



FEE & Education and Training for Sustainable Tourism

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Abstract. The Foundation for Environmental Education is the world’s largest environmental education organization, affecting more than 100 countries. The foundation has five groundbreaking projects aimed at helping people take meaningful and purposeful action to create a more sustainable world. At present, the problem of environmental protection is becoming more and more serious. All countries in the world regard environmental protection as a very important issue because, to achieve sustainability, we cannot constantly take from nature. Therefore, not only to take some measures to protect the environment but also need to educate children from childhood, so that they have a strong sense of environmental protection. So one of the foundation’s projects does just that. This paper will analyze the results obtained by the Environmental Protection Fund and some of its projects.

Keywords: Environmental protection · Sustainable development · Education

1 Introduction

Foundation for Environmental Education is focused on promoting the power of change which is also supposed to benefit future generations. The empowerment of students enables the existence of a sustainable world with positive change all over the globe. It is comprised of 77 countries all over the world and it is regarded as the “largest environmental education organization”.

It has also been recognized by “UNESCO” “UNEP” as a leading organization in Environmental Education and also the promotion of Education for Sustainable Development. The discussion will focus on explaining the background of the organization, its main goals, expounding on some of the initiatives, and five breaking-ground programs by the Foundation for Environmental Education. Specifically, the Eco-Schools program will be emphasized as its visions are valuable to today’s young generations and important in ensuring education and training for a sustainable planet which includes sustainable tourism and responsible travel. The discussion will generally focus on FEE’s results and how they have been achieved and what we can learn from them.

2 Background of FEE

“Foundation for Environmental Education” was founded in Leiden in the Netherlands, it was recognized as the “Foundation for Environmental Education in Europe” in 1981. The extra “E” that was supposed to represent Europe was to show the geographical area and its functioning within Europe. The initial “FEEE” was supposed to deal with raising awareness in regards to the natural environment, this was implemented by organizing conferences where people met furthermore it also created a platform for collaboration [2]. Their first meetings were mostly held in zoos since they were convinced children could be educated about animal habitats and also how they can improve their understanding of the ecosystems. In 1987, “Foundation for Environmental Education in Europe” introduced a new initiative known as the Blue Flag program which was an ecolabel.

The Blue Flag was known as the first ecolabel and first “FEEE” program in the world. The Blue flag was brought about by the idea of initiating a project that would be effective in changing the marine environment. In 1992 another program was presented other than Blue Flag, a French initiative introduced “Eco-Schools” which helped in formal education and also training of teachers. It also created awareness since some of the students could go back home and educate their families on the importance of saving water.

In 1994 it was confirmed that “Eco-Schools and Young Reporters for the Environment” were official programs of “FEEE” and it was the first related to “environmental education in Schools” [11]. In 1998 “FEEE” experienced a crisis whereby the European Union made a withdrawal of its financial support towards the Blue Flag. European Union stopped the funding because they wanted the Blue Flag to be changed to the EU flag. The solution to deal with the crisis was to introduce a levy that member states were to pay to International Coordinators for each site that was given.

In 1999 the fourth fee program was formed which was known as “Learning about Forests”, the program focuses on promoting outdoor learning which gives children a better chance of understanding the natural world [10]. The director for the project Barry McGonigal also recently stated, “In the last academic year, more than 110,000 trees have been planted during school activities connected to LEAF”. In 2001 “FEEE” became a global organization as the name was changed to “FEE”. The organization had realized various countries outside Europe were interested in becoming members mostly were mainly interested as a result of the desire to join the “Blue Flag initiative”.

The members thought there should not be any geographical limits when it comes to member states allowed to be part of it. During the 2001 general assembly in Copenhagen, Denmark the extra “E” for European was removed. After the organization became global “FEE” was recognized by United Nations and also other world organizations and institutions.

South Africa joined the organization after its internationalization, it was the first non-European member to join the organization. In 2003 the fifth “FEE” program was introduced. The program was initially a “Danish program inspired by Blue Flag”. The program was accepted since it was an ecolabel for hostels and hotels. “FEE” has five official programs whereby three are associated with environmental education while the other two are related to creating sustainable tourism. In 2020 “FEE” has been able to

maintain its member states and has 98 organizations that are located in 77 countries around the world.

3 Main Goals & Jobs of FEE

“Foundation For Environmental Education”, is a global organization that believes in the power of change, the ability to help future generations. The global organization tries to empower students to become great leaders and advocates on how to achieve positive change and sustainability. Its educational programs such as “Eco-Schools, LEAF, and Young Reporters for the Environment” have adopted a solution-based approach that is used for empowerment in an environmentally friendly world. The organization is also known across the world as an advocate for the protection of natural resources and sustainable business practices in tourism, this is through their programs such as “Green Key and Blue Flag initiatives”.

