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Promoting Knowledge of Climate Change (CC) amongst Cambodians: Implications for Education Managers

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Abstract:

Education is an essential element of the global response to climate change. It helps young people understand and address the impact of global warming, encourages changes in their attitudes and behavior and helps them adapt to climate change-related trends. The implementation of pro-active, planned adaptation to reduce community vulnerability is strongly dependent upon people's awareness of the threat posed to their communities at the local level. With a focus on lecturers in agricultural universities in Cambodia, a group of people expected to be knowledgeable; this study set out to look at the concept, nature and scope of climate change, its types and causes, global impacts and specific impacts on Cambodia and, its knowledge and to assess their level of awareness and the extent to which they discuss it. The results from the academic staff of seven universities in Cambodia (n=70) revealed that only 7.1% know very much of climate change and 28.6% never discussed it among themselves. Those who know and discuss it are mainly in the sciences whose areas of specialization and course contents are climate change related. Based on the findings, it was recommended that climate change clubs be established in universities. Lecturers of Education Management and Environmental Sciences should collaborate to man the clubs as well as organize Workshops and seminars on climate change from time to time to create awareness. They should also post slogans on climate change at strategic points on campus.

Keywords: *Climate Change; Awareness*

Introduction

Rising sea levels, due to thermal expansion of the ocean, and higher frequency and intensity of coastal and inland storms threaten coastal communities worldwide. The global scientific and policy community now unequivocally accepts that human activities cause global climate change (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2007; National Research Council, 2010a). The scientific consensus has been translated for a broad public and policy makers in a variety of recent reports (National Research Council, 2010b; National Science Foundation, 2009; U.S. Climate Change Science Program, 2009). Although information on climate change is now readily available, the nation still seems unprepared or unwilling to respond effectively to climate change, due partly to a general lack of public understanding of climate change issues and opportunities for effective responses (Leiserowitz, 2003; Leiserowitz and Smith, 2010; Leiserowitz, Moser, and Dilling, 2007; Patchen, 2006; Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, 2007, 2009). The reality of global climate change lends increasing urgency to the need for effective education on earth system science, as well as on the human and behavioral dimensions of climate change, from broad societal action to smart energy choices at the household level (Gardner and Stern, 2008).

The public's limited understanding of climate change is partly the result of four critical challenges that have slowed development and delivery of effective climate change education. First, research over the past 15 years has demonstrated that the underlying science of climate change is inherently difficult for most learners to comprehend (Boyes and Stanisstreet, 1993, 1997, 2001; Coyle, 2005) and for educators or schools.

Cambodia, as a developing nation is particularly sensitive to the effects of climate change. A large part of the economy of the country depends on natural resources, which are particularly vulnerable to climate change. When those resources are affected, communities are implicated. Disease, loss of livelihoods and settlements can force entire communities into relocation or complete extinction and even refugee status. Cambodian need to be educated and informed about climate change and how it can change our lives drastically. Lack of information (awareness) and knowledge (education) about climate change also means that many Nigerians are reluctant to accept the reality of climate change. This study is therefore intended to find out how much of climate change academic staff of universities know and whether they discuss it among themselves. The research covered only some agricultural institution and cannot be represent the whole country.

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Research Methodology

The design adopted for the study was a descriptive survey. The sample consisted of 70 academic staff members from 7 agricultural universities include: Royal University of Agriculture (RUA), Prek Leap National College of Agriculture (PLNCA), Kampong Cham National School of Agriculture (KCNSA), Chea Sim University of Kamchaymear (CSUK), University of Battambang (UBB), Svay Rieng University (SRU), and Mean Chey University (MCU).

Table01: Selected Sample by Universities

Universities	Sample
RUA	10
PLNCA	10
KCNSA	10
CSUK	10
UBB	10
SRU	10
MCU	10
Total	**70**

A self-designed questionnaire titled: Climate Change Awareness and Communication among Academic Staff (CCACAS) was used to obtain data. The instrument was subjected to face and content validity as well as reliability test which gave a co-efficient of stability of 0.87. Analysis was done using percentages.

Finding Result

The instrument sought to find out how much academic staff know of climate change, their source of information, whether they discuss it among themselves and whether government should pay great attention to climate change issue.

Table02: On how much of climate change academic staff members know on a 100 per cent scale for each option

Options	No of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Very much	5	7.1
Much	25	17.1
Little	56	58.6
Very little	20	11.4
Nothing	4	5.7
Total	**70**	**100**

Table03: On source of information about climate change

Options	No of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Scientific institutions	9	12.9
News/Print media	35	50.0
Government agency	13	18.6
Corporations	7	10.0
NGOs	4	5.7
Other	2	2.9
Total	**70**	**100**

Table04: On whether academic staffs discuss climate change among themselves, placing all options on 100 per cent scale

Options	No of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Always	6	8.6
Sometimes	20	28.6
Seldom	24	34.3
Never	20	28.6
Total	**70**	**100**

Table05: On whether government should pay great attention to climate change issue

Options	No of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Agree	43	61.4
Somewhat agree	24	34.3
Indifferent	03	4.3
Total	**70**	**100**

Discussion

Recognizing the role academic staff of universities play in educating students in particular and the populace in general, it is surprising that only 7.1% (5 persons) and as much as 5.7%(4 persons) know nothing about climate change. In this regard, limitation on climate change awareness found high in among agricultural educator in Cambodia as showed in table02. Source of information on climate change among academic staff is mainly News/Printed media (50%) followed by Government agency (18.6%) and Scientific institution (12.9%). Most academic staff members seldom discuss climate change amongst themselves. As many as 20 persons (28.6%) have never discussed climate change. Only 6 persons (8.6 %) always discuss climate change. Again, it was found out that most of those who discussed it were those in the sciences who teach courses in/related to climate change. Most academic staff members agree that government should pay great attention to climate change issue. 43 persons (61.4%) agreed to this

which reflected that climate change issue is very important that should be taken into account.

Recommendation

Since the impact of climate change affects not only human settlements and health but also, water resources, wetlands, industry, commerce, financial services, food security, land degradation, forestry and biodiversity, it is recommended climate change awareness should be created on the Cambodian citizens. In this respect, efforts should be made to put in place integrated approaches for the adaptation and mitigation and one sustainable way to achieve this is through education and capacity building. To realize this,

- Climate change clubs should be established in universities. Academic staff members in faculties of education and environmental sciences should be made to coordinate the activities of such clubs. This will create awareness amongst academic staff and students.
- Workshops and seminars on climate change should be organized from time to time to create awareness. The environmental studies and educational management departments or the climate change club, if and when established, should organize seminars and workshops for the universities and their communities from time to time to create awareness.
- Inscriptions of slogans in climate change issues should be posted in strategic places on campus. Such slogan as "Cut one tree, plant one tree". This will further create awareness among academic staff and the university community.

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