

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND ITS IMPORTANCE: AN EDUCATIONAL APPROACH

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ABSTRACT:

Environmental education is comparatively a new discipline in the field of education. The study of environment has been emphasized for a long time. It has become a new source of concern for workers, educators, teachers, students, individuals, housewives, policy maker and planners. The focal theme of environmental education is the health of man and how to make this planet more congenial to live in. It is a philosophy that goes thus: 'a healthy planet only can harbor healthy people'.



As man is a part and parcel of the environment, he has to recognize the role and importance of environment in order to protect it and get protection from it. In this way environmental education is education through about and for environmental conservation and sustainable development. Environment education revolves around three central themes, i.e. (1) Education in which the environment represents (2) Education concerning the environment (3) Education of the individual and person living in an environment of a given quality and who is partly responsible for that quality. It is a fundamental process through which individual at all education level s become aware of and concerned with the environment and its related problems, and the knowledge ,skill and determination needed to solve those problems for better living.

Keyword: - Environment, Sustainable Development, Environmental Education, objectives, importance.

MEANING OF ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION:

The term 'environment' has been derived from the French word *environner* meaning "to encircle" or "to surrounds" an organism or the complex of socio-cultural conditions that affects an individual. In short, environment is constituted of the air, water, vegetation and living creatures found in the sphere. Everything is interrelated –the bird, sky, sun, earth, you and me, it is an organic unity. Thus environment is everything that surrounds human being or it constitutes whatever is a present around him above the land on the surface of the earth and under the earth.

Hence environmental education includes not only the study of the physical and biological characters of the environment but also the social and cultural factors and the impact of man on the environment. Environmental education creates awareness and helps in understanding the need for environmental protection among the people. It also provides the foundation for a new international order which will guarantee the conservation and improvement of the environment. Environmental education implies establishing ecological equilibrium which means proper use and conservation of resource and also control of environmental pollution. It's may be describe as education for the environment, education about the environment and education through the environment.

DEFENITION OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION:

It is observed from the encyclopedia of educational research edited by Harold E.Mitzel (1982)that define environmental education is not an easy task ,unlike other curriculum areas the specific content of environmental education has never been well defined. The UNESCO working committee, environment education act, conference on environment education and educationists has defined the term "Environmental Education".

UNESCO Working Committee (1970):

Environmental education is the process of recognizing values and clearing concepts in order to develop the skills and attitudes necessary to understand and appreciate the inter-relatedness among man, his culture and his biophysical surroundings. It also entails practice in decision making and self-formation of a code of behavior about issues concerning environmental quality."

Environmental Education Act (1970):

Environmental education is the educational process which deals with man's relationship with his natural and manmade surroundings, and includes the relation of population, pollution resources allocation and depletion, conservation, transportation, technology and urban and rural planning to the total human environment.

Finnish National Commission for UNESCO (report of the national seminar on environmental education 1974)

Environmental education is a way of implementing the goals of environmental protection. It is not a separate branch of science or subject of study. It should be carried out according to principle of life-long integral education.

First inter - governmental conference of environmental education Tbilisi, (1977)

“Environmental education, properly understood, should constitute comprehensive lifelong education. One responsive to changes in a rapidly changing world. It should prepare the individual for lifelong through an understanding of the major problems of the contemporary world and the personal skills and attributes needed to play a productive role towards improving life and protecting the environment with due regards to ethical values”.

National Anti -Pollution Law, Japan (1969):

“In order to enable people to enjoy good health and high quality of life. It is vital to prevent harmful effects to human health or damaged to the environmental causes by pollution of air, water, and soil, noise etc, caused by firms and individuals. The environment includes animals and plants and their ecological system which are closely bound to the livelihood of people”.

Mishra:

“Environmental education appears to be a process that equips human beings with awareness, knowledge, skills, attitudes and commitment to improvement of the environment”.

R .A. Sharma:

“Environmental education refers to the awareness of the physical and cultural environment and perceives its relevance for real life situation .The problem and issues are to be identified .These imbalances of environment are to be improved in view of sustainable development”.

NATURE OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION:

Environmental education is a new educational approach to the relations of people and their environment .It is an experience based education which uses the totality of physical, natural and human resources. It prepares the individual and community for life through and understanding of the major problems of the interaction of the biological, physical, social, economic and cultural aspect of the individual and communities. It provides skills and attitude requires playing a productive role in improving life and values to enable people to enjoy good health and high quality of life.

