



ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND ITS NEED AT DIFFERENT LEVELS

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Abstract

Every nation aims to reach at a state of development because of the benefit therein to be enjoyed within and outside the state. Yet, many nations are undergoing the process of development because of all that it entails for nation building and national development. Hence, this paper focused on the Importance of Environmental Education. It also discussed Environmental Education (EE) as a key to creating environmental consciousness/awareness, empowerment and participation. We need to raise good stewards of the environment to care for issues like resource depletion, environmental pollution, land degradation, and accelerating species extinctions. Conservation efforts will benefit when we can better educate children on their connection to and dependency upon nature. This paper discusses environmental education (EE) as a key to creating environmental consciousness / awareness in pupils / students in their early educational career. 'Incomplete' education could lead to ignorance of some important issues pertaining to global and regional concerns. The rapid societal transition with its 'positive' and 'negative' effects is enough of a scenario for the stimulation of global re-orientation of education and reduction of apathy especially in the developing world. The spiritual connection to the Earth teaches children that they are a part of nature and must take care of both their surroundings and other people.



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“In the long term, the economy and the environment are the same thing. If it is Un-environmental it is uneconomical. That is the rule of nature” - Mollie Beattie

Introduction

Environment literally means surrounding and everything that affect an organism during its lifetime is collectively known as its environment. In another words “Environment is sum total of water, air and land interrelationships among themselves and also with the human being, other living organisms and property”. It includes all the physical and biological surrounding and their interactions.

According to Oxford dictionary the environment is the surrounding objects, circumstances of life of person or society. So environment consists of land, atmosphere and the water, it can further said that the total ecosystem, i.e, the dependence of Biotic and Abiotic constitutes of environment.”

Scope of Environmental Science

Environmental science is a multidisciplinary science whose basic aspects have a direct relevance to every section of the society. Its main aspects are:

- Conservation of nature and natural resources.
- Conservation of biological diversity.
- Control of environmental pollution.
- Stabilization of human population and environment.
- Social issues in relation to development and environment.
- Development of non-polluting renewable energy system and providing new dimension to nation's security.

Importance of Environmental Science

Environment belongs to all the living beings and thus is, important for all. Each and every body of whatever occupation he or she may have is affected by environmental issues like global warming, depletion of ozone layer, dwindling forest, energy resources, loss of global biodiversity etc. Environment study deals with the analysis of the processes in water, air, land, soil and organisms which leads to pollute or degrade environment. Education should be given to save environment, otherwise it will destroy society and mankind.

Environmental Education

Environmental Education (EE) is a process in which individuals gain awareness of their environment and acquire knowledge, skills, values, experiences, and also the determination, which will enable them to act - individually and collectively - to solve present and future environmental problems.

Environmental education is aimed at producing a citizenry that is knowledgeable concerning the biophysical environment and its associated problems, aware of how to help solve these problems, and motivated to work toward their solution. Environmental education, properly understood, should constitute a comprehensive lifelong education, one responsive to changes in a rapidly changing world. It should prepare the individual for life through an understanding of the major problems of the contemporary world, and the provision of skills and attributes needed to play a productive role towards improving life and protecting the environment with due regard given to ethical values. (UNESCO, 1977)

According to UNESCO (1971), the objectives of environmental studies are:

- (a) Creating the awareness about environmental problems among people.
- (b) Imparting basic knowledge about the environment and its allied problems.
- (c) Developing an attitude of concern for the environment.

- (d) Motivating public to participate in environment protection and environment improvement.
- (e) Acquiring skills to help the concerned individuals in identifying and solving environmental problems.
- (f) Striving to attain harmony with Nature.

Environment is interwoven with man's life, the environmental education should therefore, include environment in its totality-natural and built up, in an interdisciplinary problem-solving approach. Coming to the contribution of Education, Environmental education has acquired popularity throughout the world from about 1972.