“FEE” has its own environmental Education Principles which are also known as how the members of the organization are supposed to conduct themselves to attain positive results from their goals. The principles are supposed to guide the members on how they will proceed with their work. They are also championed in the programs that are part of the global organization. The principles are such as the organization should involve all the participants in the learning and teaching process [4]. There is also the principle should that it should empower participants to be able to take actions and decisions that are well informed. Furthermore, it should be based on real-life sustainability matters. The organization also aims to encourage people who are actively involved in the organization’s projects to work together and also spread the message to their communities where they can come up with collaborative solutions.

The participants were also encouraged to learn how to understand their knowledge, assumptions, and experiences, this would help in creating critical thinking skills among the participants and also developing a mindset that is open to change [6]. The organization also encourages its participants to familiarize themselves with their cultural customs and practices which would be a positive step towards enhancing sustainability issues. The participants are also supposed to share their experiences with other members, the stories shared should inspirationally explain their achievements and failures. This is a way to ensure the participants learn and support each other. The participants are also supposed to continue exploring and innovating new ways that can be adopted as new techniques and methodologies. The final principle is to ensure that the organization should carry out monitoring and evaluation of their programs hence ensuring continuous improvements on the initiatives.

The main goal of FEE is “to engage and empower people through education in collaboration with our members and partners worldwide”. The organization uses education as a tool for creating a sustainable environment. The organization endeavors to believe in what human beings can accomplish hence developing a world that is more peaceful, and sustainable through the programs initiated.”FEE” has also taken advantage of the new digital age which allows the organization to share its ideas across the borders, Schools around the globe will be given a chance to exchange ideas and engage in various activities that have been acquired under the “FEE” themes. The organization wishes to

share the themes among different schools that are supposed to be operated under the different program angles. Older members of the organization are also encouraged to have structured mentoring which would assist new members in integrating themselves with the organization.

“FEE” was first introduced with the idea of preserving the Earth’s resources, which would end up promoting the survival of humanity. The organization believed the public would be under threat in terms of how the environment was preserved. This was done through initiatives such as the “Blue Flag” initiative which was focused on creating a sustainable environment that would also help the public in conserving their environment. However, the organization adopted a new philosophy which was based on the concept of sustainability, the organization resolved that the best way of creating more wealth for the world was by using resources sustainably through recycling and also managing resources more intelligently.

The organization has been useful to the public as it continues to raise awareness about the natural environment, this was done through its participants who are among the members of the already created programs. The organization also created a platform for member states to meet and exchange ideas on how better ways of environmental stability can be improved [8]. This was done through General Assembly gatherings that were organized annually, for instance, the General Assembly meeting held in Dubrovnik, Croatia included a proposal to allow the rest of the world to become members hence leading to South Africa being allowed as part of the organization [9].

In addition, FEE enables the public to have a better understanding of the ecosystem in tourism, especially tourists and media found the blue flag initiative to be quite informative and useful in giving details about various sites. The tourists are informed about the places they are about to visit, the water in the areas, and also the equipment being used. It was also involved in other activities that are related to the environment, guided tours, and also information boards.

4 Blue Flag Program

The “Blue Flag” program was brought about by the idea, “pollution does not recognize any borders”, be it air or sea pollution; it only followed the wind and the currents” [3]. This led to “FEEE France” requesting 1000 French students to put letters into a bottle and test how the ocean currents led to the spread of pollution across the world. However, this initiative by the French transformed into the iconic “Blue Flag” program. The idea of pollution at sea led to questioning how the marine environment can be improved [7]. This led to the establishment of criteria that would deal with marinas and beaches and also how to conserve the environment for instance creation of a cleaner and safer site and environmental education activities.

The program has remained strong over the years since it was first established. It was an initiative formed under the organization “FEE”. The “Blue Flag” is one of the most recognized flags in the world. It is known for voluntary awards regarding marinas, sustainable boating tourism operators, and beaches. The “Blue Flag” has assisted in giving tourists the best places they can visit which are environmentally friendly. There is even a report that shows that the BF statutes will impact tourist decisions. In other

words, if a place has a BF label, people will be more likely to visit it. The “Blue Flag” introduced a series of strict measures that needed to be followed under a certain to ensure its high quality and standards.

According to “FEE”, the concept of its ecolabel is explained based on a “carrot and stick approach if you do not reach a certain standard, you will be hit by a stick, but if do, you will be rewarded with something” [5]. Therefore, the “Blue Flag” requires certain criteria in many aspects of environmental, educational, safety, and accessibility to be achieved to be accepted as a sustainable site. The program is also aimed at bringing the public close to their surroundings furthermore to encourage people to educate themselves better in matters concerning the environment. As tourists and environmentalists are being provided with relevant information about different sites in terms of ecosystems, environmental phenomena, and biodiversity, it is also important for the “Blue Flag” as a third party to provide the environmental-friendly certification and environmental education activities.

