

Environmental Awareness among Students in the Sivasagar District of Assam: An Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Environmental Education has become increasingly important in today's world as human activities continue to affect natural systems. It helps individuals develop the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes needed to understand the relationship between humans and the environment. This study explores the importance of Environmental Education, particularly its role in shaping student awareness and responsible behaviour. It highlights how Environmental Education enables learners to recognise environmental problems such as pollution, resource depletion, climate change, and urbanization. The paper also examines the role of schools in providing environmental learning through interdisciplinary teaching, practical activities, and value-based education. The study emphasizes that introducing Environmental Education from early childhood is essential for developing environmentally responsible citizens. The research concludes that strong environmental awareness, combined with effective school-based initiatives, can significantly contribute to sustainable environmental protection.

Keywords: Environmental Education, Awareness, Students, Sustainability

INTRODUCTION

Environmental Education has become one of the most important areas of learning in the modern world. As human beings continue to depend on natural resources and modify the surroundings through various developmental activities, it has become essential to understand the close relationship between humans and the environment. Environmental Education is therefore a process that helps individuals gain knowledge, understanding, skills, values, and attitudes that enable them to live responsibly within both the natural and human-made environment. It creates awareness about issues such as population growth, pollution, resource use, technology, transportation, and the planning of urban and rural areas. Through such learning, individuals become capable of understanding how their actions affect the total environment and how they can work towards maintaining environmental balance. Environmental Education teaches people how to use and conserve natural resources properly while maintaining ecological equilibrium. It encourages learners to recognize environmental values and understand different concepts related to environmental issues. Many scholars describe Environmental Education as education about the environment, education for the environment, and education through the environment. This means that students should learn not only the facts about the environment but also develop a caring attitude and the ability to act for its protection. The need for Environmental Education has increased as the world faces serious challenges such as climate change, loss of biodiversity, deforestation, and pollution. These problems are largely the result of human activities. Therefore, learning about the environment from an early age is essential. Schools have a major role to play in shaping the attitudes and behaviours of children. When environmental knowledge is provided at the school level, students become more conscious about their surroundings and develop a sense of responsibility. Environmental Education should begin in preschool and continue throughout life. It should also be interdisciplinary, meaning that different subjects like science, social studies, geography, and even moral education should work together to provide a complete understanding of environmental issues.

In India, Environmental Education has been organized systematically in the formal education structure. At the primary level, the main focus is on creating awareness. Children are introduced to the environment through

examples from their immediate surroundings—home, school, and outdoor situations. Audiovisual materials, stories, and field visits help them observe and understand nature. At this stage, nearly 75 percent of the learning focuses on awareness, followed by real-life situations and basic conservation practices. At the lower secondary level, students are given more knowledge about real-life environmental issues, conservation methods, and sustainable development. They learn to connect classroom lessons with real-world problems. Practical activities, general science knowledge, and field visits help them identify environmental issues and think about solutions. Institutions such as NCERT play an important role by designing textbooks, teaching materials, kits, and guides that support the teaching of Environmental Education across different levels of schooling. This research paper explores the meaning, objectives, principles, and educational practices related to Environmental Education in India. It examines how Environmental Education can help develop environmentally responsible citizens and how the school system can integrate environmental learning at different stages.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Chatterjee (2007) emphasizes that human beings are the primary agents responsible for the deterioration of environmental health, yet they also possess the ability to repair and restore ecological balance. He argues that factors such as rapid population growth, industrial expansion, inadequate education, low environmental awareness, and widespread poverty contribute significantly to environmental degradation. Tuncer et al. (2007) reported that environmental pollution remains one of the most critical challenges of the present era and is unlikely to decrease in the near future. Their study revealed that pre-service teachers demonstrated a clear understanding of their personal responsibility in addressing environmental problems. The researchers emphasized that developing strong environmental awareness among future teachers is essential, as their attitudes and actions directly influence the environmental values of upcoming generations. Choudary (2010) examined environmental awareness among college students and found notable differences across institutional types. His study revealed that students from aided colleges exhibited significantly lower levels of environmental awareness compared to those from government and private colleges. The findings suggest that institutional environment, resource availability, and academic exposure may influence students' understanding of environmental issues. Prakash (2014) explored how Eco-clubs contribute to developing environmental awareness, attitudes, and responsible behaviour among students in Bangalore. The study concluded that environmental awareness is influenced by students' environmental attitudes and responsible behaviours. The study stresses the importance of strengthening Eco-club activities across all academic streams. Nagra (2015) examined environmental awareness among teachers at different school levels and found significant differences between secondary and elementary school teachers. The study revealed that secondary teachers generally possessed higher levels of awareness. Additionally, urban teachers showed greater environmental understanding than their rural counterparts, indicating disparities based on geographical location. Mathivan and Pazhanivelu (2015) revealed no significant difference between male and female students in terms of awareness. Similarly, urban and rural students did not differ significantly in their involvement in environmental movements. The results emphasize that environmental education efforts had produced uniformly. Mohan (2015) conducted a study focused on environmental concerns related to deforestation, highlighting its causes and the importance of preservation. He emphasized the urgent need to create widespread awareness about the consequences of deforestation to safeguard natural resources for future generations.