The Finnish National Commission in a seminar held in 1974 he said:“Environmental education is a way of implementing the goals of environmental protection. Environmental education is not a separate branch of science or subject of study; it should be carried out according to the principle of lifelong integral Education”

Successful environmental education focuses on processes that promote critical thinking, problem solving, and effective decision-making skills. Environmental education utilizes processes that involve students in observing, measuring, classifying, experimenting, and other data gathering techniques. These processes assist students in discussing, inferring, predicting, and interpreting data about environmental issues.

Environmental education is not environmental information. It is often geared toward the general public instead of targeting a specific group or audience. Information can be very useful to the highly motivated individual who is concerned about a specific topic or issue and can be a critical element of environmental education.

Environmental education is not environmental advocacy. Quality environmental education concentrates on the educational process. It is non-biased and science-based. Environmental educators may consider themselves environmental advocates in their personal lives. However, in their role as environmental educator they must remain neutral; there is no room for personal beliefs to take center stage. It is important for environmental educators to remember which role they are in when working with an audience.

Environmental problems and issues are complex and there are not simple answers. Often there are many possible solutions or no obvious solution at all. It is through the processes of quality environmental education that students can sort through the frequently biased, emotional, and propagandized elements of environmental issues, weighing various sides of an issue in order to make informed, balanced, and responsible decisions.

The ultimate of Environmental education is to formulate a responsible attitude towards the sustainable development of planet earth, an appreciation of its beauty and assumption of an environmental ethic.

The aims and objectives of environmental education are:

- (A) Improving the quality of environment.
- (B) Creating awareness among people on environmental problems and conservation.
- (C) Creating such an atmosphere as people find themselves fit enough to participate in decision making process of environmental development programmes.
- (D) To foster clear awareness and concern about economic, social, political and ecological interdependence in Urban and rural areas
- (E) To create new patterns of behaviour of individuals, groups and society as a whole towards the environment
- (F) To help social groups and individuals acquire awareness and sensitivity to the total environmental and its allied problems.
- (G) To help social groups and individuals gain a variety of experiences in and acquire a basic understanding of the environment and its associated problems.
- (H) To help social groups and individuals acquire a set of values and feelings of concern for the environment and motivation for actively participation in environmental improvement and protection.
- (I) To help social groups and individuals acquire skills for identifying and solving environmental problems.
- (J) To help individuals and social groups to evaluate environmental measures and education programs in terms of ecological, economic, social, aesthetic and educational factors.

Environmental education focuses on:

- Engaging with citizens of all demographics to
- Think critically, ethically, and creatively when evaluating environmental issues;
- Make educated judgments about those environmental issues;
- Develop skills and a commitment to act independently and collectively to sustain and enhance the environment; and,
- To enhance their appreciation of the environment; resulting in positive environmental behavioural change (Bamberg & Moeser, 2007; Wals et al, 2014).

Need and Importance of Environmental Education at different levels:

In the past, little attention was given to education in relation to a growing awareness of environmental problems and development. That is to say that the societal transition now ‘as a result of science and technology and its _adverse‘effect on the environment called for attention on Environmental Education in relation to moderating such problems. The concept of environment education emerged from the Stockholm Conference organized by the United nations in 1972. Recommendations of the conference emphasized organization of ‘formal’ and ‘mass’ environmental education programs. Educating the people at large about environment and its components would develop critical thinking analytical and problemsolving skills in them. It would develop knowledge and insight to improve quality of human life on earth

