

Influence of Environmental Education on School Children : A Case Study in Tseminyu Block, Kohima, Nagaland

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ABSTRACT

Education of any form begins with the interaction of human and its environment. Since time immemorial human has been interacting with his environment and has generated branches of education. Traditional knowledge has a very rich concept of environment. But as population increases and technology advances, human beings started to control over the environment which resulted in environmental degradation at an unprecedented pace. It is imperative to make young generation environmentally literate to see environmental friendly world. Environmental Education is inserted in school curriculum with the hope to produce environmentally conscious school children. The study observed that students understand the concepts of environment taught in the classroom but it couldn't make them environmentally conscious. It indicates that Environmental Education in the curriculum is not having positive impact on child life. Even teachers awareness level is extremely low. This paper tries to study the impact of Environmental Education on school children behaviours towards environment.

Key words: *Environmental, Education, School, Curriculum, Protection, Conservation*

Introduction

Environmental degradation is an emerging concern in the present century with the advancement in technology and unsustainable use of natural resources. Pope Francis in his address to United Nations stated that environmental degradation threatens the very existence of the human species. It has become an important agenda for discussion in the international and national platform. Who is responsible? Who has to pay? Who has to compromise their development activities? etc., is an ending phenomena of discussion. To defend and improve the human environment for present and future generations has become an imperative goal for mankind (Stockholm, 1972). One such strategy adopted is Environmental Education.

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In 1977, the first Inter governmental conference on Environmental Education was organised by UNESCO in co-operation with UNEP at Tbilisi (USSR). The outcomes of the conference provided the fundamental principles on Environmental Education. It suggested that Environmental Education should be integrated into the whole system of formal education at all levels to provide the necessary knowledge, understanding, values and skills needed by the general public and many occupational groups, for their participation in devising solution to environmental questions. This allowed Environmental Education to address the broad range of issues and concerns included in agenda 21 and others which evolved through the meetings of the Commission on Sustainable Development (UNESCO 1997). The Agenda 21, the report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio-de-Janeiro, Brazil (1992) calls upon the member states to develop and increase public awareness and knowledge concerning desertification and drought, including the integration of Environmental Education in the curriculum of primary and secondary schools. Agenda 21 further suggested that schools should involve schoolchildren in local and regional studies on environmental health, including safe drinking water, sanitation and food and ecosystems and in relevant activities, linking these studies with services and research in national parks, wildlife reserves, ecological heritage site etc. In 2007, the fourth Intergovernmental conference on Environmental Education was held in Ahmadabad, India with an objective to understand the changes and developments that have taken place in Environmental Education since the 1977 conference and the role of Environmental Education in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).

National Policy of Education 1986 (Modified in 1992) recommended Environmental Education in school curriculum where 'protection of the environment' is stated as a common core around which a National Curriculum Framework would be woven. It emphasised the need to create awareness of environmental concerns by integrating it in educational process at all stages of education and for all sections of society. The National Curriculum for Elementary and Secondary Education: A Framework 1988 stated that "the school curriculum should attempt to create a commitment on the part of pupils to protect the environment and conserve nature and its resources so that the ecological balances, especially the balance between man and nature, could be maintained and preserved.... It should highlight the inter-dependence between the material environment and the plants and animal (Including human) life for survival, growth and development". In consonance with these documents, environmental studies were introduced as a subject at the primary level. The topics related to environment were suitably infused with different Science and Social Science subjects at all school stages.

One of the general objectives of education as per National Curriculum Framework 2000 is to made children understand the environment in its totality, both natural and social and their interactive processes, the environmental problems and the ways and means to preserve the environment. The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 recommends that children's life at school must be linked to their life outside school. NCF 2005 vision implies an approach which cuts across the traditional boundaries separating one subject from another. It further stated that Environmental studies will be introduced for classes III to V. In the study of natural environment, emphasis will be on its preservation and the urgency of saving it from degradation. According to

this approach, knowledge of environmental concerns and the activities, which might deepen this knowledge and develop a positive attitude, need to be infused in the subject matter of all areas of the school curriculum at different stages.

The objectives of infusing Environmental Education in school curriculum is to establish a relationship between the individual with his or her natural and social environment, aiming for children and youth to gain skills, direction, and values that are related to the environmental problems and responsibilities that face the individual, and align behaviour in a positive and interactive way towards his environment.

Objective

The objective of the study is to analyse the Influence of Environmental Education infused in school syllabus on school children, their awareness level and their attitude towards environment.

