experience by participating in various activities like tree plantation, visit to environmental places, attending workshops and guest lecturers etc. Then, they acknowledge or review the link between humans and nature.

Keywords: *environmental awareness, curricular, co-curricular activities, student teachers*

Introduction

Environment is defined as surrounding or conditions influencing development or growth. It can be understood as a system which includes all living and non-living things, i.e. air, water, soil, vegetation, flora and fauna. We live in the environment and it provides life supporting system to the human being. We use these environmental resources to meet our needs. Development additionally suggests that meeting the wants of the people. While meeting the ever-growing wants, we put pressure on the environment. When the pressure exceeds the carrying capability of the atmosphere to

repair or replace itself, it creates a heavy drawback of environmental degradation. The environmental considerations on our planet have swollen dramatically in recent decades and square measure currently among the foremost serious challenges touching people's well-being round the globe. Moreover, these trends are likely to worsen in the absence of societal intervention. Therefore, there is an urgent need to address environmental degradation and preserve the environment for healthy living. Also it is needed to improve it qualitatively not only for the present but also for the future generations.

Review of Related Studies

Palmberg and Kuru (2000) designed a study with thirty-six 11 to 12-year-old pupils selected from three schools on the basis of their experiences with outdoor activities. The results indicated that those who had been involved in outdoor activities showed higher self-confidence and a feeling of safety when compared to those who had not experienced outdoor activities.

Kadji-Beltran, Barker and Rager (2001) investigated whether school activities, age-group activities, and indoor (within school) and outdoor (out of school) activities had a bearing on developing environmental attitudes and an understanding of environmental issues.

A study carried out by Brynjegard (2001) with oldsters, teachers and students in elementary schools investigated the effect of using a school garden on students' understanding and appreciation of the environment. The study showed that studying in the garden and being involved there with their hands helped the students become aware of the environment and assume responsible behaviour towards it. While studying in the garden, the students saw the value of living things and how they relate to the quality of our lives.

Korhonen and Lappalainen (2004) compared the environmental awareness and knowledge of children and adolescents living under different ecological conditions. They showed that there is an important role of education in creating environmental awareness. They also showed that children in rural areas are measurably aware of environmental issues and can relate them to human activities.

Hotinli (2004) suggested to develop students' environmental awareness and sensitivity toward the environment by integrating environment related topics into different subjects and out-of-school activities.

Erdogan and Usak (2009) revealed that the students were not completely aware of their environment due to their lack of interest in environmental issues. The selected school of Turkey undertook varied inside and out-of-school activities to extend students' awareness, like tree planting, clean-ups, and re-using and re-cycling merchandise.

Yildiz, Y (n.d) is of the opinion that curricular (within school) and extra-curricular (out-of-school) activities related to environment issues can develop students' environmental awareness.

There are several sources which develop environmental awareness. These sources can be mainly categorized as printed and visual media, family, community and the school (Wagner, 1997).

Role of Environment Education in Environmental Awareness

Environment is a global concept today and first in environmental education is environmental awareness. Environmental awareness is an approach to learning. The best way to promote awareness for environmental problems and promote environmentally accountable behaviors is through augmented access to environmental education. In 1978, the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) Tbilisi Declaration mentioned the need of widespread use of environmental education

(EE). During the Tbilisi Convention, environmental education was outlined as: 'a process of developing a world population that's aware of and concerned about the total environment and its associated problems, and which has the knowledge, skills, attitudes, motivation and commitment to work individually and collectively towards solutions of current problems and the prevention of new ones' (Tbilisi Declaration, 1977). The importance of Environment Education is further reiterated in Chapter 36 of Agenda 21 which stresses on the following:

'Education, together with formal education, public awareness and training, should be recognised as a process by which human beings and societies can reach their fullest potential. Education is essential for achieving environmental and moral awareness, values and attitudes, skills and behaviour according to sustainable development and for effective public participation in decision-making. Both curricular and co-curricular activities are indispensable to changing people's attitude so that they have the capacity to assess and address their sustainable development concerns'. In general, environmental education focuses on making people aware of environmental issues and promotes an understanding of the relationship between humans and their surrounding environment.

Curricular activities: Curricular activities are those offered by the formal curriculum. Now days, Environment Education is a subject which is incorporated in college curriculum. Students are being lectured about different environmental issues, their causes, impact and remedial measures to overcome. On the other

hand, as part of their instruction, students are also encouraged to prepare PowerPoint and poster presentations to show case different environmental issues.

