

Research Note

Extent of Volunteering Work on School Vegetable Garden by Students and Teachers

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ABSTRACT

India is the second largest producer of vegetables in the world, our productivity levels are abysmally low. Agricultural activities have produced a variety of educational benefits in primary school students. It has deepened the recognition of the importance of feeling nature, enhanced the ability of self-control and widened the understanding toward work. At disabled children's schools and in classes of disabled children, agricultural activities have immensely contributed to the development of these children, academically and socio psychologically. It is a living laboratory where lessons are drawn from real-life experiences rather than textbook examples, allowing students to become active participants in the learning process. Extent of volunteering for students and teachers were measured in terms of their involvement in school vegetable gardening and was expressed as hours per week.

Keywords: Vegetables garden, Volunteering work, School

INTRODUCTION

The school vegetable garden movement originated in Europe and got widely popularized in United States in the 1890s. Vegetable gardens skimmed up at schools all over the country during the early 20th century, more recently, the popularity of school gardens as an educational tool steadily grew as a way to teach healthy eating behaviours and increase hands-on learning experiences in inter or multi disciplinary lessons.

Vegetables are an important source of food and nutrition. Vegetable production constitutes roughly two-third of the total production of horticulture crops. Although India is the second largest producer of vegetables in the world, our productivity levels are appallingly low. In case of Kerala, more than 70 per cent of our vegetable requirement is met from our neighbouring states like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. Kerala also has

the limitation of land for agriculture owing to the high rate of fragmentation of land due to population pressure, increasing nucleotide family structure, and other demoeconomic positioning (Thomas, 2004). One best way to address the issue of vegetable shortage is to scale up its production in schools using the vast acre of under or unused lands and the immense young energy. To address this, many projects have been initiated by Kerala Government. Vegetable and Fruits Promotion Council Kerala (VFPCCK) plans to develop vegetable gardens in 1,000 schools within three months as part of its agri@schoolprogramme aimed at cultivating interest in agriculture among school children. The concept is 'A Vegetable Garden in my school' for children, said a press release from VFPCCK. The area covered by the vegetable gardens will be determined by the availability of land. According to estimates, between two and 15 cents of land targeted to be used for vegetable gardens in schools.

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It is estimated that 600 tons of vegetables can be produced from the 1,000 gardens in schools (The Hindu, 2006).

METHODOLOGY

Ten best performing schools in vegetable gardening were purposively selected in consultation with the officials of Directorate of Public Instruction (DPI) of Thiruvananthapuram district. Ten active volunteers who were participating in the school vegetable gardening activities were selected at random from 10 schools after consulting with the respective school teachers. Thus a total of 30 teacher respondents were selected for the study. Extent of volunteering in this study refers to how often the respondents volunteered work for community service with or without relation to school. Extent of volunteering in this study for students and teachers were measured in terms of their involvement in school vegetable gardening and expressed as hours per week. The respondents were grouped into different category viz., high and low with weighted mean values as a measure of check.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Extent of volunteering for students and teachers were measured in terms of their involvement in school vegetable

gardening and was expressed as hours per week. The respondents (students and teachers) were grouped into different category and the results are presented in the Table 1, 2 and 3. From perusal of the Table 1, it is observed that 60 per cent of the students and teachers belonged to high level of 'extent of volunteering' work inside the school, with special reference to school vegetable gardening and 40 per cent of the students and teachers belonged to low level of 'extent of volunteering' work inside the school. It was interesting to note the same distribution in case of extent of volunteering (work in school). Apart from extent of volunteering work in school, observations were recorded for 'number of days' per week of involvement of students in school gardening activities and the results are given in Table 2. The result of the study showed that 70 per cent of school involved

Table 2: Distribution of students according to their number of days involved per week (n=10)

No. of days/week	Frequency	Percentage
2 days	2 school	20.00
3 days	7 school	70.00
4 days	1 school	10.00
Total	10 school	100.00

Table 1: Distribution of students and teachers according to their extent of volunteering (work in school) (n -130)

Category (hours/week)	Students (n=100)		Teachers (n=30)	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
High	60	60.00	18	60.00
Low	40	40.00	12	40.00
Weighted mean	165 min/week		165 min/week	
Lower value	120 min/week		120 min/week	
Higher value	240 min/week		240 min/week	

Table 3: Distribution of students and teachers according to their extent of volunteering (work out of school) (n=130)

Category (hours/week)	Students (n=100)		Teachers (n=30)	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
High	18	18.00	19	63.33
Low	82	82.00	11	36.67
Weighted mean	64.8 min/week		174 min/week	
Lower value	30 min/week		60 min/week	
Higher value	120 min/week		240 min/week	

in 3 days per week voluntarily in school vegetable gardening activities followed by 20 per cent of school involving in 2 days per week and 10 per cent involving in 4 days per week. Therefore, it was concluded that majority of the students voluntarily worked 3 days per week in school vegetable garden. Also, it can be interpreted as majority of the schools (70%) has planned school vegetable gardening for 3 days per week.

From Table 3 it was identified that extent of volunteering of school students was low (82%) for work outside the school in vegetable gardening whereas 63.33 per cent of the teachers fell in the category of 'high level of volunteering work' outside the school with reference to vegetable gardening activities. The results are even more interesting, that the weighted mean of 'extent of volunteering' (work out of school) demonstrated that teachers were involved in vegetable gardening for 174 min/week as against students who were involved for 64.8 minutes/ week. This could be due to the voluntary participation of teachers in their respective home garden for safe food and nutritional requirements and also with the urge for deriving additional income through agricultural activities. The results are similar to the findings of the study done by Benson *et al.* (1999).

CONCLUSION

Majority of the students and teachers (60.0%) had high level of extent of volunteering work inside school however, in the case of extent of volunteering work outside school, majority of the students (82.0%) belonged to the low category. More than 63.33 per cent of teachers had high level of extent of volunteering work outside school.

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