

Impact of Environmental Education: A Study on Degree Level Students of Tinsukia District of Assam

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Received: 10th February 2016; **Revised:** 20th February 2016; **Accepted:** 15 March 2016

Introduction

The roots of Environmental education can be traced back as early as the 18th century when Jean Jacques Rousseau stressed the importance of an education that focuses on the environment in book, EMILE. After a few decades, Louis Agassiz, a Swiss born naturalist, echoed Rosseaus philosophy as he encouraged students to “Study nature not books”. These two influential scholars helped in laying the foundation for an environmental education programme known as “Nature study”, which took place in the late 19th century and early 20th century. This nature study movement helped the students to develop an appreciation for nature. Anna Botsford Comstock, the Head of the Department of Nature study at Cornell University, was a prominent figure in the nature study movement and wrote the Handbook for Nature Study in 1911. Cornstock and other leaders of the movement, such as Liberty Hyde Bailey, contributed a lot towards Nature study. A new type of environmental education emerged during the 1920s and 1930s which paid attention mainly to conservation of the environment. This sort of conservation education was a major scientific management and planning tool that helped to solve social, economic and environmental problems.

The modern environmental education movement gained significant development in the late 1960s and early 1970s. During this period, people began to fear the fallout from radiation, chemical pesticides and significant amount of air pollution etc. that could lead their health and natural environment in a bad condition. It led to a unifying phenomenon known as Publics’ concern for environmentalism. In 1970, the president of USA, Nixon, passed the National Environmental Education Act, which was intended to incorporate environmental education in the educational institutions. In 1971, the National Association for Environmental education was created to improve environmental literacy by providing resources to teachers and promoting environmental education programmes. Internationally, environmental education gained recognition when the United Nations (UN) conference on the human environment held in Stockholm, Sweden in 1972. It is

popularly known as Stockholm Declaration. The declaration was made up of 7 proclamations and 26 principles to inspire and guide people of the world in the preservation and enhancement of the human environment.

In the year of 1975, the Belgrade Charter was published. The Belgrade Charter was the outcome of the International workshop on environmental education held in Belgrade, Yugoslavia. The Belgrade Charter was built upon the Stockholm declaration and adds goals, objectives and guiding principles of environmental education programmes. In 1977, the Tbilisi declaration was evolved. The Tbilisi declaration updated and clarified the Stockholm declaration and Belgrade Charter by including new goals, objectives, characteristics education. The United Nations conference on “Environment and development” held in Rio-de-Janerio in 1992 and World summit on sustainable development held at Johannesburg in 2002 have drawn the attention of people around the globe to the deteriorating condition of our environment. It is clear that no citizen on the earth can afford to be ignorant of environmental issues. Therefore, environmental study has become necessary for the rising generation. Recognizing this, the supreme court of India directed the university Grants Commission (UGC) to introduce a basic course on environment at every level in college education. Accordingly, the UGC has developed studies for undergraduate course to be compulsorily implemented in all the Universities and colleges of India. Following the direction of the Supreme Court of India, the Dibrugarh University of Assam has also introduced a separate subject, namely environ- mental study, at undergraduate level from the year of 2004. Recognizing the role of environmental education on Biodiversity and sustainable development, the investigators tried to have an analysis on the impact of the newly introduced subject on the students.

Rationale of the Study

To check the deadly degradation caused to mother earth, environmental education is a must. For this purpose, introduction of environmental education at all levels of education system, in a scientific manner, is the need of the hour. Students must find interest in environmental education and at the same time, so it must have the quality to attract the attention of the learners. That is why, evaluation of the implemented course from various angles, is very essential. Keeping this in mind, the present study was conducted.

Objectives of the Study

The present study concentrates on the following specific objectives -

- (1) To examine whether all the necessary topics for the students have been included in the environmental study syllabus.
- (2) To study whether the syllabus on the subject environmental studies has fulfilled its rote in fulfilment of the objectives of teaching environmental studies.

- (3) To see whether practical or field work is enough in the syllabus for developing the necessary skills in students.
- (4) To examine whether the syllabus is suitable for all types of students dull, mediocre and brilliant.
- (5) To examine whether the syllabus is fit to create awareness towards control of environmental pollution.
- (6) To see whether the syllabus is not boring.

Delimitation of the study

The present study has the following limitations -

- (1) Though the term “impact is used in the title, the study is confined to the opinion or statement of the respondents. In other words, the impact is on the students on the basis of their own opinion.
- (2) The study is limited to the provincialized college of Tinsukia and Golaghat district of Assam only.
- (3) Only the simple mathematical calculation likes percentage, subtraction, addition etc. are used in the study.

Methodology

Method: The investigators have used sample survey method for the study.

Tool: For the purpose of collecting the necessary data from the students, a non-standardized questionnaire was developed and used by the investigators.

Population and Sample: The questionnaire was administered on a sample, selected purposively from the Provincialised Degree Colleges of Tinsukia District of Assam. Out of the 11 (eleven) provincialized degree colleges 6 (six) colleges were selected purposively. By using the purposive sampling technique, a sample consisting of 60 students (10 from each college) of TDC 4th semester was selected as Dibrugarh University has already introduced this particular syllabus compulsorily in TDC 4th semester (for all streams- Arts, science and commerce).

Analysis and Interpretation

Analysis and interpretation of the data is shown as follows -

- (1) To examine whether all the necessary topics for the students have been included in the environmental study syllabus, the percentage of the respondents have been calculated. 81% respondents opined that all the necessary topics are included in the environmental studies a syllabus and the remaining 19% respondents opined that some important topics have not been included in the curriculum. It signifies that the existing environmental studies syllabus got success in incorporating all the necessary topics.

(2) It is revealed from the data at hand that the syllabus on the subject of environmental studies has fulfilled its role as far as fulfilment of the objectives of teaching environment studies are concerned. 85% respondents agree that the existing syllabus is successful in fulfilling the objectives of teaching environmental studies at degree level and the remaining 15% respondents do not agree with this.

(3) Majority of the respondents are of the view that the practical or field work aspect is enough in the syllabus for developing the necessary skills in students. 70% respondents opine that the field work or practical aspect is given adequate weightage in the syllabus and the remaining respondents i.e. 30% respondents feel that more field work or practical aspect should be included in the curriculum.

(4) To examine whether the syllabus is suitable for the all types of students, the percentage of the respondents were calculated. From the calculation it reveals that majority of the respondents think that the syllabus is suitable for all types of students i.e. dull, mediocre and brilliant. In other words, 79 percent respondents are of the view in a positive sense and the remaining have a negative view.

(5) To examine whether the syllabus is fit to create awareness towards control of environmental pollution, the percentage of the respondents was calculated. From the calculation it is proved that most of the respondents i.e. 83% respondents feel that the existing syllabus is fit to create awareness.

(6) From the data it reveals that the syllabus for environmental studies is not boring. 62% respondents are of the view that the syllabus is not boring but interesting and the remaining 38% respondents find it boring. This 38% respondents who find it boring, poses serious concern.

Conclusion

Analysis and interpretation of the obtained data reveals that environmental studies syllabus as introduced by Dibrugarh University in TDC 4th semester of its affiliated colleges, under the direction of the Supreme Court, has been fulfilling its own pre-determined objectives. Students find it interesting and they have a positive attitude forwards it. It can be considered as an important step in our country for inculcating the right types of value, knowledge and skill in the rising generation so far as the environment and its allied problems are concerned. It has the potentiality to develop such a class of future citizen who will have a healthy attitude and responsive behaviour towards environment.

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