

A STUDY ON ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION IN AKKARAIPATTU MUSLIM CENTRAL COLLEGE, SRI LANKA

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ABSTRACT

Our environment is unique because it sustains life and growth. On other planets, there is no environment and so no life. Environment means all that surrounds us. It consists of geography, geology and all other natural resources that nature has bestowed us. Environmental education is one of the important topics which is gaining prominence in the modern world. Many extensive discussions are going on regarding the solutions for environmental problems that aim at attaining sustainable development. Environmental education knowledge is essential for everyone. It helps to create awareness and an understanding of the evolving social and physical environment as a whole, its natural, man-made resources for the development of the society. Environmental education is vitally important to find ways to avoid self-destruction. Educating people is one of the measures to bring the needed awareness and solutions towards protecting the environment. The present study is to find out what importance is given to Environmental Education in Akkaraipattu Muslim Central College. Environmental awareness of students and staff also was found out. For this purpose, Environmental awareness of students and staff was taken into consideration and analysis through questionnaires. It was found that staff had high environmental awareness, whereas the students showed only 50% of awareness on environmental issues. School teachers also have a positive attitude towards conserving the environment. Therefore, the environmental attitude of students and teachers become clear from this finding. The study revealed that there was a relationship between environmental awareness and environmental attitude. There was no significant difference between male and female teachers in their awareness and attitude towards environmental education. It was also found out that environmental awareness does predict the environmental attitude of school teachers.

Keywords: environmental education, environmental awareness, environmental attitude

INTRODUCTION

Environment includes interactions and relationships among the natural elements- living, non living and man-made. It is the sum total of external factors, substances and conditions which influence organisms without their intrinsic part. "Environment includes water, air, land, the interrelationship which exists among and between water, air and land, and human beings,

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other living creatures, plants, micro organisms and property.” (Section 2(a) of the Environmental Protection Act, 1986)

All education springs from images of the future and all education creates images of the future. Significant part of education must be seen as the process by which we enlarge, enrich and improve the individual's image of the future. Thus there is a need to incorporate the education about environment in all the aspects of learning. One can states that Environmental Education has sprouted as a pragmatic educational response to the problems and concerns of environment.

Environmental Education is the process of recognizing values and clarifying concepts in order to develop skills and attitudes necessary to understand and appreciate the interrelatedness among man, his culture and his biophysical surroundings. Environmental education also entails practice in decision-making and self-formulating of a code of behavior about issues concerning environmental quality.

Environmental education is a problem-solving approach. It's teaching and learning is meaningful only when the acquired knowledge and skills are helpful in dealing with real life situations. These may be achieved by including such activities and experiments that will enable the students to make decisions or to choose between alternatives for solutions of the environmental problems.

The primary aim of Environmental education is to enable mankind to understand, preserve and appreciate the complex nature of the environment. Most people recognize the urgent need for environmental education and about the course that need to be taught. The chief objective of environmental education is that individual and social groups should acquire awareness and knowledge, develop attitudes, skills and abilities to participate in solving real life environmental problems. Every mankind needs to be educated about environment.

It is expected that environmental education will promote environmentally sustainable societies. However, some countries still feel the need to focus more on national economic development than on social and ecological sustainability and, unfortunately, environmental NGOs and other progressive organization within these countries are often not strong enough to support environmental education. Nevertheless, this situation is changing and, in recent years, many governments, NGOs and corporations have been increasingly willing to collaborate in developing a wide range of educational activities which encourage environmental protection and promote sustainable development through a broadened approach to environmental education, known as education for sustainability. This allows 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)

In the changing modern social scenario there is a crisis of environmental awareness leading to negative code of behavior towards the environment. The major challenge facing present day society is the need for developing environmental values to protect our environment. In this regard it is worthy to mention the Rio principle which states that “States shall cooperate in a spirit of global partnerships to conserve, protect and restore the health and integrity of the earth’s ecosystems in view of the contributions to global environmental degradation. States have common but differentiated responsibilities “(Rio principle: implications of agenda 21, 1992).

