
A STUDY BASED ON THE IMPLICATION AND ITS SUCCESSFULNESS OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS OF SOUTH BENGAL

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Abstract

Environmental education has become a key to solve environmental problems and also a key to maintain sustainability globally. This present study is an attempt to highlight the status of Environmental Education in upper primary school education system in west Bengal, especially in South Bengal. The source of the data of this empirical study is from field survey supported by random sampling. In this field survey few selective parameters are examined like frequency of environmental classes, frequency of practical classes regarding environment studies, frequency of field observation classes or nature study, type of teaching methodology used, type of evaluation system etc. The status of Environmental education in upper primary school education system is really not satisfactory and there is a need to standardize and upgrade the education system as a whole.

Keywords: *Environmental education (EE); Teaching and learning material (TLM); Field survey.*

Introduction

The past forty years have been growing international recognition so that the challenges associated with environmental degradation and sustainable development have important implications and connections with education and schooling. The concept of environmental education is now widely spreading as national educational policies, curriculum documents, curriculum development initiatives and conservation strategies (Rickinson, 2002). World educators and environment specialists have repeatedly pointed out that a solution to the environmental crisis will require an environmental awareness and its proper understanding which should be deeply rooted in the education system at all levels of school education (Shobeiri et.al., 2007). The environmental education (EE) has been thoroughly discussed at several national and international seminars, workshops, conferences after the deliberations at Fourex in 1971 and in United Nations Conference on Human Environment at Stockholm in 1972. On the occasion of the First International Conference on Environmental Education held in New Delhi, in 1980, the late Mrs. Indira Gandhi observed that environmental education (EE) helps to arouse social consciousness and make community aware of the fact that the good of the individual and that of the community are both harmed by ecological disruptions. In 1985, there held the Second International Conference on Environmental Education (EE) at New Delhi. Several important points emerged from deliberations at the international, national, regional and even local conferences on environmental education (Sharma, 2004).

Objectives

The present study has a specific broad enquiry about the status of environmental education in school education system. Further in details, this study has some objectives which are as follows:-

1. To find out whether there is any allotment of classes regarding environment education and also the frequency per week per school of South Bengal.
2. To find out whether there is any allotment of practical classes regarding environment education per week per school of South Bengal.
3. To find out whether there is any allotment of field observation classes regarding environment education per week per school of South Bengal.
4. To find out whether there is any use of teaching learning material (TLM) in class-room teaching for making the subject more attractive in schools of South Bengal.
5. To find out whether there is any systematic evaluation system regarding environment education and also the frequency in an academic year in schools of South Bengal.

Data source and methodology

The main source of data in this present study is field survey and another source of data are various books, journals, reports etc. After significant articles review, the frame work of this study is made. The six districts of south West Bengal (Nadia, 24 parganas (N), 24 Parganas (S), Kolkata, Howrah, Hoogly) are merely selected for survey. Pilot survey was followed by the field work and the field study was based on random sample survey. As the area of this study is quite large, it is being conducted by efficient survey team, one surveyor was appointed for each district and all the field survey have been exclusively supervised by the authors. Keeping in view the specific objectives, short interview schedule was framed on the basis of comprehensive study of the concerned literatures. It includes both closed and open ended questions. Keeping in mind the aims and objectives of the study, the survey was carried out in middle school, higher school, madrasa, convent school, girls' school, boys' school etc. in the six districts of West Bengal (South Bengal). From each district approximately 25 schools were covered and from each school twenty regular students were surveyed. The total number of sample is 1250. Table 1 depicts about the number of samples surveyed. The schedule consists questions on student identification, age, sex, enrollment, attitude, class performance etc., queries related to each respondent i.e. number of theoretical and practical and field observation class per week, procedure and technology used for teaching, number and types of evaluation adopted in an academic year, kind of regularity maintained by authority etc. Cross-questions are also included so as to elicit the required information accurately.

Table 1 District-wise number of sample surveyed

| Sl. No. District | No. of School | Average No. of Sample per School | Total no. of Sample |
|-------------------|---------------|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1.Nadia | 25 | 20 | 201 |
| 2.24 Parganas (N) | 25 | 20 | 220 |
| 3.24 Parganas (S) | 25 | 20 | 198 |
| 4.Kolkata | 25 | 20 | 205 |
| 5.Howrah | 25 | 20 | 195 |
| 6.Hoogly | 25 | 20 | 231 |
| Total | 160 | 120 | 1250 |

To supplement the information collected through interviews, indirect and informal discussions are also carried out with the school authority and guardians of the selective students. The information obtained from each respondent is also spot-checked to verify the accuracy so as to minimize the response errors.

Study Area

For this present study, merely six districts are selected namely Nadia, 24 Parganas (N), 24 Parganas (S), Howrah, Hoogly and Kolkata which is formally called as South Bengal. The study area extends from 26° 14' S to 25° 40' 22" S and 89° 49' E to 92° 54' 35" E and covering an area of 23,598 sq. km.. The total number of middle schools in South Bengal is 1709, where Kolkata district has 223 upper primary schools followed by Nadia, 24 Parganas (N), 24 Parganas (S), Howrah and Hoogly have 289, 306, 216, 237 and 447 upper primary schools respectively (Census of India,2001).