Co-curricular activities: As part of extra-curricular activities, the students are encouraged to participate in different activities like plantation drive, celebration of different environmental days, field visits, awareness rallies, competitions like poster making, slogan writing, symposiums, debates on environmental themes, best out of waste etc. (UNESCO, 1978)

Significance of the Study

The environmental degradation has become a concern of everyone. Through, in the name of development and attempt is being made a master nature through science and technology. Awareness about these environmental problems especially through education can be only solution to overcome environmental problems by masses. The people at large and especially the students must have the basic knowledge about the environmental problems in order to overcome these problems. Therefore, this study will help the teachers, policy makers and the planners to organise curriculum according to overcome the prevailing environmental issue. So, it is essential and vital to develop awareness about the environment.

Objectives of the study

1. To find the difference in the level of environmental awareness among student teachers studying environment education as a subject and not studying it

2. To find the difference in the level of environmental awareness among student teachers participating in different activities and not participating in these.

Hypotheses of the Study

1. There is no significant difference in the environmental awareness of student teachers studying environment education as a subject and not studying it.
2. There is no significant difference in the environmental awareness of student teachers participating in different activities and not participating in these.

Research Methodology

Method

Descriptive Survey Method of research was employed.

Sample: A sample of 300 students was chosen by purposive sampling technique. Out of 300 students, 150 were taking regular classes on environment education and also participating in various activities on environmental issues organized by B.Ed. Colleges in Jammu city.

Tool used: Self made questionnaire was used for data collection. Cronbach alpha coefficient value was found to be 0.71. Analysis was done through SPSS version 14. Content validity was established.

Statistical techniques Employed: The statistical techniques used were mean, S.D and *t*-test

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Research Objective 1: To find the difference in the level of environmental awareness among

student teachers studying environment education as a subject and not studying it

For achieving objective 1, *t* test was employed and results are given in table 1. It is indicated in table 1; the mean score of the student teachers formally studying environment education was higher as compared to the students not studying it. *t*-value was found to be 2.44 which is significant at 0.05 level. The result indicates that the education received through formal mode or by attending lectures related to environment issues gives greater impact on the knowledge about these issues. Also students know different causes and impact of these issues on life. It creates a positive attitude towards conservation of environment. Thus, hypothesis 1 i.e. "There is no significant difference in the environmental awareness of student teachers studying Environment Education and not studying it" was rejected.

Table 1. Mean and *t* test for student teachers receiving formal environment education

N	Studied	Mean	SD	<i>t</i> -value
	Environment Education as a subject (Formal)			
150	Yes	28.96	2.49	2.44*
150	No	17.93	1.58	

*significant at $p < 0.05$

Research Objective 2: To find the difference in the level of environmental awareness among student teachers participating in different activities and not participating in these.

For achieving objective 2, *t* test was employed and results are given in table 2.

Table 2. Mean and *t* test for student teachers participating in various environmental activities

N	Participated in various activities (Non Formal)	Mean	SD	<i>t</i> -value
150	Yes	32.98	2.34	2.52*
150	No	16.07	1.67	

Also in table 2; the mean score of student teachers participating in various activities was 32.98 which is higher than those not participating in these activities. *t*-value was 2.52 which is significant at 0.05 level. The result indicates that the activities like tree plantation, different competitions on environmental issues, celebration of different environment days, visits to places, rallies puts a greater impact. These inculcates attitude to protect environment and tells many strategies to safeguard it. The message reaches to masses by these activities. We can lead towards sustainable development by small initiatives. Thus hypothesis "There is no significant difference in the environmental awareness of student teachers participating in different activities and not participating in these" was rejected.

Conclusion

It is found from the study that curricular and co-curricular activities have great impact in creating environmental awareness among student teachers. It will definitely reach to masses as these future teachers will provide information to their students. Students can be

sensitized by celebrating special day like world environmental day, wildlife day; world water day, forest conservation day etc., and also knowledge about alternatives for plastic should be imparted and promoted among student population. It shouldn't be mere a study, rather it should become part of their life. It can be achieved through the help of NGOs who are working on environmental issues, social activists, government and Social Work professionals. That is to mention students from varied disciplines got to work along to make better environment. Government should also give grants to the institutions for conducting various activities.

Recommendations

The present study presents following recommendations.

1. Environmental study should be included in college curriculum and should be made compulsory at all levels as ordered by UGC. It can be included in their study by adding more practical oriented programmes so that students specially would be teachers take more interest in knowing about environment.
2. Society including parents should be made aware of different components of environment through door to door campaigns, films and social dramas and other co-curricular activities.
3. Experts must motivate people to be ready for various awareness programs regarding environment.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dr. Monika Bajaj is presently working as an Assistant Professor in U.G Department, MIER College of Education, Jammu, Jammu & Kashmir, India. She holds M.Sc. degree in Chemistry, M.Ed and Ph.D in Education and she has qualified UGC-NET in Education in December 2013. She has participated in various seminars, conferences and workshops at National levels. She has published six articles and research papers in the field of education in various reputed journals and conference proceedings.
