



## **Eco-club Influences the Environmental Awareness of Students**

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### **Abstract**

*Environmental education incorporates a human component in exploring environmental problems and their solutions. An eco club is a group of students with the objective to take the children to the environment and bring the environment into the classroom. It acts as the nucleus of environment education activities. It extends opportunities for developing and fastening certain abilities in children such as leadership, communication skill, creativity, planning and organizing etc. it is an effective tool to generate environmental awareness among the students. It is concluded that this club is successful in engaging students in thinking, learning and igniting sensitivity about environmental issues, although some activities of the club are more likely than others to lead to impacts beyond the bounds of the classroom. The paper entails the influence of Eco club on students' environmental awareness. The environmental awareness of eco club and non eco-club students has been compared.*

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**Keywords:** *Eco club, Environmental education, Environmental awareness.*

### **Background**

Environmental education creates an overall perspective, which acknowledges the fact that natural environment and man-made environment are interdependent. It is through this process of education that people can be sensitized about the environmental issues. Environmental education helps in the maintenance of life and health, in self-preservation and in the preservation of human race as a whole. It makes a person

conscious about the environmental crisis and methods of averting it. It also helps to understand and appreciate how environment is helpful in making a living for prompting material and culture. It stimulates concern for changing the environment in a systematic manner for the long term as well as the immediate welfare of mankind. It directs attention towards the diminishing natural resources, environmental pollution and the problem of population explosion.

The UNESCO-UNEP Congress on Environmental Education and Training (1987) agreed that: 'Environmental education should simultaneously attempt to create awareness, transmit information, teach knowledge, develop habits and skills, promote values, provide criteria and standards and present guidelines for problem-solving and decision-making. It therefore aims at both cognitive and affective behaviour modification. The later necessitates both classroom and field activities. This is an action-orientated, project-centered and participatory process leading to self-confidence, positive attitudes and personal commitment of environmental protection. Furthermore, the process should be implemented through an interdisciplinary approach'.

As awareness of the enormity of global environmental problems has increased in recent decades, school environmental education programmes have become increasingly widespread. Numerous studies indicate that teachers and students in many parts of the world are addressing outcomes relevant to environmental education and that students in many schools are actively involved in local environmental projects (Scoullos, 1999). Experiences such as planting trees, cleaning creeks, collecting information and taking positive action in the local environment are often incorporated into these programmes and students report having learned new information, skills, attitudes and approaches to environmental problems (Ballantyne *et. al.*, in press). It has also been suggested that school environmental education programmes can potentially reach a wider audience than the student population through the process of intergenerational influence (Ballantyne *et. al.*, 1998a). Some environmental education activities and approaches, for example, encourage students to discuss environmental issues and actions with their parents and other adults in the community (Ballantyne *et. al.*, in press). However, the extent to which involvement in such projects leads to students, their parents and other adults in the community developing an increased appreciation of the relationships between people and

environments and enhanced insights, commitments and skills for acting on behalf of the environment remains unclear.

With the acceptance of the Tiwari Committee Report (1980), the country has realized the need for environment education. The aim of environmental education is that individual and social groups should acquire awareness and knowledge, develop skill and abilities and participate in solving real life environmental problems.

To achieve the objectives of EE, the Ministry of India has been implementing several schemes and programs. One of the major schemes implemented for imparting environmental education and for creation of environmental awareness among the students is National Green Crops (Eco Clubs). An Eco club could be defined as a coordinated and voluntary effort of a group of students working for the understanding and protection of the environment. It is a network of students who are interested in participating in programmes beneficial to the environment. A well-planned and organized Environmental Committee in a school provides scope for understanding and appreciating the intricacies in nature and interdependence of all living organism in the environment. It acts as a valuable device to generate environmental awareness among the students. It also acts as a resource center for the neighboring school. The aim of this program are to educate children about their immediate environment and impart knowledge about the eco-systems, their inter-dependence and their need for survival, through visits and demonstrations and to mobilize youngsters by instilling in them the spirit of scientific inquiry into environmental problems and involving them in the efforts of environmental preservation. The objectives of eco-club are

- To make children understand environment and environmental problems.
- To provide environmental education opportunities / activities for school children.
- To utilize the unique position of school children as conducts for awareness of the society at large.
- To facilitate children's participation in decision making in areas related to environment and development.
- To bring children in to direct contact with the environmental problems facing the society they live in and make them think of solution.
- To involve children in action based programs in their surroundings related to environment.