1. Environmental education is a new field which human beings with awareness, skills, attitudes, values and commitment to improve environment.
2. It is multidisciplinary and is related to many disciplines such as biology, chemistry, physics, geography, sociology, economics, law, politics and ethics.
3. It is a continuous life- long process, beginning at the pre- school level and continuing through all formal and non- formal stages.
4. It is meant for all age groups.
5. It helps the learners to discover the symptoms and real causes of environmental problems.
6. It deals with every issue that affects a living organism.
7. It seeks to develop the skills to solve environmental problem.
8. It is experience based educations that make a total use of physical, natural and human resources.
9. It is oriented to all environmental problems or issues.
10. It aims to clarify values and changes them in relation to environment.
11. It is an element necessary for the transformation of society.
12. It caters to all socio -professional groups in the population.
13. It helps to maintain ecological equilibrium through the proper use and conservation of resources and also control of environmental pollution.
14. It involves concern for situations that have real consequence for a society.

OBJECTIVES OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION:

As we have already mentioned Environmental education implies the establishment of ecology equilibrium through proper use and conservation of natural resources and also control of Environmental education is to develop skills, attitudes and awareness necessary to understand environment. In other words ,its aim at the enabling the people to learn how hazardous environmental population, population explosion ,industrialization and recourse depletion could be ,and to find solutions to prevent environmental problems in order to maintain balanced eco-system .The objectives of Environmental education in all three domains :

1. Cognitive
2. Effective
3. Psychomotor domains are given below

COGNITIVE OBJECTIVES OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION:

1. To help acquire knowledge of immediate environment.
2. To help acquire knowledge of the environment beyond the immediate environment including distant environment.
3. To help understand the effect of unchecked population growth or on planet resources utilization on the world for future generations.
4. To help understand the biotic and a biotic environment.
5. To help develop observational skills, and notice details usually not seen by an untrained eye.
6. To evaluate the untilision of physical, and human resources and suggest remedial measures.
7. To help develop skill required for detecting changes in form, shape, sound, touch, habits and habitats.
8. To help develop ability to draw unbiased inferences conclusion.
9. To help diagnose the cause of social tensions and to suggest methods for avoiding them.
10. To help develop ability to make meaning full suggestion.

EFFECTIVE OBJECTIVES OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION:

1. To help acquire interest in the flora and fauna of the near and also distant environment.
2. To show tolerance towards different casts, races, religious, and culture.
3. To help evince interest in the people and problems of the community and society.
4. To love the neighbors and value mankind as a whole.
5. To value equality, liberty, fraternity, truth and justices.
6. To value the cleanness and purity of our environment.
7. To respect the national boundary of all countries.

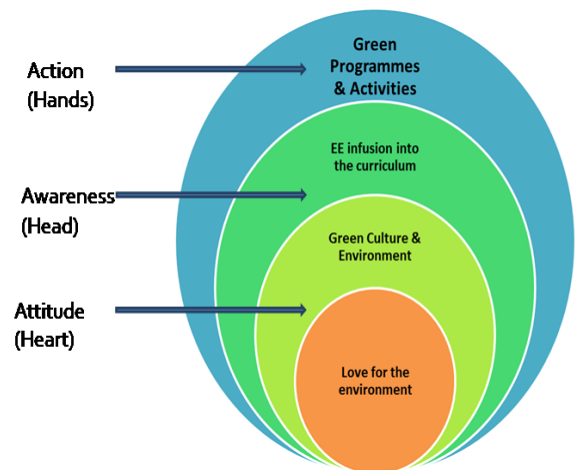
- To appreciate the gift of nature.

PSYCHOMOTORES OBJECTIVES OF EDUCATION:

- To participate in afforestation programmes.
- To participate in programmes aimed at preventing soil erosion.
- To participate in programmes aimed at minimizing air, water and noise pollution.
- To participate in programmes aimed at eliminating food contamination and adulteration.
- To participate in cleaning the neighborhood.
- To participate in urban and rural planning and execution of programmes, such as installation of gobar gas plants, solar heaters etc.

The comprehension of the objective of environmental education is very essential for the successful formulation, implication and evaluation of its programmes. In this regards, the following objectives has been formulated for both formal and non formal education at all levels at the international conference of UNESCO (1977) held at Tbilisi.

- Awareness:** To help individuals and social groups acquire and awareness of environmental and sensitivity to the total environmental and its allied problems.
- Knowledge:** To help individuals and social groups acquire knowledge and gain a variety of experiences of the total of environment and its associated problems.



