

The Study on the Role of School Eco-centers at Elementary Schools in Calamba City, Philippines

Mariko MATSUMOTO

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1. BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

As a rapidly developing country with growing population, solid waste management is more and more important in the Philippines. Republic Act 9003 which is known as “Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000”, the country’s latest comprehensive law on solid waste management, decentralizes the implementation of solid waste management to address the problems on solid waste. The Act mandates local government units to establish their own Materials Recovery Facilities (MRFs) which have the functions of segregation, recycling, and composting and emphasizes the importance of environmental education in enhancing environmental awareness and encouraging actions among the people. In addition to MRFs, Calamba City initiated the establishment of “eco-centers” which can be installed cheaper than normal MRFs. These eco-centers have the solo function of segregation and been established in many schools, subdivisions, resorts, and hospitals in the city. This study focuses on the synergistic effects by school eco-centers between the “Eco-waste sa Eskwela” school waste education program of the city and the activities regarding school eco-centers. The objectives of this study are 1) to assess the linkage between the “Eco-waste sa Eskwela” school waste education program and the activities regarding school eco-centers, 2) to determine the significance of school eco-centers in terms of awareness, participation, and attitude, and 3) to elucidate educational effects of school eco-centers on students.

2. STUDY AREA AND METHODS

The study area is Calamba city, Laguna province, which is located 54 km away from Metro Manila, a metropolitan area of the country. With a rapid increase in population, solid waste management is one of the city’s high-profile issues. On the purpose of achieving the objectives, Key Informant Interviews and the questionnaire survey for grade 6 students from 10 target elementary schools were conducted. 8 out of 10 elementary schools have already installed the school eco-centers while 2 out of 10 elementary schools have not installed the school eco-centers yet because of various reasons.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The activity of the school eco-center together with “Eco-waste sa Eskwela” school waste education program provided the opportunity of practicing proper segregation, as well as the economic opportunity for the elementary schools, which generate the income from the recyclable waste. This income was used for the students such as sponsoring the student organizations and buying school supplies. Also, the school eco-centers in themselves made the elementary schools possible to centralize the school solid waste management. Through the comparison between the model elementary school of school eco-centers and other target elementary schools equipped with/without the school eco-centers by the questionnaire survey, this study detected two features of the model elementary school; the students of the model elementary school practiced proper segregation and had the sense of the responsibility of waste generation which affected the students’ littering behavior and waste segregation. It can be said that the continuation of the activities of the school eco-centers together with the “Eco-waste sa Eskwela” program will train students’ proper segregation and cultivate students’ sense of the responsibility of waste segregation. Furthermore, the close monitoring of school principal, teachers and concerned personnel can be the key factor to make a success of the activities of the school eco-centers.