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The Level of Environmental Awareness Among Students to Fulfill the Aspiration of National Philosophy of Education

Aminuddin Hassan

*Department of Foundations of Education, Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia*

E-mail: aamin@educ.upm.edu.my

Tel: +603-8946-8187; Fax: +603-8946-8246

Hafizan Juahir

*Department of Environmental Sciences, Faculty of Environmental Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia*

E-mail: hafizan@env.upm.edu.my

Tel: +603-8946-7460; Fax: +603-8946-7463

Nur Syuhada Jamaludin

Faculty of Educational Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia

E-mail: nur_syuhada@ymail.com

Abstract

The major purpose of this paper is to investigate the philosophy of environmental education in Malaysian school system. The major contribution of this paper would be to help the respective agencies in the government in building up the environmental awareness among people starting from schools. It is part of the National Philosophy of Education to state the importance of this aspect. This paper embarks on the following objectives and expectations: (1) to identify the philosophy of environmental education in Malaysian school system from the perspective of the school management; (2) to determine the characteristics among schools members that are likely to influence the environmental awareness, (3) to determine the effectiveness of school-based environmental awareness programmes in order to enhance self-regulated strategies to school members; (4) to discover school members' attitudes towards the extensive environmental awareness programmes introduced by the respective authorities; and (5) to develop an environmental awareness suggestions. All these approaches will assist us in analyzing how far they impact on 'the betterment of the personal well-being, family, society and the nation, as stated in the National Philosophy of Education by referring to the importance of having environmental awareness.

Keywords: Environmental Awareness, Malaysian School System, Environmental Education, Philosophy of Education

1. Introduction

One of basis within the National Philosophy of Education is regarding the element of knowledge, which is the value of the knowledge itself, as well as the role of the premise within the development of individual and the society. The significance of knowledge comes from the basic truth of the knowledge that is not only functions to provide the explanation and information, but the most important, knowledge emerges as the medium in influencing, developing, and also shaping the notion of human and the society itself. This element has make knowledge gain its high value.

As the fundamental concept within the realm of academic, National Philosophy of Education focuses towards the factor of individual within several relation and connection. This is applicable with the element of National Philosophy of Education which is the appreciation towards the creative education such as environmental awareness, since the objective of education is not solely based on the development and the tranquility of human itself, but also includes the improvement of the whole society, nation as well as the harmony of the environment.

National Philosophy of Education focused on the aspect of producing the holistic and balanced individual, which appear as the knowledgeable, responsible, as well as well-mannered individual that able to appreciate their surrounding. Thus, in relating to this aspect, the environmental awareness is the supportive element that should be implemented among the students in fulfilling the aspiration of National Philosophy of Education. It is because, the individuals that able to remain the healthiness of their surrounding would be able to keep the good relation with the society. This is one of the factors which show that the environmental awareness has been adapted within the National Philosophy of Education.

By looking at the scopes and the impacts of environmental problems, this phenomenon has become very important issues on the international agenda since 1990s (Madruga, K., and Batalha da Silveira, C.F., 2003). As being capable to affect human beings and all living species (Gore, 1993 in O'zden, M., 2008), this nature's catastrophe had brought the serious implication towards the earth such as choking air pollution, water pollution in the vast majority of rivers, water shortages throughout much of the country, ocean pollution, mountains of solid and toxic waste, acid deposition spoiling land and water, destruction of the remaining scattered habitats, near-total deforestation, rampant overfishing, depletion of agricultural land, and conspicuous consumption of even highly endangered species for food and traditional medicine (Harris, P.G., 2006).

The issues of environment are the effect from the human's activities that have no civic conscious and only think the profit without concern about the impact towards the environment and their future of life. The long term effect from the environmental pollution can be seen when the ecosystem is not able to endure the pollution (Zaini Ujang, 2008). According to Sardar and Ziauddin (1985), the major cause of this ecological crisis is regarding the value and belief in shaping human's relation with the surrounding and the lifestyle itself.

Realizing of the extremely expanded environmental catastrophe, a preventive way should be carried out to slow it and thereby mitigating long-term environmental damage (Harris, P.G., 2006). Thus, one of the best ways of preservation is by creating environmental awareness among society especially students as they are future leaders, future custodians, planners, policy makers, and educators of the environment and its issues (Thapa, B., 1999). Students are also the right aim as they were the one who's responsible to fulfill and realize the aspiration of the National Philosophy of Education (NPE) to develop high levels of personal well-being towards contribution to the harmony of society and nation (Curriculum Development Centre, 1990).

