

## Creating Environmental Awareness For Tribal School Children



### Environment

**KEYWORDS :** Environmental Awareness, Sustainability, School children.

**Dr. (Mrs.) B. Loganayaki** Assistant Professor, Department of Resource Management, Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women, Coimbatore – 641 043

**Ranjitha, B.** PG Student, Department of Resource Management, Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women, Coimbatore – 641 043.

### ABSTRACT

*Today man is living in a world of crisis. In the recent decades, the environment crisis has become an important factor which has made everyone in the world to think of its gravity. International organizations including some non-governmental organization have started working on the sustainability of environment and ecological balance. Primary education constitutes the broad base of education pyramid in many countries. It may be only the formal education that they are opportune to have. If education, by and large, is to prepare people for purposive living, it needs awareness on environment in primary education level. The need for Environmental education, both formal and non-formal was keenly felt at the national level. It should be involvement of each and every human being. The environment can meaningfully be taught to primary school children in order to enhance our environmental awareness survival.*

### INTRODUCTION

Environmental Awareness is the sum total of responses that people make to various thematic aspects of the environmental education. In simple terms it means knowledge and understanding of facts and concepts related to environment and consequences of various environmental problems like pollution, population explosion, deforestation, ecological disruption, energy crisis etc.

Environment has become the concern of all academicians, intellectuals, scientists, policy makers and government. Furthermore, the rationale of environmental education is to make world population aware about the current environmental issues/problem and thus to acquire skills, attitude, motivation, and abilities to participate individually and collectively towards finding and solving the problems and preventing a new one.

Environmental Education has an ability to solve the societal needs, problems and their solutions. We need the school children to share and develop the motivation from school about various environmental issues and are the challenge of today and prepare them for the future. Though environmental education is currently imparted by giving information on related topics through subjects like science, geography, civic and community living; there is a need to ascertain the effectiveness of this formal method by studying the level of environmental awareness.

“There is a paramount need to create the consciousness of the environment. It must permit all ages and all sections of society beginning with the child. Environmental consciousness should include teaching in schools and colleges. This aspect will be integrated in the entire educational process”. Environmental education for children is critically important and should start before school begins. Early environmental education experiences help shape children’s values, perspectives and understanding of the environment and how to interact with it. It is vital that, from an early age, children acquire a good knowledge and understanding of their surroundings and the natural resources of their bountiful island. Only then they will gain respect for the environment and a desire to take care of it. This is the key to a sustainable future. Though environmental education is very important in itself, there is also a great potential to use it to teach standard curriculum.

The environment is constantly in the news and it is also becoming a hot topic in schools throughout the world. The environmental awareness of children is therefore something that is becoming increasingly important – something that many people feel is a significant factor for the future of the planet. There are various different things that teachers and parents can do to help a child to understand the impact that humans have on the world.

Despite great efforts to spread environmental awareness by the ministry through several schools, it is felt that a large population especially in Tribal areas is still left out. The best way to reach out to them and make them aware of the environmental problems is through media, particularly the electronic media. “Mass Awareness” has therefore been identified as one of the trust areas of the ministry, not only to intensify the efforts already being made in this direction but also to launch new initiatives. The Doordarshan and few other television channels are proposed to be extensively used for telecasting environment based programmes. Professional media agencies which are hired to assist the ministry in carrying out the campaign also play a major role.

Realizing the importance of this fact, an attempt is made to create an “Environmental Awareness among Tribal School Children” with the following objectives: To

- Provide opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills needed to protect the environment.
- Arouse awareness and curiosity among children about the environment.
- Encourage active participation resolving environmental problems.
- Assess the environmental awareness of primary school children.

### Materials and methods

The locale of the study is Kothagiri and Aravenu. The total sample comprised of 186 students from two different schools studying in 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> standard (81 students from government corporation school, Kunjapanai and 105 students from private school of Kothagiri). As a tool, the environmental awareness scale was developed to find out the level of awareness of children on environmental concepts. The scale comprised of multiple choice questions and statements having true or false. It throws light on various environmental aspects of bio-diversity, renewable sources of energy, forest conservation, water conservation, pollutions from various sources. The school students were distributed the scale individually and the responses obtained were scored.

The environmental education programme was planned as the knowledge of Tribal school children were not upto the expected standard. The classes were conducted three days in a week (2 hours per day) with the help of a detailed plan of work which included topics on healthy habits, Sanitation and Hygiene, Natural Resources, Air pollution, Desertification, Climate Change and Responsibilities of students towards Environmental protection.

