

The contribution of Yarmouk University (YU) in Jordan in increasing environmental awareness and values

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To cite this article

Nawal Okour. The Contribution of Yarmouk University (YU) in Jordan in Increasing Environmental Awareness and Values, *International Journal of Environmental Monitoring and Protection*. Vol. 1, No. 1, 2014, pp. 1-6

Abstract

This study aimed at recognizing the contribution of Yarmouk University (YU) in the field of environmental awareness, and environmental ethics. The sample of 30 professionals was selected randomly from the faculties of science, education and economy at YU in Jordan. A validated questionnaire was used. It distributed to the sample to achieve the study's aim. The results showed an accepted level for YU in dealing with environmental ethics and awareness. The study revealed the highest response for the cooperative and participated actions. It displayed no serious plan considered, and no environmental ethical researches were done. The study submitted a number of recommendations. In addition, further researches were suggested.

Keywords

Environmental Awareness, Environmental Values and Ethics, Yarmouk University Contribution

1. Introduction

The present study is conducted at Yarmouk University (YU). This university is a governmental one that locates in a big city "Irbid" in the northern part of Jordan. YU consists of various faculties, and a variety of social classes from rural and urban communities. The location of this university encourages conducting a variety of researches, reflecting various culture. The university, as indicated through analyzing the data of this study, collaborates with Governmental Organizations (GOs), NGOs and other universities in scientific researches, holding conferences and meetings, both locally and globally.

This university is distinguished by immersing in outdoor activities, dealing with various issues. The most important action that has been taken place, is initiating "Yarmouk Society for Environmental Friends". The members of this society are students and their staff, in addition to a large number of local interested people. It has annual meeting discussing environmental issues. Environmental problems

are of particular interest, especially issues on extinction or depletion of natural resources.

Regarding environmental awareness, Sterling (1996) indicates that environmental responsibility can be inspired by promoting a positive attitude towards ecosystems. Okour (2013) says, any society should be turned towards sustainability via embracing environmental awareness and ethics. She continues that environmental ethics could enable humans to conserve and preserve their local and global environment. Sterling (1996), on the other side, says that the responsibility is set on education that must be geared towards promoting environmental knowledge and concepts as a thread of Environmental Awareness (EA). Fien (2000) indicates that EA is gained while discussing environmental issues, applying new approach of a real-life problem, which has created some empathy with the environment. Okour (2012) points, environmental empathy ought to be installed by adopting Environmental Education (EE). This echoed by Subbarini *et al* (1993) who state, EE as a field is rich in possibilities for establishing emotional bonds with the environment, in the process creating people

sensitive to nature, in increasing their interest in preservation and conservation.

Des Jardins (1997) meets Okour's (2013) view on studying ethics to limit people demands on nature as a human resource. Des Jardins (1997:85) states, "Some of the most pressing environmental challenges are to consider in detail the ethical effects of our action on people in the future. Yet, this issue was often ignored in much traditional philosophy". This quotation echoed the ethics of Sustainable Development (SD) that asks for not compromising the need of future generation.

Environmental ethicists, e.g., Rolston (1988, 1994) and Callicott (1989 b, 1995) formulate their ethical theories towards environment to create environmental citizens. They encompass three approaches; academic approach that represented by environmental ethics, it may be achieved by studying ethicists' views and perspectives. Philosophical approach, which represented by analyzing the academic approach besides comparing ethicists' views. Finally, psychological approach, which reflects the social side in developing new methods within empirical studies, such as (Szagen & Pavlov 1992; Abdullah 1992; Fong 1993; Zimmerman 1996, Okour, 2008, 2012, 2013). These studies aimed at identifying the acquired environmental values of the studies' subjects, while Meyers (2002) aimed at developing Environmental Values' (EVs) typologies to close the gap between EVs and psychological values, and to measure adult's values and willingness towards environment.

Meyers (2002) resulted a list and system of EVs typologies. The results of (Fong 1993; Szegen & Pavlov 1992) were positive in acquiring Environmental Values and Ethics (EVEs). The results of Szegen & Pavlov (1992) also showed, the preparedness of German students to protect their environment is higher than Russian Students. Regarding to sex, the results of some studies revealed the effect of sex, the females have got higher level than males, e.g., (Fong 1993; Szegen & Pavlov 1992), while the study of Zimmerman (1996) showed the higher level for male students. With regard the field of study, the results of Abdullah's (1992) also reveal that the scientific section got higher level than literal section. The studies of Okour focused on environmental ethics and values. Most of them showed preferable values for subjects, not committed ones towards environment.