2. Viewing the Environmental Awareness from the Aspect of Educational Philosophy

Environment is the combination of living things and closely related to the element of nature such as human, animal, as well as plants. Through this connection, there are such doctrines and beliefs from the aspect of philosophy regarding the emergence of this universe, and it has develop an awareness within humans self towards their responsibility to take care the environment.

2.1. Environmental Awareness from the Aspect of Pragmatism

It has been agreed by many philosophers that education and awareness towards environmental protection and conservation require knowledge, understanding, and the change of attitude by each individual. Within the context of education, it is the process to solve the problem which is need to be implemented among the students since their primary school, as it able to provide them with the technique in dealing the difficulty within their life. This element is supported by the idea of western philosophy, which is the pragmatism movement. The philosophers believe that the role of adolescent and adult in taking care the environmental is different based on their development of age (Mak Soon Sang, 2000). This philosophy presumes that knowledge can be acquired from the relation between human and nature, as both elements are interconnected (Abd. Rahman Aroff and Zakaria Kasa, 1987). Thus, within the context of education, the implementation of the environmental values among the students can be carried out by giving them the experience through the basic activities such as working together to remain the healthy environment and expose them with the impact of environmental pollutions. For instance, there are several ideology and philosophy that has been introduced, such as the programme of “green consumerism” by the consumer association and “green chemistry” that introduced by the chemist in order to reduce the effect of environmental damage (Zaini Ujang, 2008). Through these activities, it shows that the students are not only trained from the aspect of their intellect and physical, but also from the element of spiritual and emotion through their courage and appreciation towards the programmes.

In addition, based on the doctrine of pragmatism towards the issue of environmental awareness, they believe that the speculation regarding the reality is useless, as the experience of human mainly exemplify the reality (Abd. Rahman Aroff and Zakaria Kasa, 1987). By looking at the present, the aspects of experience and students are the social organisms that are constantly interact with the surrounding, and change based on time and condition. Thus, the implementation and appreciation towards moral and value which involve the students within the activity and environment are more significant than the learning activity solely based on theory. It is because, the real achievement of students is based on their ability to cope with their problem, including the aspects of academic and the environmental aspect. By involving the students with the activity regarding the cleanliness of the school, students are implemented with the attitude to love and concern towards their school and the surrounding (Yahya Don, 2005). The knowledge that have been gained by this students is very useful within their life, as the function of knowledge towards the students is the beginning of intelligence and become the last objective of education (Abdul Fatah Hassan, 2001).

On the other hand, based on realism of epistemology, knowledge is a process to discover a thing and new phenomenon, and the process should relate with the physical object that exist within the actual life, and be able to examine through human sense. According to this epistemology, the accurate knowledge is the knowledge that relate with the physical nature. This epistemology also focuses on the development of students’ potency, as well as encourages them towards rational thought and activity within the realm of education. For instance, the Science’s teacher can provide the knowledge, and at the same time ask the students to think on the greatest of God through the appreciation towards the nature. The students should be trained and guided to look at the creation of God which able to amaze and create the feeling of fear towards God within themselves. Thus, to produce a firm and balanced student, the students should gain a high awareness towards their surrounding. For instance, the student that studies Science should concern on the elements of the nature in making their hypothesis by using

the appropriate approach. Since most of the education concept share the same objective, it can be said that an awareness towards environmental is capable to fulfill the aspiration of National Philosophy of Education.

2.2. Environmental Awareness from the Aspect of Metaphysic

On the other hand, the aspect of environmental awareness is also discussed from the view of metaphysic. This branch of philosophy focused towards the elements of belief/religion and the emergence of this universe which need to be emphasized within the education, in producing the balanced individual from the aspects of emotion, physical, intellect and spiritual. Based on this aspect of philosophy, there are several concepts that need to be focused within the life of students. Among of them are; the important of religion and belief within the education system, to produce a firm and balanced individual, the ecological protection, the reality of the creation of human and nature, as well as the awareness within the individual itself. Thus, it can be said that the surrounding and environment play the significance role within the realm of education. It is because, the element of nature and human are closely related.