Study Area

Tseminyu block is situated in Kohima district of Nagaland state which is inhabited by the Rengma Naga tribe. Tseminyu block covers geographical area of 329.05 Sq. Km. As per 2011 census, the Rengma's has 50966 populations. The study area has 51 government schools (1 higher secondary, 7 High schools, 8 middle school and 35 primary schools) and 9 private schools (1 higher secondary and 8 High school).

Methodology

This study is based on primary and secondary sources. Interviews, Focus Group Discussion and observation were conducted to generate data and information. Books, journals, published and un-published articles etc were consulted to support this study.

Discussion and Result

National Policy of Education 1986 (modified in 1992) has suggested that Environmental Education should be a core component of the school's curriculum across India. Since then, Environmental Education has found its place in school curriculum in Nagaland. Nagaland State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) have infused the concepts of Environmental Education in school curriculum. The concept of Environmental Education is inserted in the content of Science and Social Sciences textbook from classes I to VIII. Some of the important contents and concepts infused in the books are as follows: Weather, Plants around us, Animals around us, Water, Safe drinking water, Air, Uses, Care and Protection of Plants, My natural surroundings, Disaster management and mitigation.

Secondary and Higher secondary level have a separate textbook for Environmental Education. In secondary level, Environmental Education is an additional paper where students have the liberty to choose their optional papers. In higher secondary, Environmental Education is a compulsory paper but examination is conducted internal where grading is allotted. Some of the important contents and concepts in environmental textbook are as follows; Ecosystem: types and functions, Destruction of ecosystem and its impact, conservation of ecosystem and environmental impact assessment, Depletion of resources, Waste generation and management, Environment

values and ethics, Restoring balance in ecosystem, pollution, Issues of the environment, Striving for a better environment, Biodiversity, Environmental management, Sustainable development, Sustainable agriculture.

It is observed that content on the child's immediate environment on which he/ she can understand the concept better is not much represented in the textbooks. The environmental issues like air pollution, water pollution, industrial pollution, waste generation and mitigation etc are the concepts which has little significance for school children in rural area.

The study observed that the student understand the concept of Environmental Education infused in their textbook but could not assimilate in their daily life. There are certain factors responsible for low level of environmental consciousness in school children.

- (i) The contents of Environmental Education are routinely taught to be memorised for examination.
- (ii) The projects and activities infused in the textbook are not seriously assimilated in teaching – learning process.
- (iii) Compared to other subjects, students have less interest towards Environmental Education. Teachers also show lukewarm teaching in Environmental Education.
- (iv) There is hardly any activity for Eco-club. At the most they organised World Environment Day in which students participate in painting competitions, plant trees and do some social work. Consistency in spreading awareness is totally absent.
- (v) Students in rural area like hunting, fishing, collect wildlife products. They do these activities for domestic consumption and for commercial purpose too. Traditional methods of hunting and trapping, modern air guns, catapults etc are used for the activities. These activities unconsciously harm their environment.
- (vi) Cultural background and socio-economic condition of a child plays an important role in his behaviours toward environment.
- (vii) Most parents are cultivators. Their survival depends on their immediate environment. They cannot remain hungry to protect the environment. Poverty itself is a form of environmental degradation and has the potential to accelerate degradation.
- (viii) Lack of sincere and dedicate teachers. Willingness to serve in rural school is missing in many teachers' attitude.
- (ix) Teaching aids and textbooks do not reach school in time. It is learned from the teachers that they don't receive teaching aids.
- (x) Untrained teachers: The successful implementation of Environmental Education in the classroom and outside classroom depends on how well trained is the teacher. A teacher without much knowledge, understanding, skills and commitment to transact the curriculum for environmental awareness, would be unable to produce environmentally literate students.

Conclusion

Environmental issues have become a topic of discussion and debate in national and international platforms. To protect and manage environment is not the duty of government alone.

It is a responsibility of every citizen to contribute every possible bit to safeguard our environment. Although a number of steps have been taken and initiatives carried out at national and international levels, it appears that they have not fulfilled the requirements and hopes which had been expressed in the conferences.

Environmental Education is infused in school curriculum in the state with an intention to help school children to develop the skills and attitudes needed to understand the dynamics of our environment. Nevertheless, the present study shows that Environmental Education has no significant impact on the behaviour of school children especially in the rural area. The impact of transaction depends entirely on the quality and sincerity of the teacher. It is a matter of great concern that there are many untrained school teachers in the block. The department should organise training program on pedagogy of transacting Environmental Education. Video clippings and photos of environmental degradation and its consequence should be engaged in the teaching-learning process. Projects and activities infused in the textbook should be a mandatory for every student. Eco-clubs should be seriously exercised to create awareness among the students and teachers. The concerned department and school administration should organise Eco camp once in a year to enable school children to learn about their surroundings and values.

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