



VISTA INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL ON ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT & ENGINEERING



Influence of culture on the Environmental awareness of Primary Teachers

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ABSTRACT

Environment refers to the surrounding of an organism which includes both living and non-living components. According to NCF 2005, Environmental education is a process that aims at development of environmentally literate citizens who have knowledge and skills and can compete in a global economy. Environmental awareness in this study is defined as teachers understanding about a number of environmental or ecological concepts, environmental issues and it is represented by the scores obtained on environmental awareness test (EAWT) used here. Environment and society are closely related and they are interdependent. All human rely on environment and natural resources to fulfill needs and sustain health. India is full of culture and these cultures have value system and ethics which even helps the conservation of environment. But people have the greatest impact on the environment in the ways that they exploit natural resources and dispose of waste. Religious practices have caused water pollution in lots of places. Present study is focused on primary teachers who have high degree of environmental awareness as calculated but culture has shown a vivid influence on environmental degradation. A semi structured interview schedule was used to observe the influence of culture on environment. Sample size taken in this study was 50 primary teachers of Delhi and random sampling method was used to collect data. More than half of the respondents were bound to follow the rituals prevailing in the society but few of them about 30% gave some alternatives for the conservation of environment.

Key words : *Environmental awareness, culture, religion, natural resources.*

1. Introduction

Environment is viewed in different ways with different angles by different group of people, but it may be safely argued that “environment is an inseparable whole and is constituted by the interacting system of physical, biological and cultural elements which are interrelated individually as well as collectively in myriad ways”. It refers to the surrounding of an organism which includes both living and non-living components.

According to NCF 2005, environmental education is a process that aims at development of environmentally literate citizens who have knowledge and skills and can compete in a global economy. Education is the creature and creator of society. The educational process utilizes the natural environment and its resources. Different social structures depend on the natural resources and environment [1]. Education is a powerful instrument for social change and social control. The social changes are

essential to utilize the natural resources of the environment. Environment and society are closely related and they are interdependent. All human rely on environment and natural resources to fulfill needs and sustain health. India is full of culture and these cultures have value system and ethics which even helps the conservation of environment. The present society has to educate the future generation in the light of resources of the country which are to be utilized adequately. The resources are fundamental base for the economic growth and development of human society but their withdrawal from the nature, mode of their uses by human beings and their disposal has enormous adverse effect on the environment. But people have the greatest impact on the environment in the ways that they exploit natural resources and dispose of waste. Religious practices have caused water pollution in lots of places. People should develop knowledge and understanding of natural processes which take place in the environment, impact of human activities on the environment, environmental issues such as green house effect, acid rain, and air pollution, how environment has been affected due to past actions and decisions, importance of effective action to protect and manage the environment etc. Promoting positive attitudes towards the environment is essential if people have to value it and understand their role in safeguarding it for the future [3]. Cultural dimension is an important aspect and cannot be neglected at all. Development of awareness is essential and it should be done from the school level in order to prepare them for the future. Superstitions associated with religion act as a barrier in developing awareness and adopting substitutive strategies for sustainable development. In this study teacher's understanding about a number of environmental or ecological concepts, environmental issues are judged on the basis of scores obtained by Environmental Awareness test (EAWT).

2. Rationale of the study

Since the ecological balance is getting disturbed due to man-made activities and contemporary life style, the activities associated with culture and religion should be modified or changed. Now- a -days people

have become materialistic and making business to earn money. In order to set a social status, an unhealthy competition is prevailing in the society which is causing tremendous harm to the environment. So to make this earth sustainable, it is very essential to modify the activities of culture as it is a demand of the hour.

Opoku, University College, London worked on role of culture on sustainable built environment and found that the cultural dimension of sustainability should be integrated into development policies and awareness should therefore be promoted through education and public policies.

In a book "When God is not green: A World wide journey to places where religious practices and environmentalism collide", it has been mentioned that increasing number of participants in religious celebrations in India and the belief that the Ganga river will wash away their sins and bring salvation, is causing more water pollution. Religious practices have caused water pollution in various places [2, 4].

The present study investigates influence of culture on the environmental awareness of primary teachers.

2.1 Key terms of the study

a) Environment

It refers to the surrounding of an organism which includes both living and non-living components.

b) Environmental Awareness

It is the understanding about a number of environment or ecological concepts and environmental issues.

c) Culture

It refers to the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, religion and relationship.

2.2 Objectives of the study

1. To study the environmental awareness of primary teachers.
2. To study the effect of culture on environmental awareness.

3. Methodology

Population comprises of primary teachers of north-west zone of Delhi. Sample of the study is 50 primary

teachers. Simple random sampling technique is used in the present study.

3.1 Tool

1. Environmental awareness test (EAWT) of Dr. K. Yashodara was used to collect data. The validity coefficient of the test is 0.6 to 0.76 and the reliability calculated by Guttman split half method is 0.65.
2. Semi structured interview schedule was prepared to collect data.

3.2 Data Analysis

Statistical techniques were used to analyze and interpret the data. The data of awareness and responses are given in Tables (1,2).

4. Analysis and interpretation

Table 1 shows that the mean environmental awareness of primary teachers. The mean percentage of environmental awareness of primary teachers is 66.66% which is significantly high. Table 2 depicts

the result of semi structured interview. It is evident from the result that maximum respondents belong to "yes" response category and minimum respondents belong to "No" response category. More than half of the respondents are influenced by the culture and instead of having a high environmental awareness; their response is projecting towards environmental degradation. This clearly shows that respondents are totally unaware of the role of culture in environmental conservation.

Table 1. Environmental awareness of primary teachers

Sample	Mean	S.D	Mean %
50	24	3.56	66.66

The study indicates that majority of the primary teachers have high environmental awareness but the activities related to culture are forcing them to follow it and this is becoming a major cause of environmental degradation.

Table 2. Responses from target population

Survey questions	Target population	% Responses	No. of "Yes" Responses	% of "Yes" responses	No. of "No" responses	% of "No" responses
1.	50	100	48	96%	2	4%
2.	50	100	34	68%	16	32%
3.	50	100	36	72%	14	28%
4.	50	100	30	20%	20	80%
5.	50	100	18	36%	32	64%
6.	50	100	50	100%	0	0%
7.	50	100	22	44%	28	56%
8.	50	100	50	100%	0	0%
9.	50	100	40	80%	10	20%
10.	50	100	4	8%	46	92%

5. Suggestions and conclusion

Culture is an important factor in everyone's life. It is the foundation to the prosperous life time. Education is a part of cultural pattern and its nature is determined by the culture in which it is organized. Some suggestions are there which can be very beneficial. Like instead of taking bath in the river, one can sprinkle water on the body. Instead of immersion of dead bodies of children in a river, proper cremation can be done. Idols made of chemicals should be avoided and eco-friendly products should be used during festivals. The most important thing should be to develop awareness on topics of environmental concern at Hindu devotional places.

India needs a cultural shift and mindset which takes us back to a value system given to us by our forefathers to look upon nature as a source to nurture and not an object to consume or conquest. It is essential to develop awareness about culture's role in environment conservation; only then government policies would be successful. There is an urgent need to shift from a modern consumer culture to a post modern sustainability culture.

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