In Jordan, at national level, Kashakesh (1998) maintains that there are several pressing environmental problems. These problems represented by a) the misuse of land and natural resources, b) the depletion and contamination of underground water, and c) the pollution of air, water, and soil from the increasing use of motor vehicles and industrial production. In addition, the loss of cultural heritage and wild life habitats that causes environmental degradation. Irani & Johnson (2000) argue that environmental degradation, increasing resource use, and rapid population growth over the last decade have forced Jordanians to face up to the environmental issues. Not

surprisingly, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have sprung up to garner international support and funding for programs on conservation (GCEP 2002). Alongside with Ministry of Environment (MoEnv) (2006) reports, there has also been mounting interest by private and public institutions to tackle environmental issues, e.g., Amman Chamber of Industry setting up an Environment Department for dealing with environmental issues at national level. Thus, it was born an "active environmental movement" in the Jordanian society, a movement that has informally supported conservation work in the country to rationalize the use of the environmental components. Subsequently, the private and public sectors have united to provide moral and material support for environmental activities.

For YU reputation in this field, UNESCO endowed it with a "Chair for Combat Desertification" for coping with desertification, deforestation, biodiversity, and other environmental issues GCEP, 2001). But, despite this, the concern of research in the Jordanian universities in general, and YU in particular, is only in dealing with environmental concepts and attitudes in addition to analyzing textbooks in this field. These researches were conducting by postgraduate students as a requirement for achieving master degree. Similarly, there is no lack of studies at the academic level dealing with environmental problems conducting by educators and scholars.

The field of EA and EVEs is still ignored at the academic level in Jordan, so the researcher focused in this thread. Yarmouk University was selected previously to recognize its contribution in the field of EA and EVEs. The result of Okour's (2008) study showed low level, and no real attention paid for this subject. This university is selected also to know its progress in the field of EA and EVEs. In spite of no previous studies were issued at YU dealing with EA and EVEs, Okour's studies (2002, 2008, 2012) were done to close a bit of the gap resulting in ignoring the subject of Environmental Management (EM). The breakable state of practical EM stimulated the researcher interest in carrying out the present research. It attempts to investigate the contribution of YU in this field.

1.1. The Study's Objectives

The current study aims at studying the contribution of YU in the field of EA and EVEs.

1.2. The Study's Question

To achieve the objective, the following question will be answered and investigated:

What are the contributions of YU in increasing environmental awareness and values of students?

1.3. The Study's Significance

The study is the first attempt that tries to know the contributions (activities, plans, views) of YU in increasing EA and EVEs of students. It is from the first studies that

deal with asking responsible professionals about their action plans and views. It benefits decision makers and planners in conducting action plans at any academic level.

2. Methodology

In order to investigate the contribution of YU in the field of Environmental Awareness (EA) and EVEs, a questionnaire of five sections was utilized as seen below.

2.1. The Respondents at YU

They are all the male professionals who are the Heads of Departments (HoDs) and the members of respective faculties at YU. They are considered knowledgeable of what is going on in their departments and faculties in the field of environmental affairs and activities. The 30 male professors were interviewed and asked to answer the questionnaire, but some of them did not response to answer the questions, as they, were busy and had no time to answer. Twenty of them answered the questionnaire and asked for sufficient time. The respondents of professionals distributed regarding their faculties as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The Distribution of the Sample (n=30).

Faculty	Sample	
Professional	N	%
Science	8	40
Education	6	30
Economy	6	30
Total	20	100

For the collective data and to verify the study's objectives, the instrument was designed as follows:

2.2. The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed to gain data about YU's contribution in spreading EA and acquiring EVEs. The validity of the questionnaire was achieved by the researcher. It was distributed to a panel of Judges at the "Educational Science Faculty" and "Environmental Department" at YU in Jordan, and UKM in Malaysia who were concerned with such environmental subjects. Each member has been supplied by a version of questionnaire in order to confirm its validity (content and construct). The professionals were asked to write their comments in details. Their views, suggestions, and comments were used to refine the questionnaire. Consequently, the new version has been reviewed following their comments, and has been modified to be converted into the final questionnaire. The reliability of this questionnaire could be achieved by the previous evaluators, who asserted its suitability for the purposes of this study. For more validity, it also exposed to a 'panel of judges' at a number of universities in Jordan. They gave some comments to meet the development in environmental affairs within the recent days. Their comments and views were taken into consideration. Finally, they confirmed its suitability in testing the sample. At the end, the

questionnaire included five sections with an open ended view were set up, as shown in Appendix A.