Since, the modification of the scheme in 1993, Eco-clubs has been initiated in various parts of the country, although the number was not attractive. Keeping in view the potential of this program in sensitizing the school students, it was decided to intensify this program to cover each and every district of the country. A program of raising 'National Green Corps' through the Eco clubs was, therefore, launched during 2001-2002. Under this program, Eco-clubs are being set up in 100 schools of each District of the country. This program is being implemented in each State through the Nodal agency appointed by the State Govt. Each such club has 30-50 children, who show interest in environment related issues and is supervised by a Teacher In-charge, who is being selected from among the teachers of the member school on the basis of his/her interest in environment related issues. Each Eco-club is being provided with a kit of resource material in the language of their preference apart from a token monetary grant of Rs. 1000/- per annum for organizing different activities.

There is a District Implementation and Monitoring Committee to supervise, organize training for In-charge teachers, and monitor periodically the implementation of scheme at the District level and a State Steering Committee to oversee the implementation of the scheme. The State Nodal Agency coordinates the implementation of the scheme in the State and organizes related activities like training to Master Trainers. The National Steering Committee will give overall direction to the programme and ensure linkages at all levels.

Activities of Eco-Clubs include organizing seminars, debates, lectures and popular talks on environmental issues in the school, field visits to environmentally important sites including polluted and degraded sites, wildlife parks etc., organize rallies, marches, human chains, and street theater at public places with a view to spread environmental awareness, action based activities like tree plantation, cleanliness drives both within and out side the school campus, grow kitchen gardens, maintain vermi-composting pits, construct water-harvesting structures in school, practice paper re-cycling etc., prepare inventories of polluting sources and forward it to enforcement agencies, organize awareness programmes against defecations in public places, pasting posters in public places and to propagate personal hygiene habits like washing hands before meals etc., maintenance of public places like parks, gardens both within and outside the school

campus and mobilize action against environmentally unsound practices like garbage disposal in unauthorized places, unsafe disposal of hospital waste etc.

The Teacher In-charge of Eco-club plays a key role in the implementation of the scheme. He/She should encourage more and more students to join the club. He/She should take up imaginative steps to implement the activities suggested in the scheme, which are relevant to that region. Main functions of In-charge teacher are to assemble the eco-club members every week for one hour at-least and take up some activity, to encourage the students to suggest activities for the following weeks and make a list of it. Make necessary preparations for their execution in consultation with the Headmaster/Principal, send monthly activity report to the District Committee and coordinate with the District Committee for taking up district level common programmes.

Sarojini, 1992 explored that environmental education had a very good impact on the children, and the teachers in general felt that there was not sufficient time to give importance to learner centered activities. Whereas Sahoo, 1992 Worked on the conception & perception of environmental education with the objective, concept & constituents of the environment and renovate the concept of environmental education and advocated that several workshop, committees and bodies at national and international levels have thrown light on the conceptual analysis of environmental education. Environmental education is a broad concept and is perceived as lifelong experiences for all. Gupta *et. al.* (1981) reported that there is difference between the environmental awareness of the children study in non-formal education centers (NFR) and in schools from urban areas (FU) and is more in children studying in non-formal education centers. From the review of related literature, it was concluded that there is contradiction on the development of environmental education by other non formal activities.

Now the question arises whether the ECO Clubs are effective to inculcate the environmental awareness among the school children? Therefore, to know the influence of Eco Clubs on the awareness of the school children, the present work was taken with the hypotheses that there will be no significant difference between the environmental awareness of eco club and non-eco club students and there will be no influence of gender on environmental awareness of the students. The objective of the study was to compare the environmental awareness of the students of Eco & Non Eco-club.

### **Methodology**

For present study, normative survey method has been adopted. The students of Eco club and non Eco-club of class IX and X has been selected as sample. 100 students from different schools of district Dehradun and Haryana were selected for sample. For data collection, Environmental Awareness Scale (EAS) developed by Dr (Mrs) Haseen Taj, Lecturer, Department of Education, Bangalore University was used. Reliability of the scale was 0.88 (table-1). For validity of the scale, Content Validity, Predictive Validity, Cross Validity, Intrinsic Validity and Item Validity have been measured.

