

Assessment of Environmental Knowledge, Awareness and Practices of College Students in Government Sheikhul Alam Degree College Budgam, J&K

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Abstract: The present study focused on the Assessment of Environmental Knowledge, Awareness and Practices of college students in Government Sheikhul Alam Degree College Budgam, J&K. Television and radio are conservation out of their interests and hobbies in watching television and listening to radio. Other sources in information are newspapers, textbooks and magazines which shows the availability of these reading materials in the school. Teachers do not integrate well environmental issues, concepts and protection and conservation practices in their daily lessons or throughout the teaching-learning process. Likewise, their parents and friends are not those environmentally-oriented citizens to share them the knowledge of protecting and conserving the environment. The students are too much exposed to information technology like internet. In the performance of students in the achievement test only two among 120 students are excellent who got the highest scores, most of them performed poor, and some performed very poor.

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Key Words: Environmental Knowledge, Awareness, Practices, college, Budgam Jammu and Kashmir.

Introduction

The environment continues to experience environmental stresses. Industries, households and other infrastructures are releasing wastes and continuously that threaten the atmosphere as well as agricultural lands, surface ground waters. Supplies coming from natural resources such as forest products that include wildlife, timber, clean water and medicines become limited while petroleum and minerals are hard to find. The demand for water, food, energy, housing, space, transportation and other basic necessities continue to grow as population increases. More environmental problems already occur; lost of biodiversity, ozone layer depletion, pollution in air, water and land, flood, landslide, global warming and climate change. In addition, interest of people often times come in conflict over the use of resources resulting to crime. These environmental problems together with the social, political, economical and technological changes that are going on the country have created greater demands and challenges to the educational sector. The curriculum at college level in a particular situation has been expected to reflect these changes. The curriculum needs to provide the necessary knowledge, skills and values that will help the learners not only to cope with and adapt to these changes but also to help solve these environmental problems. One of the strategies used to respond to these problems is incorporation or integration of environmental concepts into the curricula and other educational programs. The strategy of promoting effective teaching and learning must be included for the learners to acquire

understanding that enable them to accept stewardship and participate in the development and maintenance of an ecological and sustainable society. The protection and improvement of the environment have, therefore become imperative goals of education, because it is the means through which society prepares its citizenry to carry out their responsibility. Schools are the basin where people are molded, the training ground which instills necessary attitudes and mindsets that would serve as the core towards proper living in a demanding world. If this integration will be implemented, it is envisioned that within the next decades, a great majority of citizens will think and act with a sense of responsibility to care for, protect and improve environmental quality that is conducive to the well-being and to support our economy for national development. Keeping this fact in view this investigator decided to take up a piece of research pertaining to the assessment of environmental knowledge at higher education level.

Significance of the study

In 1972, the UN Conference on the human Environment in Stockholm called for UNESCO to work with all the appropriate UN agencies, international non-governmental organizations, and the 148 UN member nations to develop a program for promoting environmental education around the world (Stapp, 1979). That led to the preparation of numerous working papers, the creation of UNESCO's International Environmental Education Programme, and to the 1975 International Workshop on Environmental Education in Belgrade

(UNESCO, 1977). At that Workshop, 96 participants and observers from 60 countries, equally distributed among fine UNESCO regions, unanimously adopted The Belgrade Charter. The charter includes the following goal statement, which also serves as a definition of environmental education. "The goal of environmental education is to develop a world population that is aware of, and concerned about, the environment and its associated problems, and which has the knowledge, skills, attitudes, motivations and commitment to work individually and collectively towards solution of current problems and the prevention of new ones". (UNESCO-UNEP, 1976)

The 1976 UNESCO statement was further refined during a 1977 UNESCO-UN Environment Programme (UNEP) Intergovernmental Conference at Tbilisi, then in the former U.S.S.R., at which it was concluded that the general public should be expected to achieve the following objectives:

1. To help social groups and individual acquire an awareness of, and sensitivity to, the total environment and its allied problems.
2. To help social groups and individuals gain a variety of experience in, and acquire basic understanding of, the environment and its associate problems.
3. To help social group and individuals acquire a set of values and feelings of concern for the environment, and the motivation for actively participating in environmental improvement and protection.
4. To help social groups and individuals acquire the skills for solving environmental problems.
5. To provide social groups and individuals with an opportunity to be actively involved at all levels in working toward resolution of environmental problems (UNESCO, 1978).

These objectives have been reaffirmed at numerous subsequent international meetings. The Belgrade and Tbilisi statements taken together have become the most widely recognized definition of environmental education. It describes the end goal as well as experiences, strategies and processes important for developing environmental literacy (e.g. UNESCO, 1978; Hart, 1981) To conclude

Environmental Education is a learning process that increase knowledge of people and awareness about the environment and associated challenges, develops the necessary skills and expertise to address these challenges, and fosters attitudes, motivation and commitments to make informed decisions and take responsible action.