Global awareness and the concept of one world have grown greatly over recent decades, especially with the revolution of the space age and worldwide communications. Awareness has emerged with a number of successive but overlapping concerns: population growth, environmental change, inequalities in development and political fragmentation and instability. Worrying increase in global environmental change (GEC) within the atmosphere, geosphere, hydrosphere and biosphere associated with a whole series of major ecological problems: ozone depletion, global warming, rising sea-levels, air pollution, soil erosion, desertification, deforestation, water shortages, toxic wastes, etc. Among the various responses to these environmental concerns has been the emergence of environmental education. Since mid-century there has also been growing global inequity in human prospects of economic development, resource use and standards of living, the more developed countries (MDCs) becoming ever richer and using evermore resources while at the other end of the scale the least developed countries (LDCs) seem unable to escape from their conditions of poverty. The growing gap between rich and poor is highlighted by the UNDP’s (1990) human development index (Clarke 2007).

In many countries of the Asian and the Pacific Region environmental topics have been included in education courses, through integrating environmental concerns in other subjects and through specific courses for the environment. Government, NGOs, educational institution and media have undertaken some serious efforts to meet the growing environmental challenges by promoting environmental education, information and communication in their respective countries. Activities such as green bank and eco farming are emerging in the region. Special economic incentives (such as subsidy, tax-exemption and other incentives) are provided to schools in some countries where environmental education courses are offered.

Green Banking refers to the banking business conducted in selected area and manner that helps the over all reduction of external carbon emissions

and internal carbon foot print. To aid the reduction of external carbon emissions , bank should finance green technology and pollution reducing projects. Benefits of green banking are a) avoids paper work, b) creating awareness to business people c) loans at comparatively lesser rates d) environmental standards for lending.

Eco farming combines modern science and innovation with respect for nature and bio diversity. It ensures healthy farming and healthy food. It protects the soil, the water and the climate. It does not contaminate the environment with chemical inputs or use genetically engineered crops. Benefits of eco farming are: ecological products are healthier and free from persistent toxic wastes from pesticide, Insecticides, Persistent antibiotics and synthetic fertilizers.

Objectives of the study

1. To study the environmental awareness and attitudes of school teachers and students of Akkaraipattu Muslim Central College.
2. To study the difference in the environmental awareness and environmental attitude between males and females of school teachers of Akkaraipattu Muslim Central College.
3. To study the relationship of environmental awareness and environmental attitude of the staff and students of Akkaraipattu Muslim Central College.
4. To promote and foster eco-consciousness among school population (i.e., good environmental citizenship, developing and adopting good ethics, awareness, empowerment and improved governance) in relation to an environmentally sound and sustainable society, and the wise use of resources.
5. To develop and propose proven means for encouraging all schools in the region to implement appropriate environmental education programs.
6. To encourage NGOs and networks to support and offer assistance to schools, in the region to improve environmental education.
7. To promote social groups and individuals to gain better understanding and positive attitude towards environment and it's associated problems.

8. To promote and induce social groups and individuals acquire the skills for identifying and solving environmental problems.
9. To provide social groups and individuals an opportunity to be actively involved at all levels in working towards resolution of environmental problems.

METHODOLOGY

Study Area

Study area is Akkaraipattu Muslim Central College which is 1km interior from Akkaraipattu Town. This is a coastal Town in Ampara District, Eastern Province of Sri Lanka. Akkaraipattu Muslim Central College was founded in 1946. It became the sixteenth National Muslim School in Sri Lanka and the third National School in the Eastern Province in 1992. This school consists of 2202 students and classes are from Grade 6 to 13.

Data Collection

The study was designed to be a questionnaire survey type. The environmental awareness and environmental attitude of school students and staff through environmental education was measured. Sampling technique was used. 80 school students were chosen as samples. Data were collected in the first term of their study. Data were also collected from school staff by using questionnaire. The staff and students were from various disciplines such as Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Mathematics, Economics and English. Data were analysed using SPSS software.

Quantitative approach

Analysis and interpretation of Data

Tools 1

The data obtained using the SPSS were analyzed descriptively and inferentially.

