

Effect of Documentary Films in the Enhancement of Students' Perception towards Environmental Protection

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Abstract—*This study aims to find out the perceptions of school students about environmental issues and how the perceptions on environmental protection can be enhanced through documentary films. In the present study, it was observed that more than 85% students revealed that they can better understand and communicate environment related matter via documentary films in comparison to other sources. The results of the present study revealed that the use of environmental documentary films have potential to foster environmental awareness among school students.*

Keywords: *Documentary film, Environmental awareness, Perception.*

Introduction

Global warming, depletion of natural resources, deforestation, biodiversity loss, climate change and environmental pollution are deteriorating soil, air and water quality. Scientists from all over the world reported that environmental issues have serious consequences on human health (Kunzli et al. 2000; Jarupand Akesson, 2009). Researches have shown that large number of population are unaware about the seriousness of the environmental problems and their adverse impact on earth (Erdogan and Tosun 2009; Chun, Hwang and Byun 2012; Shivakumar 2012). For the sustainable development of nation, environmental issues should be taken into consideration. Scientists revealed that current environmental issues can be resolved if people's environmental awareness is raised (Yarkandi and Yarkandi, 2012; Aminrad et al. 2013). Environmental education is one of the best ways for promoting the concept of sustainable development. It is not only to provide knowledge about the environment but also development of awareness, attitude and skills to solve the problems.

Different media tools like radio, television and newspaper are spreading awareness related to environmental issues among the people at the faster rate than personal contact. Several studies have revealed the positive effect of documentary film on learning process (Owes, 1987). Documentary films play a

significant role in science communication and can enhance the process of cultivation of scientific temper among masses. Documentary films represent potential avenue for influencing people's knowledge and understanding and it acts as a vehicle for bringing environmental issues to people's attention and motivate viewers to action. Due to the visual, auidial and narrative experiences, documentaries show a great potential to reach and influence a wide range of stakeholders in society. Documentary films have been studied extensively as a source of entertainment but the study of film as an agent of social change is still in its infancy. Researchers have reported the pedagogical benefits of documentary films as they facilitate thinking and problem solving approach, increase motivation and assist students to achieve mastery learning (Mayer and Gallini, 1990).

However, documentary films have not been incorporated as a primary instructional medium in school curriculum. The environmental education programme through schools can potentially reach a wider audience than the student population through the process of inter-generational influence (Ozkan 2013; Koruoglu, Ugulu, and Yorek 2015). In order to provide environmental education to each and every student, several initiatives have been taken by the government in terms of establishing eco-clubs in schools by which students are involved in various activities instead of just learning the concepts theoretically. Due to the certain limitations these activities/tools can not be applied under different conditions. To the best of our knowledge, no study has been conducted till date where documentaries are incorporated as primary instructional medium to generate desired learning outcomes among the school students. The objective of the present study was to compare the level of understanding of the school students before and after viewing the documentary film on environmental issues. These efforts can make coming generations more sensitized and encourage them to find innovative solutions and methods for the way ahead in order to protect environment.

METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted in government school of Gautam Buddha Nagar, Uttar Pradesh to assess the role of documentary films in dissemination of knowledge and awareness among the school students about the environment related issues. Two documentary films on environment issues were selected for the present investigation. The title of the documentary films was (i) *Sanjay Van* and (ii) *Saving the Saviour*.

Two groups of school students (class 10th and 12th standard) comprising of 50 male and 50 female students were randomly selected between the age - group of 15 and 17 years respectively for the study. A brief group discussion and interview were made with the students prior to data collection to get their consent and to explain them that their cooperation is a valuable contribution.

Students were introduced briefly about the scientific concepts and background information of the topic illustrated in the documentary film before the presentation of the documentary film. The subject material was also distributed for reading and understanding of concept. After viewing the documentary film on environmental issues, students were requested to reflect and respond to questionnaire. They were also asked to compare between their understanding level on the same topic only by reading subject material and after viewing the documentary film. Questionnaire was used during the study for collection of the information from the students and their level of understanding on the basis of results of the responses was summarized in form of percentage (Figure - 1). Questionnaire is given in Annexure - I.

Annexure - I. Questionnaire to check the knowledge level of students on the environmental issues.

1. Name :
2. Age:
3. Gender:
4. Class:
5. Name of school:
6. What do you really think about environment?
7. To what extent do environmental issues influence your daily life?
8. Which environmental issue do you consider the most serious today?
9. Do you believe in need to protect the environment?
10. Who should be responsible for making sure that we have a healthy environment?
11. What is the meaning of sustainable development?

12. Comparison between documentary films and other resources (print material) as a teaching mode for understanding of scientific concepts.
13. Significance of documentary films as a teaching tool.
14. Need of incorporation of documentary film in the curriculum as a teaching tool for better understanding of subject.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the present study, comparison has been done on the level of understanding of the school students before and after viewing the documentary film with reading material and it was summarized in form of percentage (Figure -1). Approximately 67% and 77% students reported their understanding on environment related topic after reading study material whereas 88% and 96% students of reported their understanding about subject after viewing documentary film. Most of the students felt that documentary films should be included in their curriculum as they can better understand and communicate environment related matter via documentary films in comparison to other sources. Documentary films are powerful tool for students to engage them with a range of environment issues and to connect these topics with their lives. The results suggest that documentary film is beneficial for the students as it helps in development of critical thinking abilities and sense of relevance, which collectively leads to a more pro-environmental disposition. Furthermore, through a film school students can understand that how climate or environmental change impacts communities and students can become agents of social change.

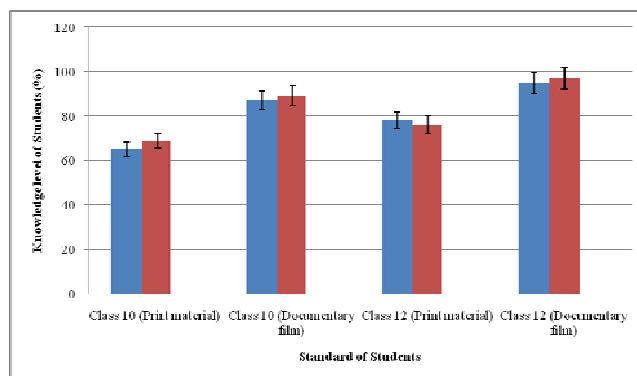


Figure 1: Knowledge level of school students based on print material and documentary films on environmental issues.

Hence there is an urgent need for building a team of science filmmakers which may act information intermediary between science and students to address the environmental issues. Documentary films should be distributed in schools and colleges at grass root level.

CONCLUSION

Documentary film can directly and indirectly produce positive changes among the students. The role of documentary film in science communication is very crucial to bridge the gap between science and society. Environmental awareness through the documentary films is the stepping stone towards environment protection. Hence, more documentary films should be produced on success stories of eco-friendly technologies and environment related issues for sustainable development.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

The author declares that they have no conflict of interest.

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