For instance, the environmental awareness among the students can be viewed and related with the belief of Islam. This religion is not only focusing on the aspect of intellect, but also the need of mind and spiritual within human self. It defines that the process of education should be included with the aspect of intellect, physical, emotion, and the development of manner, bravery, as well as the sense of respectability. It states that the belief and moral can not be separated as both aspects are based on Quran, which include the quality of moral and human behavior. For instance, the axiology of Islam states that the moralistic individual is the balanced individual from the aspect of manner and act, such as the awareness towards environment as the person is able to manage his emotion and action from spoiling the nature.

Besides, according to the metaphysic of Islam, this universe is belonging to Allah SWT, not human. Thus, it is very important to maintain the ecological stability. Human should realize that they are appointed by Allah to become a *caliph* or leader in flourishing this earth, as they are provided with mind and potency to manage this world (Saidul Amin Usman, 2000). This accountability towards human has been stated in Quran, Surah An-Nahl:

Dialah yang telah menurunkan hujan dari langit untuk kamu sebagai menjadi minuman dan sebahagian menjadi tumbuh-tumbuhan yang pada tempat kamu mengembalikan ternakan.

Quran, Surah An-Nahl, Ayat 10.

Based on this *surah*, it is clearly stated that this universe is entrusted towards human to be entirely benefited. As a human or individual who has been entrusted to inhabit and concern this world, it is their responsibility to make sure this expectation is well used. Thus, they should consider on their act and manner that able to spoil this nature. It is because, the pious individual would consider regarding the protection and nurturance of the environment (Zaini Ujang, 2008). Besides, Islamic Philosophy has been implemented within the National Philosophy of Education in order to produce the responsible, moralistic, and trustworthy individual (Mohd Salleh Lebar, 2002).

In addition, the highly environmental awareness among students gives them an opportunity to learn on how to nurture this nature and avoid themselves from exploit the sources. This will prepare the students to become the responsible individual that able to contribute towards the harmonious society and nation. Besides, based on the axiology of Islam the aspects of moral and belief are interconnected. Thus, it is very important for students to have the highly environmental awareness by strongly believe on their religion and obey the moral rules, so that they are able to become ethical and moralistic person. It is because, the knowledgeable and educated person is the person that practice the highest moral standards for every sense and act of his life.

Within the context of education, in order to produce a balanced individual from the aspect of emotion, the awareness towards environmental is very important in generating the sense of serenity when they are closed with the nature. Furthermore, the balanced individual from the aspect of spiritual will amaze and praise with the creation of God. Thus, they will appreciate the significance of environment.

2.3. Environmental Awareness from the Aspect of Axiology

Furthermore, the aspect of axiology focuses towards the moral of students. Thus, consistent with the effort to produce the balanced individual from the aspect of intellectual, physical, emotional and spiritual, the awareness towards environment should be implemented among the students. It is because, from the aspect of axiology the theory of value is closely related with the element of belief and faith. As the branch of axiology is divided in to two factors which are moral and esthetic, thus, the awareness towards environment should fulfill both aspects. In producing the ethical students, the students should obey the rule of society. If the rule concern on the awareness towards environment, the students will directly concern on the environment and produce the society that aware towards their surrounding. In addition, from the aspect of esthetic the students will reinforce their appreciation towards the beauty of nature and this will encourage them towards environmental awareness.

Furthermore, from the context of The National Philosophy of Education, the aspect of axiology plays the important role to produce the moralistic and responsible students towards their surrounding. Hence, the level of environmental awareness among students is very important in fulfilling the aspiration of National Philosophy of Education. It is because, the good and healthy environment is able to encourage and develop students' mind towards the learning process. However, most of students still not realize the fact that the surrounding plays the important role within their daily life. Thus, the aspect of consciousness along with the knowledge, understanding, the change of attitude and physical participation are very important to students in developing their highly awareness towards the environmental aspect, and directly apply the values within their life.

2.4. Environmental Awareness from the Aspect of Reflective Philosophy

From the aspect of philosophy reflectively, students are getting more opportunity to view the importance of environment. It is because, from the aspect of reflectively thought, the individual needs to examine the reality of emergence of the creator, the concept of knowledge and values with the deeply thinking. Thus, students need to be taught to think the existence of nature and its significance and implication within the human life, as the description of nature cannot be defined solely from the physically view. Since the students understand the concept of nature, they will realize the essential of harmonious environment.