Environmental education in South Bengal

From the Table 2 below it is observed that in most of the schools (69 percent) the number classes regarding environment education (EE) is one per week and the rest of the school (24 percent) conducts two classes per week. On the other hand very minor number of schools (9.33 percent) did not conduct classes regarding environment education regularly in South Bengal. Among six districts of South Bengal, 24 Parganas (S) stands in the first position in allotment of two classes per week per school. On another side Howrah stands in the first position (87percent) in case of conducting single class per week followed by Kolkata.

Table 2 Allotment of environment class per week

| Sl.No. District | Single Class Per Week (%) | >2 Class Per Week (%) | Irregular Class (%) | Total (%) |
|-------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|------------|
| 1.Nadia | 51 | 44 | 4 | 100 |
| 2.24 Parganas (N) | 72 | 17 | 16 | 100 |
| 3.24 Parganas (S) | 46 | 47 | 9 | 100 |
| 4.Kolkata | 86 | 16 | 0 | 100 |
| 5.Howrah | 92 | 4 | 5 | 100 |
| 6.Hoogly | 67 | 16 | 22 | 100 |
| Total | 69 | 24 | 9.33 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2017

In the syllabus of environment education as an example there is compulsory provision for field observation class for real time realization about our environment. But in South Bengal only 13 percent schools conduct field observation classes regularly. On the other hand 45.33 percent schools conduct field observation classes but with a lesser regularity and it is worthy to mention that 36 percent schools do not conduct field observation class. In case of conducting regular field observation class, regarding environmental education (EE), Nadia and Kolkata districts have taken front position and in case of unable to conduct any field observation class 24 Parganas (S) district have ranked at the top position followed by Howrah district (Table 3).

Table 3: Allotment of field observation class per week

| Sl.No. District | Regular Class (School in %) | Irregular Class (School in %) | No Field Observation Class (School in %) | Total (%) |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|--|------------|
| 1.Nadia | 17 | 56 | 31 | 100 |
| 2.24 Parganas (N) | 12 | 41 | 11 | 100 |
| 3.24 Parganas (S) | 12 | 26 | 66 | 100 |
| 4.Kolkata | 17 | 44 | 41 | 100 |
| 5.Howrah | 7 | 51 | 46 | 100 |
| 6.Hoogly | 13 | 54 | 21 | 100 |
| Total | 13 | 45.33 | 36 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 4: Teaching method used in environment class

| Sl.No. District | Lecture Method (School in %) | Using TLM (School in %) | Total (%) |
|-------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| 1.Nadia | 31 | 71 | 100 |
| 2.24 Parganas (N) | 36 | 42 | 100 |
| 3.24 Parganas (S) | 46 | 56 | 100 |
| 4.Kolkata | 60 | 43 | 100 |
| 5.Howrah | 41 | 61 | 100 |
| 6.Hoogly | 36 | 67 | 100 |
| Total | 41.67 | 56.67 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2017

The method of class- room teaching plays a vital role in the improvement of knowledge level among the students about any particular discipline and also helps to grow interest in that discipline. From the Table 4 it is observed that among six districts of south Bengal, more than fifty percent (56.67 Percent) schools follow improved teaching method, i.e., using TLM during class-room teaching. On another side, 41.67 percent schools follow conventional teaching method, i.e., lecture method. From this survey, it is revealed that in Nadia district 71 percent schools used TLM in class-room teaching and on the other side in Kolkata district 60 percent schools follow lecture method for class-room teaching.

Conclusion

It is very difficult to arrive at any concrete conclusion. The findings of the study are depicting that although in every school there is a curriculum of formal environmental education (EE), but its standard is not appropriate, most of the schools have not conducted theoretical and practical classes regularly, primitive teaching method have been followed by most of the schools, nature study classes have not conducted regularly and seriously, school administration did not framed any comprehensive evaluation technique regarding environmental education compared to other discipline. Moreover, in all the schools there are no specialist teacher, who religiously teaches environmental education. So, for strengthening and improving of this kind of poor situation some recommendations are enumerated below: (i) Govt. should take care about the proper implication of environmental education in high schools in true sense of its term. (ii) Govt. should prepare a proper guideline for school management and not only this; there should be an enquiry team in every district, headed by District Inspector of School, for monitoring school education system, especially environmental education. (iii) It is quite impossible to appoint specialist teacher in each and every school all of a sudden, but it is possible to train frequently the existing teachers of science faculty about environmental education (EE) and the application of TLM in class management. (iv) Formal system of education should also incorporate in its curriculum, some elements of environmental awareness programmes. (v) Apart from this, with the help of mass media and modern means of communication the concept of environment, environmental deterioration, conservation of environment etc. should be published and popularised.

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