Keeping in view the nature and importance of Environmental Education present study determines if environmental concepts are integrated in the lessons taught in the basic education curriculum and if the students practice environmental protection and conservation practices. It serves as guide to local government leaders, environment sector and school administrators for the monitoring of science curriculum in the integration of environmental concept. It will also encourage them to put up school projects such as recycling centers or recovery facilities as support to practice more environmental protection and conservation activities. This study will also serve as information for the public about the problems of the environment and the need to address these problems by involving the youth. Most importantly, it will encourage students and readers to practice environmental protection and conservation activities if they have enough knowledge and understanding about the environment.

Objectives:

The study was conducted to determine the knowledge acquired by the college students on the environment, their awareness regarding the problems of environment, issues and protection and conservation practices. The study was conducted with following major objectives:

1. To study the students awareness about the different environmental problems, issues, and protection and conservation practices.
2. To ascertain the student's sources of information about these environmental problems, issues and protection and conservation practices.
3. To ascertain the level of understanding of the students on environmental concepts, problems and issues.

Table 1 Sources of information of the respondents

Source of Information	No. of Respondents	Percentage	Ranking
Television	105	87.50%	1
Radio	85	70.83%	2
Newspaper	65	54.17%	3
Textbooks	57	47.50%	4
Magazines	48	40%	5
Others: Teachers, parents and friends	45	37.50%	6
Internet	34	28.33%	7
Journals	29	24.17%	8

The sources of information among the respondents as shown in the above mentioned table are the television, radio as the top ranks with 105 or 87.50% or 70.83% respectively. This implies that students become aware in environmental protection and conservation out of their interest and their hobbies in watching television and listening to radio. Other sources of information are the newspaper with 65 or 54.17% among the respondents, textbooks as the 4th rank with 57 or 47.50% and magazines by 48 or 40%. Only 45 or 37.50% respondents consider their teachers, parents and friends their source of information. This indicates that teachers do not integrate well environmental issues, concepts, protection and conservation in their daily lessons or throughout teaching-learning activities. Likewise, parents and friends are not environmental-oriented

citizens to share them the knowledge of protecting and conserving the environment. Among their sources of information, internet and journals are the least mentioned sources of information with 34 or 28.33% and 27 or 24.17% respectively. In addition to journal containing environment related topics are not always within their reach or available to gain much knowledge and environmental concepts, issues and protection conservation.

In performance of students in the achievement tests as shown in the table 2 below, only four or 3.83% are excellent who got the highest scores that fall between 81-100. Twenty or 16.67% and 44 or 36.67% of the students have very satisfactory performance with scores between 61-80 and 41-60 respectively.

Table 2 Performance of the Students in the Achievement Test Scores Frequency Percentage Description

Scores	Frequency	Percentage	Description
81-100	04	03.33	Excellent
61-80	20	16.67	Very satisfactory
41-60	44	36.67	Satisfactory
21-40	33	27.50	Poor
0-20	19	15.83	Very poor
Total	120	100	-

Most of the students 44 or 33.67% performed satisfactory in the achievement test in which their scores fall between 0-20 and performed very poor. 33 or 27.50% student's performance on the achievement tests of Environmental awareness is poor. The table showed that less than half number of students lack the knowledge about environment issues, concepts, protection and conservation of the environment as well.

However in terms of the mean scores of the students, the computed value is 43 approximately which falls between 41-60 scores as shown in the above mentioned table which indicated that the level of understanding of the students in the protecting and conserving the environment is satisfactory. They may know what is happening in the environment and the ways to protect it but they did not do anything to solve problems related to environment.

Conclusions:

1. The respondents are aware about environmental concepts, issues, problems, protection and conservation practices from the different sources. Television and radio are conservation out of their interests and hobbies in watching television and listening to radio. Other sources in information are newspapers, textbooks and magazines which shows the availability of these reading materials in the school.

2. Among their sources of information, teachers, parents, friends, internet and journal are the least mentioned sources of information. This indicates that teachers do not integrate well environmental issues, concepts and protection and conservation practices in their daily lessons or throughout the teaching-learning process. Likewise, their parents and friends are not those environmentally-oriented citizens to share them the knowledge of protecting and conserving the environment. In addition to journal containing environment-related topics are not always within their reach or available to gain much knowledge on environmental concepts, problems, issues, protection and conservation. The students are too much exposed to information technology like internet.
3. In the performance of students in the achievement test only two (4) among 120 students are excellent who got the highest scores, most of them performed poor, and some performed very poor. It shows that they have low level of understanding about the different environmental issues, problems, protection and conservation practices. They lack much of the knowledge to help in solving environmental problems and practices relating environmental protection, conservation. But in terms of the average mean score of the students, it indicated that their level of understanding in protecting and conserving the

environment is problems, issues and concepts but they lack the proper values to help or contribute to solve environmental problems.

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