

# Differences on Natural Resource Management Themes between Mathematics and Science Textbooks in Public High Schools

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**Abstract-** Textbooks are among the main instructional materials in educational systems. It is just necessary to study its contents more particularly on nowadays relevant issues concerning natural resource management. Our environment has been confronted with many pressing problems and the endeavors from the government and non-government organizations to help solve these concerns still remain inadequate. There is a need to go down at the very roots of the problem--the low level of knowledge on natural resource-based education. In schools, textbooks are being used as an opportunity for increasing the awareness among the young, particularly on natural resource management topics. Hence, this comparison study on Natural Resource Management (NRM) themes between Mathematics and Science textbooks was conducted. It aimed to compare the frequency of occurrence and the presentation of NRM themes between textbooks of these two subjects in public high schools. Tallies on the occurrence of the NRM themes and their presentations were done manually. Results showed that Natural Environment Conservation theme had the highest occurrence among all NRM themes. Science textbooks were found to contain more NRM themes compared to Mathematics textbooks. On the other hand, the presentation of themes was mostly in the form of essay and "picture and slogan". Presentation of NRM themes in Science textbooks was more varied compared to Mathematics textbooks. Test of significant difference on the occurrence of NRM themes and their forms of presentation between Mathematics and Science textbooks revealed significant differences. These suggest that Science textbooks are playing its role on NRM education to the students more than the Mathematics textbooks. In general, at the grade level category, the analyzed textbooks contained only few articles with NRM themes and the presentation of these themes were less variable. It is desirable that these textbooks carry more NRM themes to substantiate their role of creating awareness on NRM education among the students.

**Keywords-** Content Analysis, Themes, Textbooks, Natural Resource Management, Awareness, Public schools, Sustainable education

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Content analysis is a systematic, objective, and quantitative method for studying communication messages and developing inference concerning the relationship between messages and their environment [1]. Dated to the late 1600s, content analysis has evolved into a common scientific research method used by various disciplines like psychology, sociology, and politics [2]. In the education sector, many printed communication materials offered new study objects to content analysis research. Book contents are the most interesting to investigate.

There are various themes that can be analyzed in books. With the global concerns on environment, natural

resource management themes should be prioritized. Today, the world confronts many natural resource base and environmental issues. Based on the Department of Environmental and Natural Resource's report, such issues include land degradation, deforestation, desertification, air pollution, solid waste generation and disposal, coastal pollution, loss of water quality, urbanization, and natural disaster.

For instance, in the Asia Pacific Region, statistics show that 850 million hectares of land had some degree of degradation; about 250 million people live within 100 km of coast line; forest cover is declining at a rate of 1% per year; 50-70% of mangrove stands lost to aquaculture; irrigation

water in Asia accounts for 80-85% of total fresh water needs; ground water abstraction exceeded causing saline intrusion. The Philippines, likewise, has its own share of problems related to natural resource management, which includes land or soil dilapidation, deforestation, impairment of water resources, and marine and coastal degradation.

Aware of the negative impacts of these problems, concerned sectors have exerted efforts to reverse the degradation of the natural resource base. In the Philippines, for instance, the government, in cooperation with non-government and people's organizations, is implementing projects on social forestry, anti-pollution campaigns, reforestation, and timber stand improvements. Likewise, the church and the academic community lobby for policies that can promote the maintenance of functional ecosystems.

However, governmental, non-governmental, and organizational endeavors to help solve natural resource base degradation and environmental problems still remain inadequate. There is a fierce cry to go down at the very roots of the problem--the low level of knowledge on natural resource base education.

Undeniably, the school is the primary venue of a structured education on natural resource management. In addition, textbooks are among the main instructional materials in educational systems. However, the question is whether the school textbooks are being used as an opportunity for increasing the awareness among the young and mobilizing them into action. Hence, this study was conducted.

The study aimed to analyze and compare the Natural Resource Management (NRM) themes and the presentations of these themes in the Mathematics and Science textbooks of public high schools.

## **2 METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Research Design**

A qualitative approach was used in the analysis of Natural Resource Management (NRM) themes contained in Mathematics and Science textbooks of public high schools. This was also used in determining the presentation of the NRM themes. A quantitative approach, on the other hand, was applied in determining the occurrence of the NRM themes and its presentations.

### **2.2 Books Used and the Natural Resource Management Themes and Presentations**

The researcher used grades 7-10 Mathematics and Science textbooks in public high schools for content analyses. In the content analyses, a validated guide on the different NRM themes was used. The themes were soil and water management, forest conservation, wildlife conservation, water resource management, mineral conservation, plant conservation, marine life conservation, natural environment conservation, energy conservation, and biodegradable conservation. For the presentation of the different NRM themes, classification was based on genres. These included short story, play, fable, essay, legend, myth, poem, picture and slogan, comics, diagram, dialogue, letter, speech, paragraph, epic, story, and video.