Tools 2

The graphs were obtained using MS-Excel

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

Table 01:Analysed data of students

| | Variables | Frequency | Percentage |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | Students feel safe | 56 | 70 |
| 2 | Students participate in environmental activities | 60 | 75 |
| 3 | Teachers are knowledgeable about environmental activities | 68 | 85 |
| 4 | Do not use active learning methods | 40 | 50 |
| 5 | School environment clean | 68 | 85 |
| 6 | Students have adequate food and water | 60 | 75 |
| 7 | Students are healthy | 60 | 70 |
| 8 | Members in environmental club | 32 | 40 |
| 9 | Awareness about environmental issue | 40 | 50 |
| 10 | Environmental awareness predict environmental attitude | 40 | 50 |

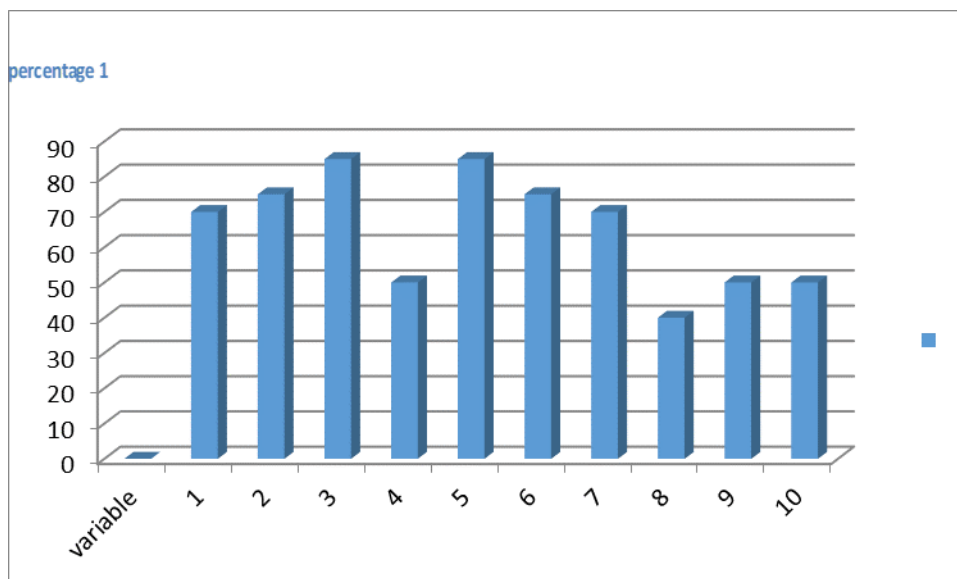
Table 02: Analysed data of staff

| | Variable | Frequency | Percentage |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| 1 | Students feel safe | 20 | 100 |
| 2 | Students participate in environmental activities | 20 | 100 |
| 3 | Students participate in hands on exercise | 4 | 20 |
| 4 | Students skill ,attitude which meet adequate standards | 12 | 60 |
| 5 | Teachers are knowledgeable | 12 | 60 |
| 6 | Use active learning methods | 12 | 60 |
| 7 | Families know environmental activities from children | 20 | 100 |
| 8 | Community members are involved in environmental activities at school | 04 | 20 |
| 9 | School environments are clean and green | 04 | 20 |
| 10 | Schools have emergency preparedness plan | 20 | 100 |
| 11 | School buildings are resilient to local hazard | 20 | 100 |
| 12 | Students have adequate food and water | 20 | 100 |
| 13 | Students are healthy | 04 | 20 |
| 14 | Environmental club in school does various | 04 | 20 |