5 Eco-Schools Program

In 1992, “Foundation for Environmental Education” received new suggestions for other programs besides the “Blue Flag”, and Eco-Schools were among the new programs presented to the organization. In 1994, Eco-Schools was officially recognized as an official initiative of “FEE”. Currently, it is recognized as one of the largest global sustainable school programs. The initiative was based on increasing awareness [1]. The programs begin from the classroom and it is extended to the community, this is done through the students engaging with their community members and sharing their knowledge. The project promotes interacting with the next generation through action-based learning. The program has managed to get great achievements, the most outstanding one was the idea that the program will keep creating sustainability-minded people generations after generation. The behavioral patterns acquired by the students of Eco-Schools would be shared with the other generation [4].

The “Eco-Schools” program has been in existence for almost a quarter of a century, it has been active in engaging young people who are educated about taking positive actions which are supposed to transform lives [9]. The program which started from its early beginnings in Europe has currently expanded to various other countries, the expansion has led to the establishment of 59,000 schools in about 68 countries around the globe. Enhancing positive actions assist in changing the behavior among schools and the communities. The project promotes formal education and also training a teacher as an important role. It also has another role of raising awareness which is mostly done by the students. Eco-Schools have been a driving factor towards attracting new members to join “FEE”, this is because the initiative is also a form of action-based learning targeting schools.

“Blue Flag” and “Eco-Schools” have worked together and developed a lot of small tourist sites. With the initiative “Eco-Schools” by creating awareness of the best possible way of sustainability, people can preserve the environment. This initiative also supports tourism since tourism flow has increased, furthermore, it has created a lot of job opportunities for the locals [12]. Knowledge is shared with students in school on

issues such as control of water consumption is spread to the community which creates awareness of issues concerning the environment. Preserving the environment allows for “FEE” organizations to permit more tourist sites with their strict criteria to be followed to get a “Blue Flag award”.

6 The Impact of Foundation for Environmental Education in Uganda

Uganda is a beneficiary of Eco-Schools furthermore it has brought tremendous progress to the Ugandan society. Eco-schools in Uganda has been ranked among the highest performing school in Uganda. This is according to research that has been done based on high-ranking schools in Uganda. With the introduction of Eco-schools in Uganda, the schools that partnered with the initiative have been upgraded to competitive education centers. The initiative has been a success since the society has also been able to adapt to what the Eco-students have shared with the community. The awareness initiative has managed to impact society as they have adopted the pattern of being environment friendly.

According to participants who visited Uganda to check on the progress of the program, it has been suggested it is important to visit such member countries to understand how it is implemented from a different perspective. In one of the schools in Uganda which was day and boarding, and also part of the “Eco-Schools” program, students from the surrounding villages were able to put into practice what they had benefited from the program [7]. The school had also partnered with “The Danish Outdoor Council” and “CECOD(Conservation Efforts for Community Development)” whereby they had been provided with five tanks that contained 15,000 L of water.

The school had put gutter pipes on the roof hence they were able to collect rainwater since the weather favored them. The water was then used for carrying out activities such as watering their garden and helping the children in maintaining hygiene. Most female students when they reached the age of eleven would miss school as a result of a lack of water to keep them clean.

The eco-School program managed to keep the number of students in school as they could now benefit from the project. Furthermore, the initiative had also been extended to the villages, the members of the village had gutter pipes on their roofs which enabled them to collect water in their big containers [10]. This helped the community since they did not have to undergo long walks in search of water from the river [4]. The Eco-Schools program has proved to be effective in Uganda since it has managed to make a difference in the life of Ugandan schools and villages. The project had a positive impact since it was a way of conserving the environment and therefore promoting more sites for tourism to thrive (Figs. 1 and 2).

As can be seen from the above two charts, Uganda’s income from its beautiful environment is gradually increasing, even rapidly increasing. These achievements could not have been possible without Uganda’s emphasis on environmental protection.



Fig. 1. Inbound tourism to Uganda



Fig. 2. Revenue generated by tourism in Uganda in recent years

7 Conclusion

One of the Foundation for Environmental Education’s important roles is to promote belief in human beings. Everyone involved in benefiting from tourism, including travelers, should be responsible for responsible travel education and everyone who benefited from the environment should be responsible for maintaining a sustainable lifestyle - probably sounds reasonable and somewhat common sense to many people. But the reality of our industry today, I think, is that there’s still a big gap between how important we know education about sustainable tourism is and how we are getting opportunities to be educated.

Educating people from the youth generations and the schools as a beginning is a key to helping us improve the status quo. Students that grow up in eco-schools that provide educational and practical resources will not only gain a deeper understanding of the environment where they live but also have valuable knowledge and skills to handle the social and environmental changes that will occur shortly. In addition, they can educate their families, friends, and people around them about the importance of sustainability through storytelling [5]. As millennials are playing a huge role in shaping the current economy, they can also utilize the power of media to help educate, engage, and inspire

travelers about responsible travel and create awareness of sustainable tourism. There are many ways we can make the world better. For now, we should continue to support international organizations such as FEE that have the mission to build platforms to allow members to join together to discuss matters and offer programs to teach us strategies that are mutually beneficial to both humans and the natural ecosystem.

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