


Chapter 1

Assessing the Influence of a High School Environmental Project on Teacher Readiness Across Borders

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The educational system should cultivate a generation committed to environmental stewardship and equipped to combat climate change. While individuals of all ages can glean knowledge about climate issues from media sources, educators hold a unique capacity to instill environmental literacy in their students who need adequate preparation and support. This research utilized an unstructured direct observation method to explore the impact of an environmental initiative on empowering educators involving 15 high school teachers and 150 students from the USA, India, and Bangladesh. Data analysis was conducted through the lens of the Environmental Education Strategies Framework. The findings indicated that effective strategies for conveying information and building understanding supported teachers in empowering students with improved skills to conduct sustainable actions. This chapter also highlights the challenges faced by the coordination team for project execution and shares recommendations for all stakeholders for future planning.

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INTRODUCTION

The current alarming climate change conditions around the world highlight the urgent need for a society that is educated in environmental issues and prepared to take action to mitigate the impact of climate change. Education plays a crucial role in raising awareness about environmental degradation, climate change challenges, and sustainable practices. The education sector may provide opportunities to instill environmental literacy from a young age. Despite this, there is a global scarcity of environmental awareness programs targeted at young children. This gap is significant because developing environmental literacy early in life ensures that future generations can make informed, responsible decisions and take sustainable actions when faced with environmental crises (Ma et al., 2023; Sell et al., 2023). Unfortunately, many children worldwide complete their secondary education without having received adequate environmental education because of the lack of a formal curriculum. Recognizing this, the United Nations and various organizations advocated for systematically integrating environmental education (EE) into school curricula to build a solid foundation of environmental concepts. This integration is essential for students' future understanding and actions as responsible citizens (UNESCO, 2014).

Schools are pivotal in shaping students' attitudes toward the environment, enabling them to become active advocates for climate change mitigation through increased climate literacy and awareness of climate change-related trends (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, 2019). Including climate change and other environmental issues in the curriculum is essential. Universities also face the challenge of incorporating diverse perspectives on sustainability, which requires systemic and comprehensive thinking and new teaching methods (Ma et al., 2023). In this situation, preparing our younger generation to handle the climate crisis requires empowering them with strong environmental literacy skills, which are currently not part of most school curricula.

The need for enhanced environmental literacy, teaching climate change, and helping students understand its implications is no longer just the domain of scientists. Teachers must integrate climate change elements into their instructional plans, enabling students to learn how they can contribute to addressing climate change issues within their capacity. Students must understand that climate change has far-reaching consequences for the earth and human lives and that it plays a crucial role in mitigating its adverse effects. Although many teachers are taking the initiative to incorporate climate change awareness into the curriculum, these efforts are insufficient (Corpus et al., 2022). We need more intensified and systematic approaches to nurture responsible, environmentally conscious future citizens.

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