

14. Role of NGOs in Promoting Non-Formal Environment Education: A Case Study in Bangalore District

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Objectives

The present study was taken up to identify the NGOs involved in Non-Formal Environmental Education and to make a case study of some of them in Bangalore District (urban). This study mainly aimed at

- identifying the NGOs in Bangalore District (urban) working towards NFEE
- studying the functioning of the NGOs selected for the study (case study)
- studying the effectiveness of the NGOs in promoting NFEE
- studying the NGOs' linkage with school education to promote EE
- identifying the problems faced by limitations of NGOs in promoting NFEE

Methodology

The study has employed the normative survey method involving descriptive analysis and case study with multiple case replication design. The list of NGOs in Bangalore District (Urban) was prepared by referring to websites, directories and organisations. The NGOs working towards NFEE were short-listed after screening the thrust areas and objectives of the listed NGOs. Twenty-two NGOs were identified as those working on EE, and their profiles were prepared. Out of these, three were selected (ATREE, ECOWATCH and YMCA) for the case study. The major findings of the study are presented below:

Findings and Implications

Typology of NGOs

All the 22 NGOs identified in the study are grass-roots organisations (NGDOs) working on NFEE, out of which five — CEE, MYRADA, PARINITI, TERI, and WWF — work as network NGOs too. Of them, only twelve are found working exclusively on EE in the direction of promoting environmental awareness, knowledge among the public, and environment conservation, whereas the other ten have EE as part of their development programmes. This implied that only one per cent of the NGOs in Bangalore district are working towards EE. Hence, concern for EE among NGOs is very limited.

Functioning of NGOs

The functioning and effectiveness of the NGOs in promoting NFEE has been studied with respect to their objectives regarding EE; target groups; programmes; follow-up activities; funding; linkage with schools; limitations of NGOs.

Objectives

Perusal of the agenda of NGOs indicated that their objectives regarding NFEE are not clearly spelt out, and all the objectives expected of NFEE have not been considered by them. This inference holds also in the case of three NGOs considered for the case study. It is implied that NGOs do not have clarity in their objectives regarding EE.

Thrust Areas

Most of the NGOs have focused on 'water conservation and treatment'. It is interesting to note that 'water conservation programmes' are given priority in addition to eco-development, biodiversity conservation, and educational programmes by the case study NGOs too. This implied that NGOs' concerns regarding environmental issues reflect the national/global concerns about environment.

Target groups

Most of the NGOs have targeted students, teachers, youth, professionals, public and women for their programmes; only a few concentrated on certain categories like farmers, womenfolk and rural folk. It is found from the case study too that the NGOs have targeted mainly students and teachers; public/rural folk to some extent. It is inferred that the environmental message can reach wider sections of the population only if the NGOs target a wide cross-section of the population.

Funding

All the NGOs depend on self-generated funds, besides sponsorships from certain agencies. Funding was reported to be inadequate and mobilisation of funds the most difficult task for the NGOs.

Effectiveness of the Programmes

While the key informants of all the case study NGOs claimed that the NGOs and their programmes are effective to the extent of 75 – 90 per cent, the participants, teachers and students reported that many programmes are 50 – 75 per cent effective and some are 75–90 per cent effective. It is concluded that the programmes of the NGOs are 50–75 per cent effective. Further, most of the participants, public, teachers and students, got knowledge of, awareness and sensitivity to the environment and its problems; some developed the required sensitivity to work towards environment conservation and develop an eco-friendly attitude. The least number of students achieved the skill of sustainable use of the environment. Thus, although some NGOs have consideration in providing for all the objectives, they have not proved effective in achieving them. It is inferred that NGOs' attempt at developing environmental knowledge, awareness and sensitivity is appreciable, whereas efforts at developing and monitoring the skills for environment protection are marginal.

Linkage with schools

Only 50 per cent of the NGOs identified in the study have established linkages with schools. Developing such linkages with schools is a recent phenomenon. The schools with which the linkage is established by the case study NGOs are not many.

Problems Faced/Limitations

The most common problems faced by all the NGOs identified are:

1. Funds from Government are inadequate and fraught with inordinate delay. Mobilising funds from different sources is difficult, and information on procedures regarding funding is not available.
2. It is possible to have follow-up in developmental programmes, but not in the case of EE programmes. Cross-sectional follow-up is possible in some cases, but not longitudinal follow-up.
3. It is very difficult to motivate the participants.

Suggestions for Improvement

The following suggestions have been made to enable the NGOs to be more active and effective:

- Increase the outreach programmes.
- Build up networking with other NGOs and local institutions.
- Sustained hard work with greater consistency and commitment.
- Get like-minded people/organisations to work with the NGO.
- Accommodate more resource persons and manpower (volunteers).
- Get more funds from Government and other agencies.

Further, NGOs should have clarity of objectives and approaches concerning EE, conduct more action-oriented programmes with outdoor activities, have upward linkage with other agencies for funding, and widen the reach of the programmes.