The students were scored according to the scoring key. For statistical analysis, mean, SD, SE and t-test were employed to see the differences obtained in scored data.

The study is limited to the students of few schools of Uttarakhand and haryana states only. More activities organized by the other schools of different states should be studied and further, environmental education is not related to only developing awareness but it should be action oriented or related to the ethics. So, environmental ethics of the students of eco club and non-eco club should also be studied.

**TABLE No. 1: Reliability of the Scale**

Sl. No.	Reliability	Coefficient of Correlation	Index of Reliability/r
a.	Split-half	0.78	0.88
b.	Test-retest	0.76	0.87

## Result and Discussion

Table-2: Environmental awareness of eco club and non eco club students.

Variable	N	Mean	S.D.	t-value
Eco club	50	67.5	15.71	1.323
Non Eco club	50	53.8	15.25	

Environmental awareness of eco club and non eco club students is presented in table-2. An examination of the table reflects that total 100 students were studied, out of which 50 were the member of eco club while 50 were non eco club students. The mean value of eco club and non eco club students were found to be 67.5 and 53.8 and S.D. were recorded as 15.71 and 15.25 in the same order. The t-value was calculated as 1.323. From the analysis, it was found that there exists a significant difference between both the groups.

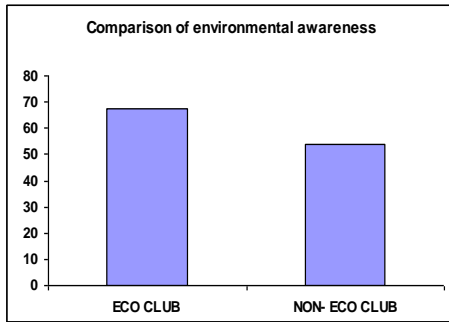


Fig. – 1

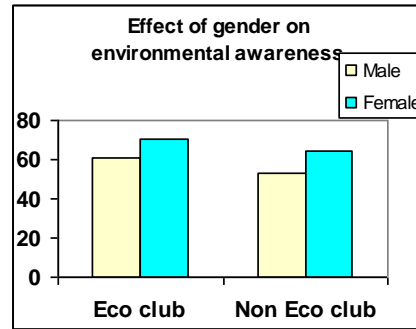


Fig.-2

Students of Eco club and Non-Eco club vary in their environmental awareness. The students of Eco club have more awareness towards environment than Non-Eco club students. Male and female students of Eco club vary in their Environmental Awareness. The Female students have more awareness than male students towards environment. Female students of Eco Club have more environmental awareness than female students of Non-Eco club. Male students of Eco Club have more awareness towards environment than male student of Non-Eco club.

Fig.-1 depicts the environmental awareness of the students of Eco & Non Eco-club. It was clear from the figure that students of eco club have definitely more awareness than non eco club students. It is concluded from the fig. – 2 that female students possessed significantly more awareness of environment than male students which is also illustrated by Shahnawaj (1990).

### **Conclusion**

From the research work, it is concluded that eco club has a very positive influence on the environmental awareness of students. There is influence of gender on the environmental awareness as significant difference was obtained between male and female students and females were found more aware than males. The female students are more influenced by the activities of eco club.

### **Recommendations**

Environmental education emphasizes the teaching of the holistic nature of the environment through interdisciplinary and problem-solving approaches. The primary school is the natural place to introduce children to environmental education, since at this level they instinctively have a holistic view of the environment; they have not yet been trained to compartmentalize their learning into separate subjects as they will have to do in

secondary and higher education. Introducing critical thinking, problem-solving and activity oriented approaches in EE, especially at primary school level, is fundamental, if students are to become skillful in the identification and solution of environmental problems as students and later on as adult citizens and possibly decision makers.

Thus, on the basis of results obtained, it is recommended that it should be made necessary to establish Eco-club in every school and a strong network of Eco-club should also be developed. So that resources and experiences can be shared.

The teacher in-charge of eco club should be motivated and trained for resource pool and also for organizing various activities related to environmental conservation. They should also be sensitized for the concept of education for sustainable development and associated activities.

The principal of the schools should also participate and encourage the teacher and students for their environmental works. Emphasis should be given to initiate eco club in schools. The policy makers and higher administrators should actively implement the above plan district wise and monitor their activities. Best eco club of the region should be awarded. Similarly, best eco club of state and country should be honored.

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