

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

Environmental education is considered to be the central aspect of the process of change towards sustainable development. Environment has been considered as a game, in which all individuals are players and the future existence of the individuals depends upon the environment. Environmental problems such as climate change endanger ones affluence and economic development. Cooperative action is the only means through which these problems can be solved; like education for sustainable development, is based on building awareness and identification with personal living environments. Environmental education is not just the transference of knowledge but it is learning about political action, cooperative action, sustainable development, economic development and survival of living organisms and human beings (Herodin & Zuhlsdorff, 2002).

Environmental education is a very comprehensive area, it is viewed as an integral part of the educational process; the main aim behind this topic is to focus upon practical problems of interdisciplinary character, build a sense of values, and contribute to the welfare of the population. Its focus should center on the activists and the inventiveness on the part of the learners. The environmentalists have to get themselves involved in practical action under the management and guidance of the immediate as well as the future areas of interests (Stapp, 1997).

UNDERSTANDING ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

When acquiring understanding of environmental education, it is required to gain understanding of the following areas: (Stapp, 1997).

1. Man is considered to be an inseparable part of the system from which he cannot be separated; the system comprises of three components man, culture and the biophysical environment. The fundamental connection between these components lies in the fact that man interacts through culture with the biophysical environment to produce or obtain the goods and services that he needs.
2. A broad understanding of the biophysical environment both natural and manmade and its role in contemporary society. The existence of any society or a nation depends upon the man's use of natural resources. A basic understanding of the natural resources includes their characteristics, distribution, status, interrelationships and their present and potential utilization.

3. An individual should gain a perceptive of all kinds of biophysical problems that he may have to face; measures have to be formulated adequately about how to solve these problems and what are the responsibilities on the part of the government and the citizens to work towards the solutions to the environmental problems; few kinds of problems can be urban blight, transportation congestion, or the indiscriminate use of pesticides.
4. The individuals have to develop amongst themselves the attitudes of concern to solve the problems; environmental education must provide factual information which will lead to total understanding of the biophysical environment; eminence and worth of the biophysical environment should be taken under consideration that will enable the citizens to work towards solutions and individuals should be aware about how they can achieve their desired goals and objectives.

CONCEPT OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Environmental education is a lifelong learning process; individuals have to gain knowledge and awareness about this concept throughout their lives. Possession of creative problem solving skills, scientific and social literacy, ethical and cultural awareness, understanding of relationships between the individuals and the environment and commitment to get engaged in cooperative and individual actions are the factors that would enable environmentally literate citizens to build up an ecological and a sustainable environment. An individual during his school years are taught the concept of environmental education; it is the part of the curriculum and instructional standards, and parents as well as the educators make an effort in inculcating environmental education experiences within the mindsets of the children (Fortier, 1998). Awareness, knowledge, attitudes, skills and participation are the main aspects which are required to identify with the environmental education and its problems. The main aim of environmental education is to develop world population which possesses all the skills, knowledge, attitudes and awareness towards solutions to current problems and also making efforts to prevent new ones.

ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

1. Effective environmental education programs are relevant to the operation of the agency or organization, to the educational objectives of the audience and to the everyday lives of the individual learners. The goal of the program is to provide direction for program development, guiding the development of goals and objectives and their choice of the target addressees.

2. Successful programs involve stakeholders to design, implement and evaluate their program that is in accordance to their needs and requirements. Stakeholders are those that have a stake in the program that has been progressed. They are the people who are concerned about a program, are prepared to develop a commitment to it and are able to render their best effort into it. These stakeholders might be teachers, funders, agency supervisors, community leaders, landowners, extension workers, parents, and curriculum developers.
3. The learners and the specialists who are part of the program acquire the skills to help prevent and address the environmental issues and with the sense of personal and civic responsibility. Awareness and knowledge about the systems, issues and concerns about the environment is a crucial factor of the program. Knowledge and positivity will implement the effective measures that would assist in solving the problems and creating a peaceful and sociable environment.
4. The programs should possess certain characteristics when they are formulated; they should be balanced, accurate, meaningful, logical, and incorporate multiple perspectives and interdisciplinary aspects.
5. The final aspect of the programs is that they are instructionally perfect using best practices in education. The programs should be developed in response to theories of learning such as Piaget's theory of cognitive development, constructivism, multiple intelligences and learning styles. There should be congruency between the program and the learning of the people (Athman & Monroe, n.d.).

