

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONFERENCE: Analysis of Intellectual Curiosity

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Central Department of Environmental Science, Tribhuvan University (CDES/TU) in collaboration with Nepal Government, Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology (MoEST/GoN) held a three days (22-24 June 2007) National Environmental Conference. The conference was organized to buildup interaction, share knowledge and experiences among the scholars, policymaker's, institutions and implementer's on environmental issues to pave the way toward sustainable economic development.

Though environmentalism in Nepal dates back to seventies, a national level conference of this kind was organized for the first time in Nepal where crowd of multi disciplinary environment stewards gathered together to discuss on the concurrent environmental issues, challenges and prospects. Scholars from India, Pakistan and other Asian countries have also participated in the conference. Scholars had presented 59 different papers scheduled in ten different sessions for three days and each session was chaired by respective environmental field experts.

In this context, all the nature of papers presented by scholars was analyzed based on the environment disciplinary domain in order to know the trends in research interest and environmental science knowledge exploration among the scholar's in Nepal. The data was analyzed based on the topics of the paper presentation schedule of the National Environmental Conference (22-24 June, 2007). The papers were categorized into major disciplines of study by studying the topics of the presented papers and inferences were drawn.

Where was the major focus?

The papers presented during conference are divided into 5 broad disciplinary domain categories. They are; natural environment, urban environment, environment and technology, climatology and socio-economics & environmental policy. The percentage of each domain is

presented in figure 1. Around one third of the papers presented were in the natural environment domain. Just under a fifth of the papers presented were in environment and technology domain. The papers in urban environment & pollution and climatology domain were presented equally and constitute the 34 % of total papers presented. The least papers were presented to socio-economics & environmental policy domain in total.

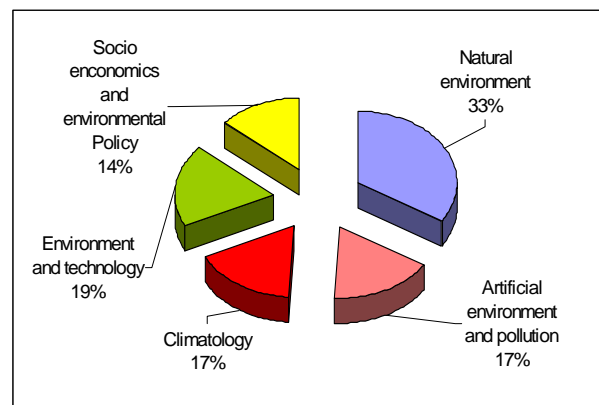


Figure 1. Percentage of papers presented during National Environmental Conference (22-24 June, 2007)

What were individual subject interests?

According to the nature of subject interest study, the papers were categorized into 13 different subjects. They are: Ecosystem, energy and technology, climate change, water pollution, species, environmental policy, solid waste technology, weather and climate, air pollution, socio economics, microbiology, pesticides and genetics. The percentage of each subject interest category is presented in figure 2.

Based on the of presented paper percentage, subject interests were categorized into high (> 10 %), medium (5- 10 %) and low (<5 %). The paper on subjects ecosystem, energy and technology and climate change were presented higher and constitutes 40.7 % of the total papers presented. Medium subject interests were on water pollution, species and environmental policy,

solid waste technology, weather and climate, air pollution, socio-economics and microbiology constituting 55.9 %. The subject interests on pesticides and genetics were least presented constituting only 3.4 %

What does this means?

Participation in the conference to deal with different environmental field and lab studies suggest that environment-related knowledge is happening in Nepal. Majority of papers dealt with the concurrent issues of natural and urban environment. The papers that were presented had indeed acknowledged that the academic community knows more about the actual state of affairs underlying the term “sustainable environment development” by bringing up the data that had been examined, sliced, grated, dissected, collated and interpreted.

Where should we go from here?

Researchers as well as decision makers should associate with each other. If we still stick on traditional practice of studying each problem in isolation, it is no longer suffice to devise narrow control or remediation strategies for what we yearn to achieve as sustainable economic development. As we continue to strive, our academic school of thoughts should gain more scientific certainty as a reason to postpone or prevent the threats of serious or irreversible damage to the environment. As an investigator accrue knowledge and clarifies succinctly our science based understanding of our environment, it will help inform decision makers. Only new knowledge can help decision makers to have thought over that the “right question is more important than producing the right answers”.

The principal audience who perch on the decision making tops, must understand in clarity about the decision that they make, perhaps restructure and reformulate to unite knowledge system as a means to guide them and to prioritize the complex domains of reality. Our drive to deal with uncertainty can be explored

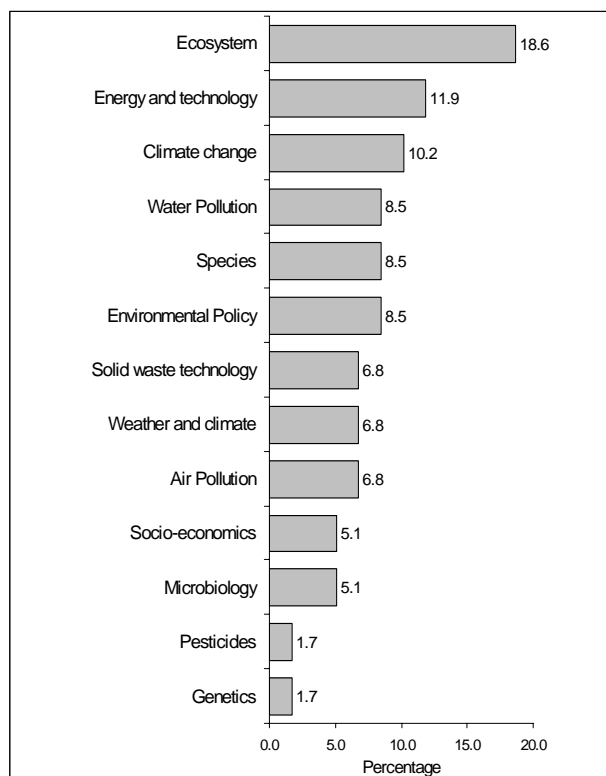


Figure 2. Percentage of paper submitted to specific area of study

more by problem driven experimentation, discovery and analysis with innovative research tools and practice of good science. Be it local issues or is related to global climate change, they must recognize unequivocally that a completely new set of approaches and environmental standards are necessary to define and implement the environmental research and development activities in current scenarios to inform themselves about the concurrent environmental issues.

Therefore, we must continue to explore new environmental science knowledge by understanding elements of its ethics and mechanism for its deliberation to our society. Only our intellectual curiosity and impetus to extend beyond disciplinary tradition can impart our knowledge to maintain the structure and function of the environment and our relationship with environment to craft our own sustainable economic future.

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