Objective

1. To assess the level of environmental awareness among students in relation to various environmental problems.

METHODOLOGY

The population of the study included students of Classes I to VIII from Lower Primary, Upper Primary, and High Schools within the study area. In addition to students, the sample also included teachers, Headmasters/Headmistresses, educational officers, NGO personnel, and officials of Amguri Education Block. Secondary data were collected from the Gourisagar Block (Amguri Education Block) office, Census Office in Sivasagar, and various government and environmental organizations. These included the Office of the Chief Conservator of Forests, Assam Pollution Control Board, and the Ministry of Environment and Forest,

Government of India. Additional information was gathered from published biodiversity and environment reports, newspapers, magazines, books, journals, and the internet. Primary data were collected directly from the selected respondents. Separate interview schedules were prepared for each group—students, teachers, heads of institutions, educational officers, and NGO representatives—to gather relevant information.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Table 1: perception of students regarding environmental awareness

Sl. No.	Question	Yes	No
1	Aware of Environmental Education	95% (76)	5% (4)
2	Involvement of School for Environmental Awareness	95% (76)	5% (4)
3	Celebration of World Environment Day	97.5% (78)	2.5% (2)
4	Student involvement in plantation programme	75% (60)	25% (20)
5	Environmental pollution is a big issue	95% (76)	5% (4)
6	Understanding the meaning of Environmental Education	12.5% (10)	87.5% (70)
7	Present education system is good for imparting knowledge on Environment	25% (20)	75% (60)
8	Involvement of students and teachers in creating a sound environment	80% (64)	20% (16)

Source: Field Survey

The data shows that most students demonstrate a high level of general awareness about environmental issues. A large percentage (95%) reported being aware of Environmental Education and acknowledged environmental pollution as a major issue. Similarly, 95% agreed that their school is involved in creating environmental awareness, and 97.5% confirmed the celebration of World Environment Day, indicating strong institutional support. Student participation in plantation programmes is also fairly high at 75%, showing active involvement in environmental activities. However, a major gap appears in their conceptual understanding, as only 12.5% of students understood the actual meaning of Environmental Education. Additionally, 75% felt that the present education system is not effectively imparting environmental knowledge, revealing a need for improvement in curriculum and teaching methods. Encouragingly, 80% agreed that both students and teachers play an important role in creating a healthy environment. Overall, the findings show strong awareness but weak conceptual understanding.

The data presented in the table provide valuable insights into the level of environmental awareness and participation among students with regard to various aspects of environmental education and conservation activities. A close examination of the responses reveals a generally positive orientation toward environmental concerns, although certain gaps remain, particularly in conceptual understanding.

A significant majority of students demonstrated awareness of Environmental Education, with 95% responding positively. This indicates that the concept has reached the student community to a considerable extent. Similarly, 95% also acknowledged the involvement of their schools in promoting environmental awareness, suggesting that institutional initiatives are playing an active role in sensitizing students. The high percentage of students (97.5%) who reported celebrating World Environment Day further reinforces the presence of environmental activities within the school environment. Such events likely contribute to experiential learning and create opportunities for students to engage with environmental issues.

Student participation in plantation programmes stands at 75%, a reasonably high figure, reflecting a commendable level of hands-on engagement. Moreover, 95% of students agreed that environmental pollution is a major issue, indicating strong awareness of contemporary environmental challenges. However, a contrasting finding emerges regarding their understanding of the meaning of Environmental Education, where only 12.5% displayed clarity. This gap suggests that while students participate in activities and are aware of general environmental concerns, their conceptual understanding remains limited.

Further, only 25% believed that the present education system effectively imparts environmental knowledge, which highlights perceived shortcomings in curriculum design or teaching methodologies. This suggests a need for more structured, relevant, and comprehensive environmental education modules. Encouragingly, 80% of students felt that both teachers and students are actively involved in creating a sound environment, reflecting a collaborative school atmosphere.

CONCLUSION

Environmental education plays an important role in achieving the goal of protecting and improving the environment. It helps students become aware of environmental problems and encourages them to think and act responsibly. Education is a powerful tool that can guide people to safeguard the environment and contribute to its betterment. Developing a positive attitude toward the environment from an early age is essential, as childhood is the stage when values and habits begin to form. Several factors such as level of education, socio-economic background, needs, habits, and daily experiences influence how individuals think, observe, and behave. These factors also shape one's personality and responses to environmental issues. Therefore, providing environmental education from the primary level is very important. Early exposure helps students develop good habits, positive thinking, and a sense of responsibility, which ultimately supports long-term environmental protection and sustainable development.

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