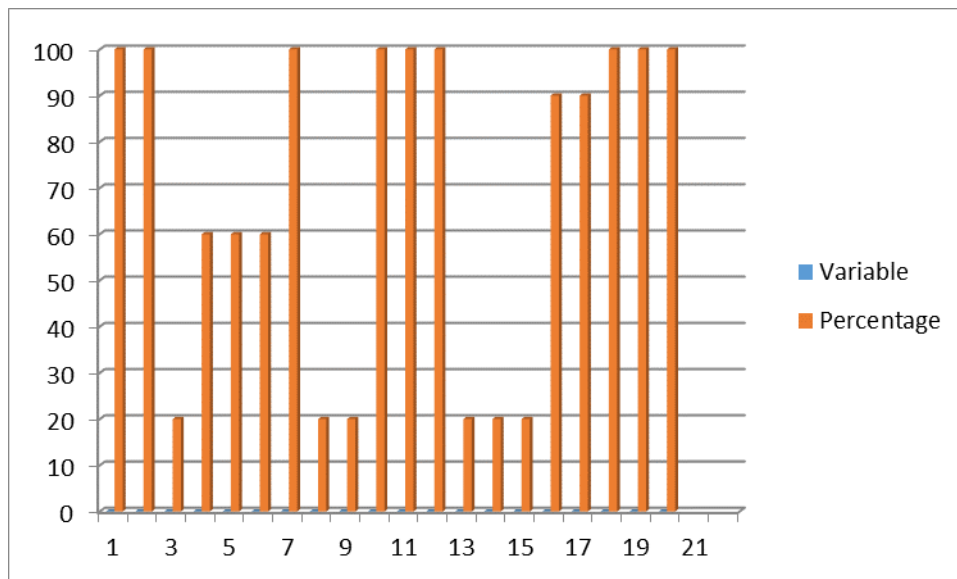
| | | | |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|-----|
| | environmental activities | | |
| 15 | Members in environmental club | 04 | 20 |
| 16 | Awareness about environmental issues | 18 | 90 |
| 17 | Positive attitude | 18 | 90 |
| 18 | Difference in environmental awareness and environmental attitude among male and female teachers | 20 | 100 |
| 19 | Relationship between environmental attitude of school teachers | 20 | 100 |
| 20 | Environmental awareness predict environmental attitude | 20 | 100 |

Graphs

This graph shows analysed data of students



This graph shows analysed data of staff



CONCLUSION

It is evident from the above findings that 50% awareness towards Environmental issues and problems among the school students exists. From the findings it was observed that students need to improve upon their environmental awareness so that the environment can be protected and conserved. So, this finding necessitates a need for Environmental education to improve the awareness level of students so that they can function as better environmental knowledgeable students in the schools. However, 90% staff has environmental awareness. Teachers play a very important role in the development of a country, Therefore, they can incorporate this knowledge in their teaching so that it can help in the development of better citizens in the future. Also, having a positive attitude towards environment indicates that they know the importance of protecting the environment. 50% Environmental awareness of students predicts the environmental attitude of students. But the school teachers have 90% environmental awareness. This is similar to the study of Padmanabhan, Borthakur, and Mittal (2017). The study of Padmanabhan (2008) reveals that the environmental awareness of Secondary school teachers was higher. 90% of teachers have positive attitude to Environmental Education. Environmental awareness and environmental attitude are important not only for teachers but also for any common man. So, teachers can do a lot towards the development of these two aspects in their students.

Since there was no significant difference between male and female staff towards Environmental awareness and environmental attitude, it is evident that all teachers are good at environmental education irrespective of gender.

Also the Environmental awareness as a predictor of environmental attitude reveals that those who have high environmental awareness also have positive attitude towards environment. So it can be concluded that if there is increase in the awareness of environmental issues and problems, we can develop a positive attitude towards the environment

Proper waste management has to be practiced to protect the environment. Minimum use of private vehicles, tree plantation, Conservation of forest, proper drainage and environmental awareness programme are some of the ways to protect the environment of Akkaraipattu. One of the suggestions given by student was to discourage urbanization. Students may form groups and survey the locality to find out the sources of mosquito breeding. Through discussions in the class, they can exchange their views on their findings.

There should be a strong support from school authorities, educational planners, policy-makers, administrators and others who are responsible for the education system as well as support by the community. By providing proper social environment and education, human nature could be altered fast. Hence, environmental education is necessary. Efforts should be made to start environmental education programmes in all schools so that children develop interest in the environment. This would bring a change in their attitude as well.

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