According to Ogueri (2004), Environmental Education is concerned with the quality of human environment for healthy development as well as for healthy life. It seeks to improve the quality of the realized perpetual environment, develop understanding of the influences which restrict or modify it, by raising the quality of information and improving the capacity of acting responsibly with it, and by heightening aesthetic awareness, improving sensitivity to its less tangible qualities and develop creative responsiveness. According to the Annual Report (2004-2005) of the Ministry of Environment and Forest, the Government of India can be defined as ‘a process of recognizing values and clarifying concepts in order to develop skills and added tools necessary to understand and appreciate the interrelationships among man, his culture and his biophysical surroundings.’ Through this definition, it is clear that environmental education can play a most significant role in building Awareness about- the relation between modern development and environment; and the impact of developmental practices on the surrounding environment among masses, if imparted properly. It is the educations which can enable a person know about everything. Environmental education is a learning process that increases people's knowledge and awareness about the environment and associated challenges, develops the necessary skills and expertise to address the challenges, and fosters attitudes, motivations, and commitments to make informed decisions and take responsible action (UNESCO, Tbilisi Declaration, 1978). The concept of environmental education emerged only in the seventies which were called as the decade of environmental education. During that period the world realized that environmental concerns and awareness could be spread only through a mass environment education program.

The child socializes with the immediate environment and later with the extended environment. The values that are indirectly assimilated by the child are transferred to the demanding society (Obasoro, Ogungbemi and Adu-Peters, 2010). From the above assertions, it could be seen that environment and human being depend on each other for survival. Thus,

any education 'outside the environment lacks a solid foundation and can be likened to _a tea without sugar'. Man, is expected to take action on environmental quality for the future, and even for generations unborn. Moreover, Ilesanmi (2006), stated that Environmental Education (EE) calls for the inevitable need of empowerment right from youth and without Environmental Education (EE) in schools, the enhancement of empowerment with regard to world decision-making and/or problem solving (especially in the issues of global challenges – which have much to do with environmental issues) might be farfetched.

Environmental education helps the learner to perceive and understand environmental principles and problems that enable them to identify and evaluate problems and assess their benefits and risk. Environmental education includes conservation of natural resources and everything that related man to his environment. Environmental education is a lifelong process. It should not merely at imparting knowledge and understanding of environment and its methods and their application for improving, but it should also aims at inculcating skills, attitudes and value necessary to understand to appreciate and improve our biosphere. In facts the MHRD had also been interacting with the University Grant Commission (UGC) to take appropriate steps for the inclusion of environmental education at the University Levels. After the directives issued by Hon'ble Supreme Court of India, the MHRD as well as State Departments of HRD have included the environmental education as a separate and compulsory subject in the education curricula framed by NCERT, at all levels of formal education, that is at primary, Secondary, Senior Secondary and College levels. Teaching of environmental education can be an important vehicle

Environmental Education in Children Childhood is perhaps the age that fathers the most important memories in a person's life. Most adults retain and unconsciously use information commencing from upbringing experiences. It is during this early stage where personality begins to take form. Almost everything that children learn is provided in different ways by the outside world. The natural environment is a significant component in this learning process. Children are very emotional and sensitive about everything they learn. They can easily be attracted or repelled by any topic. Environmental education must not be presented to them with a sense of doom or disaster so they don't avoid or dislike it. If they feel the natural world is a universe of problems they might not want to deal with it at all. Children should be given a chance to bond with the natural world before they are asked to heal it. Kids learn better when they focus first on local issues and globalize after.

The younger generations, students are the effective media to bring enormous changes in the society and hence educating about the environment to the young minds is the right step and

also this is the right time for the same. In many of the conferences it was presumed that in order to solve environmental problems, it was necessary, besides the technical and scientific solutions that everybody adopted a different behaviour towards the environment. Developing a 'responsible environmental behaviour' became one of the tasks of environmental education. Unfortunately changing behaviour through environmental education confirmed itself as a difficult task. A communication approach can give us a new perspective of responsible environmental behaviour. It allows us to consider it not only from the individual perspective but also from a social perspective. Many environmental education researchers and practitioners consecrate themselves to understand the responsible environmental behaviour in order to improve environmental education. The 'responsible environmental behaviour' is defined as "the whole of actions of an individual within the society, that takes into account, in a conscious way, the perennial and harmonious relationship between these actions and environment". Communication is a way of approaching and explaining processes in society and it can be defined as "the exchange processes among the individual and group members of a given society".