3. Findings and Discussions

This section presents the results after qualitative and quantitative analyses in accordance with the items posed. The questionnaire was formulated to address the study's aim in evaluating YU's contribution in the field of EA and EVEs.

Finding Related to Question1 (Q1): *What is the contribution of YU in increasing environmental awareness and values of students?*

For answering this question, the responses of the subjects are categorized into five sections as follows:

3.1. The University Plans for Spreading EA and Acquiring Eves

From analyzing the sample's responses, all of the professors focus on the item "holding conferences, meetings, and work team". This item has achieved the highest response as conferences and meetings viewed as the most important actions taken in raising students' EA, probably through outdoor activities that reflect their knowledge and skills. All of them focused on the item "participation in local and global organizations". This participation could enable decision makers to change their views for the benefit of environment. The subjects indicated that there has been no serious plan by YU to acquire EVEs. But if there is any plan, ten of them hope to be followed. See table 2.

Table 2. Actions Taken in Acquiring EVEs (n = 20).

Action taken	N	%
Serious active plan	00	00
Follow university plans for spreading EA and EVEs	10	50
Holding conferences, meetings, work teams	20	100
Participation in local and global organizations	20	100

3.2. Conducting Researches and Publications for Developing EA and Acquiring Eves

From table 3 below, there is no response to the research and publications in the field of EVEs as, apparently, all of them did professional research and published on other topics to achieve higher degrees. On the other hand, the professors at the faculty of education confirmed the item "researches in environmental culture". This means that postgraduate students at education deal with environmental culture such as attitudes and concepts, not in EVEs.

Table 3. Frequency Research and Publications in EVEs (n =20).

Publication and researches	N	%
Researches and publication in EVEs	00	00
Researches in environmental culture	10	50
Researches in environmental topics	12	60

The subjects indicate that various topics were conducted related to environmental resource management, environmental local and global problems, and waste management.

3.3. The Appropriate Suggestions to Develop EA and to Acquire Eves

For developing EVEs, the professionals focused on holding conferences locally and globally as in table 4. All of them asked for lectures as the good way for raising EA and embracing EVEs. They assert the role of practical actions in preserving the environment while dealing with indoor and outdoor activities. Therefore, their views are set in the item “holding lectures, meetings, and local conferences”. Most of them encouraged the use of national network, while others focused on TV and other mass media. Mass media could profoundly veer public attitudes and values towards any issue under request. Another suggestion by them is in item “cooperation between GOs and NGOs”.

Regarding their views, cooperation must be adopted between public universities, ministries and other private societies, .e.g. the Royal Scientific Society (RSS) and the Royal Society for Conservation Nature (RSCN). These societies adopt installing EA; they spread sufficient environmental knowledge and concepts that enable people to behave positively towards nature. NGOs in Jordan do their utmost efforts in spreading EA and acquiring EVEs. They focus on voluntary efforts that could affect public better than compulsory rules and law. So, they suggest establishing new rules and modifying the previous ones to face the current status of our environment. The lowest response to spread EA and acquiring EVEs is what already being seen, reflecting subjects’ beliefs in campaigns in spite of its good role in infusing environmental ethics.

Table 4. Suggestions for Developing EVEs at YU (n=20).

Way	N	%
Holding lectures, meetings and local conferences	20	100
National network and Mass Media	10	50
Cooperation between GOs and NGOs	20	100
Establish new rules and activate previous suitable laws	15	75
Campaigns for spreading EA toward unpolluted environment.	10	50

3.4. The Appropriate Suggestions for Developing Eves towards the Jordanian Biological Diversity

The professionals’ suggestions for developing EVEs for Jordanian biological diversity are summarized in Table 5. The best way for spreading EA and acquiring EVEs was thought to be by “Research surveys of flora and fauna”. This way reflects the concern of academics on the one side, and the most concern of the Jordanian government on the other side. In this respect, they add, the government

published its national and international reports on biological diversity within its SD strategy, explaining how these resources are managed. These reports expose the Jordanian national Agenda 21 in using our biodiversity efficiently in farsighted way.

Table 5. Suggestions of Acquiring EVEs for the Jordanian Biodiversity (n=20).

Suggestion	N	%
Activating biological programs	15	75
Research survey of flora and fauna	20	100
Participation between GOs and NGOs	18	90
Cooperation by all sectors	14	70

The issues of “desertification and land degradation” are taken the concern of YU. It actively cooperates with UNESCO to get rid of these issues. A good response for the item “participation between GOs and NGOs” reflects the subjects’ interest in coping this natural wealth. But this interest also requires cooperative efforts to conduct actual SD programs on biodiversity.