Moreover, they will also encourage by the responsibility to analyze the cause and advantage of healthy environment. It is because, through the reflectively approach, students are taught to find the answer based on concept of cause and effect. Hence, the student that gains the awareness regarding their surrounding and environment is more concern on the cause of environmental problem. Besides, students are more incline to consider and analyze the implication of their behavior towards environment.

2.5. Environmental Awareness from the Aspect of Idealism

Besides, from the view of Western education philosophy which is Idealism, the element of moral is defined as universal and general concept and exists within the spiritual and mental. Thus, to fulfill the aspect of moral, environment is very important in producing the balanced individual from the aspect of spiritual and emotion. This is because students need to be revealed with the important of the cleanliness and the beauty of nature. The value towards the significance of environment is very

important to be implemented among the students, which is able to represent the balanced and harmonious element.

3. The Approach of Educational Measures to Overcome Environmental Problem

Undoubtedly, the process of environmental education is complicated and should be reviewed deeply at the affective, cognitive, behavioral and meta cognitive levels (Sanera,1998),. In the same way, Jaus (1982) found that there is a positive correlation between environmental education instruction and favorable attitudes towards environment. Then, Worsley and Skrzypiec (1998) examined the environmental attitudes of senior secondary school students in South Australia and the results analysed with respect to students' regions, gender and socioeconomic status. Male students having lower socioeconomic status are pessimistic but supportive to environmental development and scientific solutions than females.

Since the solution for the environmental problems depends on the improvement of students' attitudes, school plays an integral role as the educators have to seek new approaches and methodologies for students to understand that the preservation of nature and efficient use of resources are vital to prevent environmental problems. Besides, many people believe that environmental education is one of the most important factors for preventing environmental problems (O'zden, M., 2008).

According to Abd. Rahman Aroff and Zakaria Kasa (1987), students think based on the concept of psychology such as the emotion, observation, learning, as well as the aspect of consolidation. Their observation towards their surrounding will develop the empirical knowledge, which is the knowledge from the experience and the using of sense. Hence, the role of educators is very important to encourage the behavior of the students that parallel with the right and good attitude, along with the well and healthy environment (Sharifah Alawiyah Alsagoff, 1992).

Among the endeavor that has been carried out in implementing the environmental education among the students is the theoretical model. Hungerford and Volk (1990) in Palmer (1998) has identify the critically components which need to be implemented within the educational programme in order to change the students' attitude towards the environment. These components have been shown through the theoretical model which discusses the relation between knowledge and attitude. According to this theory, the knowledge regarding the environment and the skill of action are very important for an individual in changing his attitude. Theoretically, when the knowledge regarding environment is increase, the positive attitude towards environment is indirectly expanded. This model has been applied within the perlaksanaan of Environmental Education in Malaysia.

Moreover, by viewing from the context of education, the actual knowledge is not only focusing towards the fact, but also consider on the perception, observation, experience, as well as the reason. All of these elements come from the interaction process between human and the surrounding. If the environment is healthy and safe, the society will live within the harmonious and pleasant surrounding. Thus, the significance of the concept of environmental awareness has been implemented since the primary school. For instance, the Primary School Curriculum has focused towards the aspects of spiritual, value and human's behavior with their surrounding which had been taught through the subjects such as Islamic and Moral Education. It is because, the sensitivity towards the balance between human and environment is able to produce the balance of ability to think, as well as the physical and spiritual development. Thus, through the objective of Primary School Curriculum students are able to recognize and appreciate this balance, and generate the concerned society towards the well and harmonious environment. This value is also practiced within the activity of co curriculum and this is the continuation from the lesson in classroom. Hence, it is able to increase the level of environmental awareness among the students in fulfilling the aspiration of National Philosophy of Education (NPE), since the involvement of the students physically and spiritually towards the environmental protection and conservation has develop the holistic individuals and the solidarity of this country.