### Results and Discussion

It is understood that 63 percent of government school and 68 percent of private school children were from nuclear families and the remaining were in joint family which showed their pref-

erence towards nuclear families in modern era.

Earlier, tribals depended on the forest and its sources and their shifting cultivation. But in recent years due to deforestation and diminishing fertility of the soil, the tribal people started working as laborers and coolies and this resulted in setting up their own families. The main reason that could be attributed to the change to nuclear families was because of economic instability.

There is not much difference between the size of the family for the children from government and private schools. Comparatively large families were between 10-15% which shows the adoption of family planning measures by the selected families.

Regarding the ordinal position of the selected children, 62 percent of the government school and fifty percent private school children were born as the middle one. Around 20 and 30 percent respectively were the third born from both the schools.

Twenty per cent to 27 per cent were observed as illiterates among the parents of both the schools. Majority of the parents (43%) had high school education (government school students) whereas the same percentage of Private school children had higher secondary education. This showed their interest towards aspiring education at different levels and also the importance given by the people for education programmes.

Nearly 60 and 54 per cent of government and private school parents were engaged as tea pluckers and tea estate labourers due to the climatic conditions which are more favourable for cultivation of tea leaves. Other than this 28 and 20 per cent respectively were involved as labourers in cultivation of vegetables. Twelve per cent of the parents of government school children worked as Government servants against 26 per cent of Private School children.

TABLE 1: SCORES OBTAINED (BEFORE)

S.No	Class	Percentage of Scores Obtained by Children													
		Government School(81)								Private School(105)					
		Total	(25-35)		(36-45)		(46-55)		Total	(25-35)		(36-45)		(46-55)	
			N	%	N	%	N	%		N	%	N	%	N	%
1	4th	38	13	34	18	47	7	19	47	15	31	22	47	10	22
2	5th	43	11	26	22	51	10	23	58	13	22	30	52	15	26

TABLE 2: SCORES OBTAINED (AFTER)

S.No	Class	Percentage of scores obtained by Children													
		Government School(81)								Private School(105)					
		Total	(25-35)		(36-45)		(46-55)		Total	(25-35)		(36-45)		(46-55)	
			N	%	N	%	N	%		N	%	N	%	N	%
1	4th	38	9	23	12	32	17	45	47	9	19	23	49	15	32
2	5th	43	7	16	20	47	16	37	58	8	14	21	36	29	50

The mark obtained by private school children was high before and after using the awareness scale. Before creating environmental awareness 21 percent of government school children scored (46-55 marks) compared to 24 percentage of private school children. After the awareness programme, their knowledge level was enhanced by 40 percent (government school) and 50 percent (private school) children. It shows an increase in the environmental awareness of 19 per cent among the government school children with that of 26 percent for the private school.

**Conclusion**

The training programmes among the selected tribal school children have created the significant impact on "Environmental awareness". They were highly satisfied with awareness

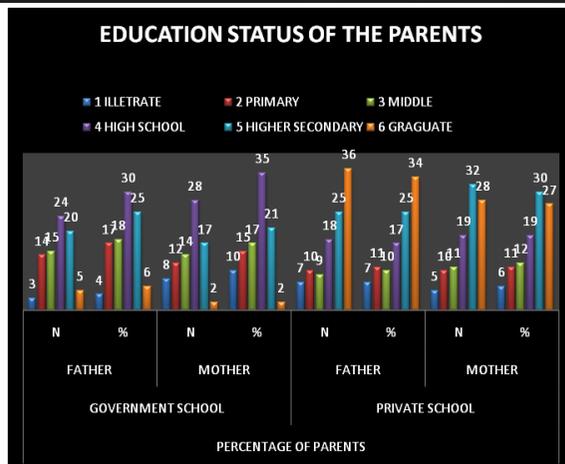


Fig. 1: Educational Status

The family income ranged between Rs. 3000-4000/- for 75 percent of Private School Children whereas 88 percent of Government School Children were within this income range. Twenty five per cent of the parents (Private school) earned Rs. 5000-10,000/- per month.

An Environmental Awareness Scale was used to find out the knowledge of tribal children before and after creating the Environment Awareness as shown in Table 1 & 2.

programme and they showed greater interest in learning and adopting new concepts related to environment. This programme helped the students to gain their knowledge and skills towards environmental protection.

We have to create awareness about the environment and attitude of caring and sharing of natural resources in the minds of those who are the future citizens of our nation. Emergence of Environmental education as a compulsory subject at school level is a welcome development. India can protect and restore environmental and natural resources by spreading awareness on such issues among its citizens.

## REFERENCE

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