3. **Attitude:** To assist individuals and social groups develop attitudes, a set of values and feelings of concern for the environment and the motivation (encouragement) for active participation in the protection and improvement of environment.
4. **Skills:** To help individuals and social groups acquire the skills to identify and solve environmental problems.
5. **Understanding:** To help individuals and social groups develop a basic understanding of the structure, processes and problems related to environment and the interdependence of the components of the environment.
6. **Participation:** To help individuals and social groups develop a sense of responsibility and provide an opportunity for active participation or practice at all levels in working for the solution of environmental problems.
7. **Evaluation:** To help individuals and social groups develop the ability to evaluate the environmental components and educational programmes in terms of ecological, economic, social, cultural, political, aesthetic and educational factors. The objective of environmental education is to increase the public awareness of the problems in this field as well as possible solutions and to lay the foundation for a fully informed and active participation of the individual in the protection of the environment and prudent and rational use of natural education is to formulate a responsible attitude towards the sustainable development of planet earth, an appreciation of its beauty and an assumption of an environmental ethic.

NEED FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

The need for environmental education cannot be disputed as it has been drawing the attention of the people worldwide since the dawn of human civilization. In fact, the dust of mother earth and light of father sky should remain associated with full brightness for our welfare. According to Rig-Veda the celestial, the air and terrestrial, i.e. land, air and water are the three kinds of god in the universe. Thus, man and environment are interrelated. The degradation of the environment is linked to continuing problems of pollution, loss of forest, solid waste disposal, issues related to economic productivity, and national as well as ecological security.

We live in a world in which natural resources such as water, oil, minerals and products from forest, grassland, oceans and agriculture are limited. These are vital for our existence. But, we misuse natural resources and are unconcerned about our environment and the life of future generations. For instance, we waste or pollute the natural resources water, air and soil to satisfy our needs and lead a comfortable and luxurious life. It is also seen that plastic bags are discarded after a single use and food materials are wasted in large quantities. These wastes

lead to a variety of health disorders and other adverse environmental impacts on all our lives .For example, air pollution leads to respiratory diseases, water pollution leads to gastro-intestinal diseases, and soil pollution leads to fertile lands becoming unfit for cultivation. All living things affect the environment and are affected by conditions, interaction and changes in the environment. Civilization with advanced technology has led to human domination of the environment, the result of which is the creation of serious environmental problems and depletion of natural resources. Environmental education should be include with physics, chemistry, zoology ,botany, geography ,mathematics ,history, arts and health and physical education .It helps the students to gain knowledge about environmental issues so that they can make efforts to find solution for the environmental problems . Environmental education provides the following basic knowledge to the students.

1. **Population:** It includes history of population growth, crisis, and problems of unplanned population.
2. **Land:** It includes the utilizing of land, land reclamation, land and soil conservation.
3. **Utilization of resource:** It covers the sensible use of resources and conservation, recycling of wastes.
4. **Food and nutrition:** It is about food production, types, quality, and supply, food adulteration, preservation nutritive values of foods, balanced diet, deficiency diseases and their eradication.
5. **Conservation:** It includes conservation of wild life, forest, soil, water, air, non-renewable natural resources and preservation of natural beauty.
6. **Pollution:** It includes pollution of water, air, soil, and pesticides and chemical wastes.
7. **Man in nature:** It includes the relation of man to other component of biosphere, environmental quality and man's future on earth.

IMPORTANCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION:

Environmental education is the scientific study of the environmental system and its induced changes of organism. Therefore it includes not only the study of the physical and biological character but also the social and cultural factors and the impact of man on the environment. The importance of environment education is as follows:

1. It provides adequate knowledge to students and common people for proper conservation and maintenance of natural resources like water, air, soil, forest, wildlife etc.
2. It helps to control environmental pollution occurring in land, water, air, etc. and furnished ideas to maintain clean and safe environmental for better life.
3. It helps the common man to preserve the natural resources for future generation.
4. It bestows ideas for the conservation of rain water to check ground water depletion.

5. It helps to study the nuclear wastes released by the nuclear power station and their safe disposal.

CONCLUSION:

Since the environmental scenario of India is very wide and she is climatically, geologically, floristically, fanuistically, ethnically, lingually, socially, a economically highly diverse country, the environmental education programmes should essentially be location specific. Special attention should be paid to school going children and women, constituting about 50% of the population. They should be made aware of health, family planning, nutrition, rural development, slum improvement, sanitation, hygiene, water and food contamination, fodder, fuel wood etc. Non-governmental organization (about 200 private organizations) plays a significant role in the field of environmental education and awareness.



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