

## Environmental Education as an Academic Discipline- Ways and Means

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### Abstract

Environment refers to the natural conditions surrounding human beings- air, water, soil, trees, land surfaces etc. The importance of natural elements, to protect them, to keep them clean, to control them and utilize them in a healthy consumption- production ratio. As much of formal education is imported in the school system, environmental education becomes its concern. This paper deals with those aspects of education through which environmental education can be imparted in a very effective manner.

#### Introduction:

The most essential components of human life are clear air, water, health and energy. increasing pollution day by day due to industrial wastes, deforestation, energy consumption, high CO<sub>2</sub> emission, land degradation, soil erosion is causing global warming. If it continues like, no one on the earth will be alive. To protect it, awareness about these hazards must be brought to the notice of all. Education is taken as the most potent means of change, the concept of environmental education emerged as an academic discipline. It seems as a new concept but its basic nature is as old as human civilization. Before we discuss it in detail, first have a look at the basic ingredients of natural environment and its pollutants.

**What is Environment:** Environment is taken to mean all those which are physical, chemical, organic and non- organic components of the atmosphere which in an aggregated manner influence the life of an individual or the population.

Boring has tried to define it in this way:

" A person's environment consists of the sum total of the stimulation which he receives from his conception till his death."

Anatasi defines it as everything which affects the individual except his genes is environment.

#### **What is environmental education:?**

Environmental education is a process of recognising values and clarifying concepts in order to develop skills and added tools necessary to understand and appreciate the interrelationship among man, his culture and his bio-physical surrounding.

It creates an overall perspective which acknowledges the fact that natural environment and man- made environment are interdependent. It should consider the environment in its

totality and should be a continuous life long process beginning at the pre-school level and continuing through all stages. It is interdisciplinary in nature and major environmental issues from local, national and international points of view. It utilizes various educational approaches to teach and learn about and from the environment with stress on practical activities and firsthand experience. It is through this process of education that people can be sensitized about the environmental issues.

It awares and trains students to participate in activities aimed at conservation, protection and management of the environment essential for achieving sustainable development.

In nutshell it can be said that environmental education is a process that equips human beings with awareness, knowledge, skills, attitudes and commitment to improve environment.

The environment comprises of both living and non-living components which can be termed as:

- Biotic environment
- Abiotic environment

The biotic component consists of plants( flora) and animals(fauna) including man as an important factor. The abiotic component consists of land, water, air etc.

Aims of Environmental Education:

The major aims of environmental education can be identified as:

- To educate all concerned about the nature and dimension of environment.
- To develop the right attitude in the people regarding the safety and development of environment.
- To explain the devices for deciding the various types of pollution.
- To develop the skills for solving the environmental pollution problems; and
- To provide opportunities to individuals, groups and institutions for keeping the environment, interdependence of environmental components.
- To improve the quality of environment

To fulfill these aims, formal education should play its role in the following way:

**Curriculum:** The curriculum should be such that it should enlighten the school going children about the environment, its relation to man, its degradation, its protection and preservation. It should comprise of following topic/ items:

- Relationship between man and his environment.
- Natural Resources and their preservation.
- Planning of housing as to prevent environmental pollution.
- Government policies to check the pollution.
- Means of reducing pollution.

Role Of Teacher in Environmental Education:

Teachers can play a significant role in developing the desirable attitude towards environmental education in the following way:

- While teaching his/her own subject matter, the teacher can correlate the content with environmental issues eg teacher of biology can highlight how to control diseases and population explosion. The teacher of social science can emphasize the close relationship of human beings with nature etc. In this way teachers of various disciplines can make their contributions to the teaching of environmental education.
- A teacher may create awareness regarding renewable and non-renewable resources of environment.

Teacher should adopt following methods of teaching to contribute to environmental education:

- **Discussion method:** Discussion method can prove an effective strategy to clarify those topics which are not clear. It can lead to understand the outcomes and their consequences.
- **Project method:** It may prove helpful in understanding the causes and their remedies. The teacher divides the class and assigns some problems to them for investigation. The report is prepared by the students along with the solutions. Topics may be- conservation of water, Air pollution- causes and suggestions etc.
- **Exhibition method:** Exhibitions may be organised to create awareness about degraded environment and its impact on human life.
- **Eclectic method:** Take the best from various methods and apply them in solving the problem is the eclectic method.

Conclusion: Education in an informal and non-formal way can also play its role in environmental education.

- It becomes role of the parents to provide an environment to the child to develop good habits and good culture.
- students can be shown certain movies which are based on cleanliness drive, health and hygiene, games etc.
- Certain good quotes can be displayed on the walls to give an aesthetic expressions.
- Children should be taught to clean their surroundings.
- Media can play a significant role by showing cleanliness programmes; environment related programmes to create awareness.
- The negative picture i.e. the hazards can be shown to stop the malpractices.

In this way, environmental education can play a significant role in reducing the level of pollution.

References:

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