Conclusion

In a world where it is increasingly challenging to get students interested in classroom lessons, EE offers an enriching way for both students and teachers to connect their appreciation of the natural world to academics. Environmental Education has been explored and has been seen to touch all areas of life one can think of, man is to environment and environment is to man. Environmental Education should be introduced to all levels of education and students in higher institutions should be made to take the course as one of the general courses. There should be environmental literacy in which every citizen should be fluent in the principles of ecology and should have a "Working knowledge of environmental wisdom". Environmental Education boils down to one profoundly important imperative: preparing ourselves for life in the next generation.

It requires that every discipline include environmental component in each major course. Environmental literacy is not the responsibility of a single discipline or a few disciplines but of all disciplines. To accomplish this, substantial faculty retaining is necessary. In this process, especially environmental related courses must be included in the educational programs such as 'Environmental Education'. Because, teachers who teach these subjects feel themselves limited between applied sciences and biology courses and also they feel irresponsible to teach such a subject because they are not trained to teach it. And therefore, teachers are failing to develop environmental literacy because they are not incorporating

environmental concepts ecological principles into the subjects they are teaching). It could be useful to gather environmental subjects in the biology and applied science books in order to teach them in detail and to give conscious. It is better to teach them as a separate course and it helps the problems disappear. The teachers play an important role in teaching environmental-based concepts (Khalid, 2003). But, as stated, if there is an urge to do something for the environment, the teachers will try to teach environmental education despite the barriers. There is no doubt that India is not the only country in the developing world insufficient environmental education is in action. Lack of environmental knowledge in curricula is obvious in many countries. The results of globalization have been closely noticed in every passing day. For this reason, all people around the world have been affected by all the activities related to environment, either positive or negative. However, it is known that environmental pollution and degradation of the natural balance cause many undesired natural events. So it is crucial to enlighten people about the environmental problems and to bring up with environmental conscious through environmental education. It is important to make the pupils conscious in such an educational environment. In summary, it is urgent to give the necessary training both to the students in school and the people in society. It is stated that if the students do not have the proper knowledge and understanding of causes and effects of these environmental issues, it will be very hard for them to make correct decisions in the future to reduce and control these problems (Khalid, 2003). Thus, environmental education for whole society and citizen is crucial for human life and world life. And also, as stated by Tuncer and colleagues (2005), it is not forgotten that translate theoretical knowledge into environmental attitudes will help very much in constructing an environmental education strategy. Because, to know is not enough, to apply is also necessary. Everybody must not forget that we have one world.

Recommendations:

- 1) Lack of adequate environmental knowledge can play a big role as an obstacle towards achieving a sustainable future for humankind at both global and local scales. Proper media-assisted civic education and awareness campaigns regarding the importance of environmental health are vital to enhance the protection and well use of natural resources, and to reach a sustainable future in any community. This review distinguishes and relates environmental awareness and environmental education, and considers how they are implemented in different contexts.
- 2) EE should be multilevel and continuous. A first educational level should target special programs for non-formal adult and community-based audiences. The second level

focuses on secondary school. It involves teaching the main disciplines within an environmental context. The third level focuses on obtaining environment based professional skills within the different professional disciplines

- 3) Environmental Education should be taught at all levels. That is from primary to tertiary levels
- 4) Seminars and workshops should be organized for all teachers at all levels on the importance of Environmental Education.
- 5) The Government and non-governmental organizations should create their awareness in the society.
- 6) Ministry of land, culture, natural resources and tourism should create an avenue where students that is, the interested brilliant ones would have opportunity of reading courses in environment and education on scholarship or fellowship.
- 7) Curriculum designed for environmental education should be clear and enough for teachers to realize desired environmental education and enough time should be given in class to teach it.
- 8) We also advise to establish a separate department training environmental teachers in universities. We believe that it is useful to include environmental courses in primary and secondary school curricula.

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