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Environmental Policies in the UK

Environmental Policies in the United Kingdom

Policies are made to put limitations and control over various actions of the people. These are regulations that aim to promote a high standard of practices so as to improve the normal systems and processes of the society. Thus, it is the government, along with its agencies that create policies to provide such order. The United Kingdom, for an instance, has many policies and one of which is the environmental policies that aim to reduce the environmental issues such pollution. UK also aims to reduce the amount of waste in order to protect the marine biodiversity as well as the wild life reserves. All of these are achievable by through strict enforcement of policies to preserve the environment.

Overview of the UK's Environmental Issues and Policies

The Environmental Action Program was established in 1973 and it is focused on protecting the environment (Hey, n. d.). It was claimed that the actions in protecting the environment will be more successful with the help of the community. This program includes various objectives such as reduction, prevention, and containment of damages to the environment, ecological equilibrium conservation, and the rational use of the natural resources. This primary approach has been more focused on how the government can convince people to do their part in protecting the environment by engaging the community's participation.

Moreover, this program also gave emphasis to the need for broad assessment of the effects of the other governmental policies so as to avoid

activities that will further damage the environment. That is why; this first program was one of the reasons that the term “ sustainable development” was created (Hey, n. d.).

During the early 1980s, there have been some changes that were made to the policies concerning the protection of the environment. It was the era, to which both benefits and risks were considered in relation to the internal market. Therefore, both the policies and the internal market became the key drivers when it comes to programming and activities (Hey, n. d.). For example, the standards of environmental emissions must be harmonized so as to prevent distortions to the competitiveness of the industries. In effect, the approach to the environmental policy has changed and modified to become more beneficial to both the industries and the environment. In fact, the EAP or the Environmental Protection Program has been modified number of times. In the late 1990s, modification of such policy has been formulated to fit with the socio-economic and environmental needs.

Some of the innovative elements of the EAP modification aim to address the issues through sectoral approach that incorporates an environmental aspect into the sectors that contribute to the pollution such as the energy, transport, as well as the agriculture sectors (Hey, n. d.). The constant changes in people’s lives affect many aspects of the environment such as lifestyle and basic needs. In relation, these changes are affecting the way how people utilize the natural resources, to which unwanted environmental exploitation might occur. For example, the transportation sector holds a potential contribution to the pollution and the increase in energy demands that will also trigger the increase the energy production through various

ways that will negatively affect the environment. Therefore, the modification of this early environmental program is an ideal approach of the government in order to address the growing threat against the environment.

Few years after the last modification of the EAP, several strategies were developed in order to address new environmental challenges. There were new issues that captured the attention of the legislators, which lead to the new strategies and policies to address the environmental issues. The legislations became more focused in protecting the water or the drinking water directive (Hey, n. d.). Additionally, the policy also included the waste management approach such as the promotion of recycle and reuse systems as well as the procedural law like the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive (Hey, n. d.).

It is therefore ideal that the UK government's approaches to modify the existing policies are needed, not only to sustain the environment, but also to avoid further damage. Further damages to the environment are threat not only to the wildlife, but also to the people that depend on its sustainability. For instance, the waste management approach, which must be part of the UK's environmental policy could prevent or reduce air pollution that may affect people's health. In addition, the reuse and recycle system can be used to reduce the cost of producing non-biodegradable materials.

Throughout the history of UK's environmental policy, it is agreeable that such modifications of early policies have been done. In this sense, the people will be aware that the government understands the essence of addressing the environmental issues. In an ethical view, the environmental issues that hold threats to the environment must be avoided through creation of

adequate policies that will be beneficial to both the environment and the society.

UK As a Member of the EU

The United Kingdom has been a member of the European Union (EU), to which some of its current environmental policies may have been influenced by the latter. Thus, the EU legislation contributed in shaping the UK's policies, specifically, its environmental policies. Being a member of the EU had an insightful effect on UK's environmental policy (Burns, n. d.). In fact, such membership may have also changed the United Kingdom from being the “ Dirty Man of Europe” during the 1980s, which was one of the unwanted reputations of the UK. Consequently, being a member of the EU provided an innovative effect upon the UK's policy in protecting the environment. As part of EU membership, UK's environmental policy has been the reason of the government's re-organization when it comes to the implementation.

The creation of new environmental policies also prompted the introduction of new agencies that focus on addressing the environmental issues (Burns, n. d.). One of the agencies that were created was the National Rivers Authority and along with this, there has been an adoption of emission limits through clear judicial processes in order to support the policy implementation.

Relatively, these priorities and policies concerning the protection of the environment are those that have developed via the European Union.

These policies that were created through the influence of European Union may have benefited the UK such as the bathing water directive from the EU. This policy changed the method sewage treatment as well as the releases of nitrates. As part of the outcomes, the quality of water along the beaches and

the water used for bathing has improved.

This approach is not just a mere action to protect the beach waters, but in effect, clean beaches hold an attractive opportunity to encourage tourists, which will then improve the local economy. The issue of water pollution is a threat that UK policies must address. However, it is not always a good practice to depend the UK's environmental policy on the EU's directives. The UK government must create its own policies on how it sees the environmental issues as threat to UK people. Thus, addressing it using its own approach could be a win-win situation, which will benefit both the people and the environment.