### **2.3 Data Gathering Procedure and Statistical Analysis Used**

In determining the number of NRM themes in the textbooks, the NRM themes were categorized into specific areas—e.g. soil and water conservation, water conservation, forest conservation, environmental conservation, etc. and the frequency counts of specific NRM themes contained in Mathematics and Science textbooks were determined.

Determining the number of presentations used in portraying every NRM theme, however, was done by (1) categorizing the NRM themes as to the type of presentation to which it falls under—e.g. short story, fable, legend,

essay, poem, etc. and (2) determining the frequency counts of the presentations.

To test the significant difference between Mathematics and Science textbooks on the NRM themes and their presentations, a t-test was applied between two independent variables using the online T-Test Calculator software [3].

### 3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Differences on the Occurrence of the NRM Themes between Mathematics and Science Textbooks

A total of 87 articles were analyzed containing the NRM themes both in Mathematics and Science textbooks of public high schools (Table 1). It can be gleaned from the table that Natural Environment Conservation theme had the highest occurrence among all NRM themes (23 articles).

All of the articles under this theme originated from the Science textbooks. High occurrence of this theme can be due to the fact that it involves all aspects about the physical surroundings. It tackles everything that is related to the natural environment, what we see and experience in our daily lives, that is why, it is not difficult to write about the conservation of the natural environment due to its being a broad field. According to Smith et al. [4], natural environment has been considered important for human health. In fact, in Europe, a systematic review of evidence for the added benefits to health exposure to natural environments was conducted [5].

Table 1. Differences on the occurrence of NRM themes between Mathematics and Science textbooks.

Grade Level	Subjects	Natural Resource Management Themes										TOTAL	
		Soil and Water Mgt.	Forest Conservation	Wildlife Conservation	Water Resource Mgt.	Mineral Conservation	Plant Conservation	Marine Life Conservation	Natural Environment Conservation	Energy Conservation	Biodegradable Conservation		
7	Mathematics	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Science	5	1	0	2	5	0	1	9	1	1	1	25
<i>p</i> -value		0.007**											
8	Mathematics	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Science	1	1	0	0	0	2	2	1	0	0	0	7
<i>p</i> -value		0.008**											
9	Mathematics	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
	Science	0	2	6	3	9	2	4	8	1	0	0	35
<i>p</i> -value		0.002**											
10	Mathematics	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Science	1	3	2	2	0	0	2	5	1	1	1	17
<i>p</i> -value		0.002**											
Total	Mathematics	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	3
	Science	7	7	8	7	14	4	9	23	3	2	2	84
<i>p</i> -value		0.000**											
GRAND TOTAL		7	9	8	7	14	4	9	23	3	3	3	87

ns- not significant; \* significant at 5% confidence level; \*\* significant at 1% confidence level

In Mathematics textbooks, only Forest Conservation (2 articles) and Biodegradable Conservation

(1 article) were observed. More articles for Forest Conservation can be due to many products that have been

and can be extracted from forest-based resources such as timber. The forest has long been exploited and the concept of forest conservation is not a new one; hence, many articles have been written about its conservation. Furthermore, many people have discovered the important role of forests in people's lives such as the protection it provides them in times of natural calamities like flood, typhoon and many others. Forest conservation topic has been a global talk because of the rapid clearing and concomitant biodiversity loss [6], [7] and climate change concerns [8], [9].

Biodegradable Conservation has the lowest number of NRM themes (3 articles). This was also observed in Science textbooks (2 articles). This is quite alarming considering that students should always be reminded on recycling concepts and practices. The school should take part even at least on the awareness level because globally, there is a need to focus on solid waste reuse and recycling [10]. The appreciation on recycling of plastic solid wastes [11] and on animal waste treatment and recycling technology [12] are just two of the many "biodegradable conservation" practices that should be developed by the students.

Energy conservation also occurred least among all NRM themes (3 articles). Like any other themes, energy conservation should be given importance considering today's fast pace on technology advancement. Energy conservation has an impact on technology and economic growth [13]. There is a constant and unchanging relationship between gross energy consumption and Gross National Product [14]. It is also worth to note regarding about energy conservation policies [15], and this should be started in households [16] [17].

In all books across grade levels, more of the NRM themes occurred in Science than in Mathematics textbooks. There were significant differences on the occurrence of

NRM themes between Mathematics and Science textbooks in all grade levels. A significant difference was also observed looking at the overall NRM themes between the two subjects ( $p$ -value = 0.000). The significant differences observed imply that Science textbooks are incorporating topics related to NRM themes that are significantly frequent than those observed in Mathematics textbooks. Hence, Science textbooks are playing its role on NRM education more than Mathematics textbooks.