On the other hand, it is widely known that the main characteristic of National Philosophy of Education is holistic and integrated approach, which the universal knowledge has taught by the educator and learned by the students (Chong, 2008). Thus, as the objective of National Philosophy of Education which is to produce the individual that intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, and physically balanced, as well as able to contribute towards the harmony and betterment of family, society and nation should be correlate to the individual that has a balanced deliberation and able to contribute towards the stability of environment.

It is because, logically the tranquility of environment that include the stability of the ecosystem will contribute towards the healthy society with values and also produce the generation that able to increase the productivity of the nation. Therefore, as school and the educators have become the societal agents towards students, the educators should present the good attitude in shaping element of environmental awareness among the students. The appreciation towards the subject that moral oriented should develop holistically by the educators through the teaching and learning process because they become the role model to the students. For instance, the aspects of environment should be apply within the process of teaching and learning, thus, students will realize their responsibility to care the environment.

In addition, the application of teaching media by teachers should include the elements of environment. Students should be provided at the early of their age regarding the knowledge of environment. As the belief of Confucianism, the National Philosophy of Education also aspires to produce the competent and moral individual (Choong Lean Keow, 2008). Thus, the need towards the implementation of environmental awareness should be focused in order to produce the generation that have praiseworthy personality and appreciate the creation of God. Besides, the appearance and the manifestation of the educator are very important in realizing the objective of school management to implement the element of environmental awareness (Yahya Don, 2005).

However, the element of awareness is not sufficient without knowledge, understanding, the change of attitude and physically participation. According to Abdul Fatah Hassan (2001), no matter how much knowledge that has been gained by someone, it is still can not be assumed as perfect as the individual does not applies the knowledge within his life to differentiate between the right and wrong. Moreover, he believes that an appreciation is the important concept within human's life, because the solely concept without the sense of gratitude and appreciation is worthless and the sense of gratitude without concept is blind. For instance, by looking at the context of environmental issues, there are lots of individuals that gain knowledge and awareness regarding environment, but still remain the irresponsible attitude towards their surrounding. They fail to interpret the environmental awareness as mutually commitment (Starke, 1990).

Moreover, according to Thapa, B., (1999) there were only a limited understanding of environmental attitudes and the relation to environmentally responsible behaviors among students. Due to the intensive environmental awareness promoted by the environmentalists, it is critical to observe if the future leaders of tomorrow which is students uphold positive environmental attitudes and practices of the environmentally responsible behaviors. Hence, it can be said that the level of students' awareness towards environment and the values of humanism within their self are still low.

Concerning this issue, each individual especially student should have an awareness and responsibility towards environment within. As stated by the philosophy of metaphysic, the connection between human and nature with the creator is the abstract elements, which can not be discover without examine and believe it. Thus, we need to recognize and care for this universe and preserve the harmonious relation with this nature. Besides, the appreciation towards the gift of God needs a responsibility and realization from every human being. Furthermore, apart from fulfill the aspiration of National Philosophy of Education, the student themselves are able to improve their weakness from the aspects of physical, spiritual, emotion, as well as intellectual.

4. Summary and Concluding Remarks

For every creation of God, they have their own significance and function. Environment is the habitat for all living things, includes human, animal as well as plant. It is very important to know and appreciate the existence of this nature, and realize its existence that is closely related to human's life.

On the other hand, human's activity is an act or manner that based on emotion and humans characteristic itself. The emotion and the characteristic emerge differently according to the aspect of education, economy, social and spiritual. That is why education is very important in shaping the moral values and consciousness within human self towards their surrounding, as education includes knowledge and awareness of individual towards the significance of environment. Thus, the awareness towards the protection and conservation should be developed within each human self, so that they can prevent themselves from ruin the chain of biology. Besides, they will make an effort to protect and conserve this nature once he realizes his responsibility towards his surrounding.

Within the context of students, their awareness towards the important of environment is able to protect this earth from the entire pollution. The environmental awareness among students since they were at school is able to be realized through the implementation of the main objective of National Philosophy of Education (NPE) within the teaching and learning process, which is to produce a individual that intellectual, physical, emotional and spiritual balanced. The whole society, especially the students should realize that the peaceful of the environment is the main element within human's life. Each of them should know and believe that by concern towards the environment, it is able to bring the harmony within human's life, society and the nation itself that parallel with the aim of National Philosophy of Education, which is to experience the nation's peaceful. Besides, the appreciation towards the gift of God needs a responsibility and realization from every human being.

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