

Investigation and analysis of print media attention in Azerbaijan to environmental issues during the years 1986-2008: media as a way to sustainability

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ABSTRACT

Environmental education is considered to be one of the important measures for environmental problems and leading issues needed for sustainability. The issue of environmental awareness and education emerged in the middle of 20th century meant not only the education of specialists and experts but directed to the idea of education for all citizens. The mass media has a power to contribute to the public awareness and education about the environment and involvement of professionals is very important to develop the environmentally-friendly behavior and responsibility in audience.

The main purpose of this paper is to provide the comprehensive overview of the trends in newspaper coverage of environmental issues in Azerbaijan during the years 1986-2008 in order to get a picture of changes and improvements toward the publishing in environmental issues. In the society with the less environmental education in schools and universities the media plays as one of the important sources of information for the society that is one step forward to the sustainability. In order to sustain the environment for a future generation the steps toward the improving the condition of the environment have to be taken. In this case the media plays an enormous role in educating people about the existing issues that has a great impact on their behavior and could lead to environmentally-friendly activities.

Public awareness and education through all sources of education is essential to influence their intellectual knowledge and behaviors toward the environmental protection. Because the people receive much of the knowledge and information about the events from the news media it is very important to find out what media report that give the assumption of what potential readers know about the environmental issues. This study analyses the print media (newspaper) since it is considered to be the cheap and broad source of information for all levels of society.

From the analysis it was found out that the newspapers in Azerbaijan did not play a role as an educator with the information and knowledge they give through print media. The analysis on 1114 articles showed the lack of information given to the readers about the environmental issues in Azerbaijan as well as global environmental problems through all years analyzed. The global environmental problems were ignored by media dedicating only % 5 of articles to these issues. The economic profits from Caspian Sea played an important role rather than environmental issues. The frequency and prominence of articles in both studies is low and the decrease observed in recent years. Journalists who lack environmental education in Universities did not have a sufficient collaboration with the scientists and experts that could have improve the situation with giving more broad and exact information about environmental issues and problems with the detailed consequences. As a matter of fact the print media condition in environmental informing is not satisfactory since more attention pays to the political and economic issues rather than environmental and the proper actions have to be taken in order to improve the conditions.

This work is the starting point and first attempt to work toward the improvements in media attention to environmental issues in Azerbaijan that has an enormous impact on public opinion and behavior that can be followed by environmentally friendly activities that is one

path leading toward the sustainability.

“The media is the most powerful entity on earth. They have the power to make the innocent guilty and to make the guilty innocent, and that's power. Because they control the minds of the masses”, Malcolm X, 1965