At a grade level category, most of the NRM themes were observed to occur rarely in the Mathematics textbooks of public high schools. In Grade 7 and 8, none of the NRM themes occurred. This is opposite when it comes to Science textbooks as all NRM themes were represented looking at the overall themes representation from grades 7 to 10. The observations suggest that Science textbooks gave more importance on educating students on NRM themes compared to Mathematics textbooks in public high schools.

### **3.2 Differences on the Presentation of NRM Themes between Mathematics and Science Textbooks**

Among the 17 presentations used to portray NRM themes, essay ranks first (35 articles: Table 2). This shows that essay is appropriate for better explanation of topics that talk about NRM. It gives good opportunity to include as many sentences as possible in order to fully discuss the themes. The use of essay allows authors to express point of view on a matter [18], and this is more advantageous to many writers. In fact, most of the book reviews are in a form of essay. Example to this is the study conducted by Mizruchi [19].

Picture and slogan ranks second (28 articles), and was the only form of NRM presentation evident in Mathematics textbooks. Perhaps "picture and slogan" is an easy way of explaining various concepts in the subjects. Though it provides shorter phrases or simple sentences to

describe or explain a particular theme, pictures could reveal more of its thought to the readers. According to Sadiq [20], using photographs for explaining complex phenomena is one of the teaching aids of modern education system all over the world. Visual aids have the tendency to materialize the thoughts of students in the form of graphics to give thoughts a concrete frame of reference. In a related study, text with pictures can help to improve students' reading comprehension especially those with hearing impairment [21].

In general, Science textbooks were more variable in the presentation of the NRM themes compared to Mathematics textbooks (Table 2). Across grade levels, there was a significant difference in the forms of presentation on NRM themes between two textbooks ( $p$ -value = 0.036). This suggests that the presentation of NRM themes in Science textbooks can help better in educating students on NRM themes compared to Mathematics textbooks. This is also true at the grade level category wherein Science textbooks

at grade levels 7 and 9 were significantly variable in presenting the NRM themes compared to Mathematics textbooks.

On the other hand, no significant differences were found in the presentation of NRM themes between two textbooks at grade levels 8 and 10. This implies that presentations of NRM themes in Science and Mathematics textbooks are comparable with each other. The contribution of the variability on the presentation of NRM themes to NRM education for the students in both textbooks is generally equal.

Generally, presentations of NRM themes in both textbooks represented only 29.41% from the 17 different forms. This can be because there are genres that are either not applicable or difficult to present in the two subjects like for example in short story, play, fable, myth, story and epic.

Table 2. Differences on the presentation of NRM themes between Mathematics and Science textbooks.

Grade Level	Subjects	Presentation of Natural Resource Management Themes																	TOTAL	
		Short Story	Play	Fable	Essay	Legend	Myth	Poem	Picture and Slogan	Comics	Diagram	Dialogue	Letter	Speech	Paragraph	Story	Epic	Video		
7	Mathematics	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Science	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	7	0	5	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	25
<i>p</i> -value		0.019*																		
8	Mathematics	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Science	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
<i>p</i> -value		0.097 <sup>ns</sup>																		
9	Mathematics	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
	Science	0	0	0	13	0	0	0	13	0	7	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	35
<i>p</i> -value		0.042*																		
10	Mathematics	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Science	0	0	0	9	0	0	0	3	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	17
<i>p</i> -value		0.064 <sup>ns</sup>																		
Total	Mathematics	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
	Science	0	0	0	35	0	0	0	25	0	17	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	1	84

<i>p</i> -value	0.036*																	
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	0	0	0	35	0	0	0	28	0	17	0	0	0	6	0	0	1	87

*ns*- not significant; \* significant at 5% confidence level; \*\* significant at 1% confidence level

#### 4 CONCLUSION

The findings of the study showed that Science textbooks are playing its role on NRM education more than Mathematics textbooks. This was supported by the significant differences in the occurrence and presentation of NRM themes between two textbooks across grade levels. Science textbooks were incorporating topics related to NRM themes that were significantly frequent than those observed in Mathematics textbooks. Further, the presentation of these NRM themes in Science textbooks was significantly varied compared to those observed in Mathematics textbooks.

#### 5 RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the findings of this study, book editors and authors need to re-examine their textbook policies to spot provisions that tend to hinder publication of natural resource management articles especially in the Mathematics textbooks of public high schools. Science textbooks, on the other hand, need more NRM articles looking at the grade level category. With their wide scope and coverage, it is desirable that these textbooks carry more natural resource management themes in their articles and present them in-depth. With these suggestions, the Mathematics and Science textbooks in public high schools can very well substantiate their roles of creating awareness among the students and subsequently mobilizing them for action.

Further study is suggested to include in depth qualitative analysis of NRM themes by conducting interviews to students who have been using the analyzed

books in the present study. Other themes that are within the textbooks of public schools, including those used in the elementary levels are also very important to look into.

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