3.5. The Cooperative Organizations with YU for Acquiring and Instilling Eves

Table 6 shows the organizations viewed by the respondents to be cooperating with YU in instilling EVEs in the students. The public sector was felt to be the most in helping YU in EA and EVEs as their indication. They focus on the Ministry of Education (MoE), Ministry of Environment (MoEnv), and other public universities such as the Jordanian University (JU) and the Jordanian University of Science and Technology(JUST). Most, if not all, of the subjects are aware of the role of MoE in educational affairs with the help of the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE).

They say that the cooperation between all of them is building up the contemporary knowledge in science and technology, supported by the ethics that come along with it. They point out, the MoE is the most responsible in the awareness and ethical issues, and it is supplying students with environmental knowledge and concepts. They add, those students will be active university students in the near future, in increasing EA and EVEs. The professionals do not ignore the role of MoEnv in inspiring EVEs through its active programs in environmental field.

The concern of them was directed to the local organization RSCN. This organization has achieved the highest response for spreading EA and acquiring EVEs, probably due to its reputation as a voluntary society in increasing EA and EVEs to all, both within and without the country. In addition, it involves in environmental researches and publications in collaboration with YU and other Jordanian universities. Some of the professionals indicate for “the Carlton, Freidreich and Al-Dad organizations” as global ones. They offered many scholarships in various environmental fields, particularly, public awareness.

Table 6. Organizations believed to be cooperating with YU in instilling EVEs in students (n=20).

Organization	N	%
Ministry of Education (MoE)	20	100
Ministry of Environment (MoEnv)	17	85
Governmental Universities	15	75
Local Organization (RSCN)	20	100
Global Organizations	13	65
Private Universities	13	65

It could be seen, the items “Holding conferences, meetings, and work team”, “Participation in local and global organizations”, “Cooperation between GOs and NGOs”, and “Research survey of flora and fauna” have achieved the highest response. On the other side, the items “Serious active plan” and “Researches and publication in EVEs” have achieved the lowest response.

4. Recommendations and Suggestions

In the light of the results, the study recommended for:

- Holding lectures, meetings and local conferences to inspire EVEs, and to be more aware of our environment.
- Participation between local and global organizations to deal with environmental affairs.
- Activating biological diversity programs to be sustained for future and far distance generations.
- Initiating a Jordanian website for environmental information and research, seeking for establishing and strengthening environmental information systems at the national level.

The study also suggested the following:

- Conducting researches and publication in EVEs to meet environmental challenge and issues.
- Encouraging empirical research and sustaining methods to care for biological diversity in Jordan.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, the study proved that YU-like other Jordanian universities-is not actively involved in increasing EA and acquiring EVEs. The analysis of the responses indicates for the accepted response for holding conferences and meetings. It could be concluded that YU contribution in the field of EA and EVEs is still in its infancy. No active plans were done to install EVEs in its students, and the voluntary programs for acquiring EVEs are still lack the necessary attention and encouragement from the Jordanian government. In addition to the inadequate legal and administrative framework that may affect public participation.

Appendix A

The Sample's Views Regarding the Contribution of YU in EA and EVEs.

Dear Prof/Dr

Please put ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ beside the item that believed to be as a contribution of YU in EA and EVEs

Faculty: Science () Education () Economy ()

Item	Yes	No
1. The action plans taken for spreading EA and acquiring EVEs		
Serious active plan		
Follow university plans for spreading EA and EVEs		
Holding conferences, meetings and work teams		
Participation in local and global organizations		
Follow university plans for spreading EA and EVEs		
2. Publication and researches		
Researches and publication in EVEs		
Researches in environmental culture		
Researches in environmental topics		
3. Suggestions for Developing EVEs at YU		
Holding lectures, meetings and local conferences		
National network and Mass Media		
Cooperation between GOs and NGOs		
Establish new rules and activate previous suitable laws		
Campaigns for spreading EA toward unpolluted environment.		
4. Suggestions of Acquiring EVEs for the Jordanian Biodiversity		
Activating biological programs		
Research survey of flora and fauna		
Participation between GOs and NGOs		
Cooperation between all sectors		
5. Organizations believed to be cooperating with YU in instilling EVEs in students		
Ministry of Education (MoE)		
Ministry of Environment (MoEnv)		
Governmental Universities		
Local Organization (RSCN)		
Global Organizations		
Private Universities		
Please, put your views and comments regarding the previous items.		
.....		
.....		

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