Impacts of Addressing Environmental Issues

As mentioned, the environmental policies of the UK have been shaped by being a member of the European Union. Other member nations are in coordination when it comes to identifying the adequate directives and policies that will support the overall environmental protection. Therefore, the UK's environmental policies also cover the potential effects of environmental issues to the neighboring countries. One good example of this policy approach is the European Parliament's support to the directive that will protect the birds, not only in specific country, but in whole Europe. The United Kingdom is also one of the enthusiastic members of EU that supports this directive. The impacts are more likely to benefit the environment and the wildlife. On the other hand this is not just a simple cause and effect situation, to which the United Kingdom is involved.

The United Kingdom's environmental policies provided some significant effects. There were various environmental issues that were addressed in the

United Kingdom (IEEP, 2013). Thus, the other neighboring countries that are also EU members benefited from the UK's environmental policies. One of the best examples, which were also mentioned earlier, is the improvement of sewage system. The sludge that was previously disposed in the North Sea had stopped and the use of pesticides was improved by intensive testing of chemical products for crop protection prior its availability in the market. The United Kingdom has also participated in the global negotiations against climate change, to which the policies and approaches will not be as effective if being done alone by a specific nation. In fact, this UK approach has benefited the UK citizens as well as it is considered a global achievement (IEEP 2013).

Our stance on the environmental issues such as the disposing of sludge in the North Sea is a serious issue that was addressed by both the UK and EU's efforts. It was good that such actions were prevented as it holds threat to marine wildlife. It is essential to understand the logic of this environmental issue approach as it can be a global issue if not prevented. For instance, once the marine wildlife is negatively affected, the amount of fish catch might also be affected. This will reduce the amount of fish being caught for commercial purposes, to which the fishermen's profit is affected and the fish industry as a whole. That is why; the policies that protect the sea water are holistic approach that protects both the marine life and the economic advantages it provides.

Furthermore, the improved test of crop pesticides is another part of the UK's environmental policies that have multiple positive effects such as the protection of farmers against the chemical's potential harmful effects. It also

ensures that such chemicals will not harm the pollinating insects' health.

They may be a small part of the environment, but they have a big responsibility in sustaining the ecological balance.

More importantly, the environmental policies of the United Kingdom have impacts on the environment itself. One of the policies that affect the environment is the Bird Directive (IEEP 2013). This policy had a significant contribution when it comes to protecting the bird species that are considered at risk of extinction. These species need to be protected through policy creation that will focus on improving their population. Another policy is the Marine and Coastal Access Act of 2009 (IEEP 2013), which includes planning, licensing, and management of marine protected areas. However, this policy's scope is broader in a sense that improved environmental status must be achieved all throughout the United Kingdom's marine ecosystem.

It is therefore ideal that these policies and regulations have been in effect as they will provide further improvement on the protection of the ecosystems.

With such policies, wastes will not be disposed to improper areas that might cause both water and air pollution.

Economic Impacts of Policies against Environmental Issues

The United Kingdom's environmental policies have different effects on the economy. That is because; protecting the environment is not a single approach that affects the environment, but also the external aspects such as the different industries and the economy as a whole. The primary objective of UK's environmental policies is to make sure that there is a proper management of natural environment and for it to be utilized sustainably. In that sense, the society may receive many benefits from the natural

environment, which can be used as inputs to the activities in the economy. In return, the policies that address the environmental issues could be the driver of individuals' well-being as well as quality of life in its own right (Everett et al., 2010).

The UK's environmental policy holds benefits for investment and innovation (Everett et al., 2010). For instance, the environmental policy plays an important role in incentivizing the technological progress. There are policies that aimed to ensure that environmental inputs will be priced correctly, which more likely to spur industries to innovate so as to reduce their costs. On the other hand, such policies may affect the competitiveness and productivity of other businesses. For example, new technologies and business operation processes are required to comply with these environmental policies, which can be less efficient in terms of using market inputs. In that sense, the productivity of the business could be affected and their competitiveness will be reduced.

Recommended Approach in addressing the Environmental Issues

The United Kingdom must be able to integrate their environmental policies and their economic decision-making (OECD, n. d.). Since the UK has a long experience when it comes to economic development's effect to the environment, proper integration of economic, environmental and sectoral policies must be formulated accordingly. The current mechanisms for sectoral and economic policy should be utilized more fully, to which a stronger environmental competency must be developed within the non-environmental government agencies. In this case, there will be a chance that

the environmental appraisal can be part of every level of policymaking.

The policy makers must only focus on the economic and sectoral aspects of the policies being created, but they must also consider any potential effects of such laws to the environment, whether it is good or otherwise.

Furthermore, there should be more work when it comes to economic costs and benefits of the government's environmental programs, the environmental effects of sectoral and economic policies.

Conversely, the United Kingdom has moved towards the implementation of IPC or the Integrated Pollution Control, which aims to reduce the environmental issues' burden. With this policy's major components, environmental management can be done extensively through pointing out the large source of pollution. Generally, the UK's approach in addressing the environmental issues must continue through continuous development of new strategies on how to reduce the effects of such issues. On a broader view, the UK's environmental policies must benefit the environment, the local economies, and the society as a whole.

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