DIVERSITY IN ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Environmental education is about experiencing, sharing, creativity, pleasure and sensitivity; environmental education activities can be enlightening the population, discovery activities such as guided visits, games, or outings; it can also consists of the active participation of the public such as by organizing workshops, volunteering, excursions, role play, field trips or holidays. The public sector, as well as NGOs, provides materials, education and guidelines on environmental education. Protected Areas also play a vital role in environmental education in regions, having the scientific and protection issues at hand and being able to transfer the knowledge using participation opportunities to public. Education for sustainable development can be viewed as enlargement and intensification of environmental education. It takes into account not only the education about ecology, but also the social, cultural, democratic, and economic well being of the humans; it enables the individuals to put into effect and continue sustainable development in their regions and also globally (Environmental Education, 2011).

ECONOMIC GROWTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

India has been committed to economic growth and environmental sustainability. The first five year plan (1951-56) aimed at economic stabilization and investment in the agrarian sector. The plan supported community development taking into consideration the social and economic welfare of the rural sector. The second five year plan aimed at structural transformation with an emphasis on heavy industrialization. The first two plans laid the foundation for development planning in India. The development strategy of the country has mainly emphasized upon economic development. With the increase of velocity of economic growth, the works and the pressures to bring about changes and improvements began to strengthen and therefore the need to pay greater attention to the management of water, forests and land began to enlarge. These are largely associated with the development of the rural sectors not only in India but in other countries of the world as well (GRD, 2012).

Environmental degradation has been expressed as loss of fertile soils, desertification, unsustainable forest management, reduction of freshwater availability and an extreme biodiversity loss rate. There has been a high correlation between economic growth, rural development and environmental sustainability. Sustainable use of environmental resources can contribute to augmentation and steadiness. It is essential to contribute to the environmental resources to increasing the productivity of investment in agriculture, infrastructure and natural capital. Success in achieving the conservation of the environment will contribute effectively towards rural development, water supply, land management and agricultural activities will be fulfilled effectively. The Schemes of the Ministry of Rural Development are well organized to deliver green endings i.e. to restoring and enhancing the ecosystem services and natural capital (GRD, 2012).

Natural capital is often esteemed and understood most excellent at the local level, and local knowledge is essential for useful solutions. Communities and societies need to be active supporters of the conversion to sustainable development, alleging their rights and also fulfilling their responsibilities in terms of sustainable management of natural resources. Rural development schemes provide a strong opportunity to cumulative small inventiveness in several locations to improve natural capital on a comprehensive scale. These self governing institutions and their capacities will be answers to greater effectiveness of regulatory and market instruments in ecosystem rejuvenation and perfection of natural capital (GRD, 2012).

ADULT ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Adult environmental education should propagate knowledge about the environment's direct and indirect physical and related social impact. It should also convey knowledge on the communication and dealings between local activities and their effects which may occur further away. Direct impacts, such as deforestation and diseases caused by polluted water, are visible

and tangibly affect daily life; remedies to them can be found in the short term if appropriate measures are taken. Connecting environmental and social issues and locating environmental problems within the context of ones daily lives and activities are important challenges for adult environmental education. At present, adult environmental education is experimenting with different ways and methods to bring about transformations and initiate action. Such projects go beyond creating perceptive and responsiveness; they aim at developing skills, creating a sense of loyalty and motivating individual and collective action. Adult environmental education has the potential to bring about action at individual, community and governmental levels (AEE, 1999).

CONCLUSION

Environmental education is a field about which individuals are educated from the very beginning of their school years by their parents, teachers and other community members. Environmental education comprises of areas concerning the environment such as employment opportunities, tourism, different kinds of education, such as formal, informal and non-formal education, rural development, lifelong learning, adult education, protection and conservation of the natural and cultural resources, plantation of trees and plants, taking every measures to curb all kinds of pollutions such as water, air, sound and environmental pollution. It is crucial for every citizen of the country to possess some kind of knowledge and facts about environmental education for sustainable living. It is considered to be a lifelong process which gets started during the early years of person's life until he reaches his twilight years.

Environmental education depends on a personal commitment and motivation to help guarantee environmental quality and quality of life. This commitment and enthusiasm often begins with an awareness of one's immediate surroundings. Environmental educators can help foster learners' inherent curiosity and enthusiasm, providing them with continuing opportunities to explore their environment and engaging them in direct discovery of the world around them. As learners develop and apply analysis and action skills; they have the opportunity to make their own decisions and think more significantly about their choices and as they hear stories of success, they are learning that what they do individually and in groups can make a difference. This locus of control, or sense that they have the ability to influence the outcome of a situation is important in helping learners develop a sense of empowerment, a sense of personal responsibility and further means of environmental education.

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