

Environmental Literacy of Teacher Educators in Colleges of Teacher Education in Israel

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Abstract : The importance of environmental education as part of a national strategy to promote the environment is recognized around the world. Lecturers at colleges of teacher education have considerable responsibility, directly and indirectly, for the environmental literacy of students who will end up teaching in the school system. This study examined whether lecturers in colleges of teacher education and teacher training in Israel, are able and willing to develop among the students, environmental literacy. Capability and readiness is assessed by evaluating the level of environmental literacy dimensions that include knowledge on environmental issues, positions related to the environmental agenda and "green" patterns of behavior in everyday life. The survey included 230 lecturers from 22 state colleges coming from various sectors (secular, religious, and Arab), from different academic fields and different personal backgrounds. Firstly, the results show that the higher the commitment to environmental issues, the lower the satisfaction with the current situation. In general, the respondents show positive environmental attitudes in all categories examined, they feel that they can personally influence responsible environmental behavior of others and are able to internalize environmental education in schools and colleges; they also report positive environmental behavior. There are no significant differences between teachers of different background characteristics when it comes to behavior patterns that generate personal income funds (e.g. returning bottles for deposit). Women show a more responsible environmental behavior than men. Jewish lecturers, in most categories, show more responsible behavior than Druze and Arab lecturers; however, when referring to positions, Arabs and Druze have a better sense in their ability to influence the environmental agenda. The Knowledge test, which included 15 questions, was mostly based on basic environmental issues. The average score was adequate - 83.6. Science lecturers' environmental literacy is higher than the other lecturers significantly. The larger the environmental knowledge base is, they are more environmental in their attitudes, and they feel more responsible toward the environment. It can be concluded from the research findings, that knowledge is a fundamental basis for developing environmental literacy. Environmental knowledge has a positive effect on the development of environmental commitment that is reflected in attitudes and behavior. This conclusion is probably also true of the general public. Hence, there is a great importance to the expansion of knowledge among the general public and teacher educators in particular on environmental. From the open questions in the survey, it is evident that most of the lecturers are interested in the subject and understand the need to integrate environmental issues in the colleges, either directly by teaching courses on the environment or indirectly by integrating environmental issues in different professions as well as asking the students to set an example (such as, avoid unnecessary printing, keeping the environment clean). The curriculum at colleges should include a variety of options for the development and enhancement of environmental literacy of student teachers, but first there must be a focus on bringing their teachers to a high literacy level so they can meet the difficult and important task they face.

Keywords : colleges of teacher education, environmental literacy, environmental education, teacher's teachers

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