



Environmental Education And Sustainable Development: Key Issues

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Abstract: Environmental education and sustainable development – these two concepts are integrally related. These two major concepts have significant roles to play in dealing effectively with issues like climate change, equal distribution of resources etc. UNESCO also advocated sustainable development “is the ultimate goal of the Man-environment relationship; thus the whole educational process should be reshaped for sustainable development”. A theoretical framework for environmental education is critically discussed in this chapter from several angles- aims, objectives, models, target groups, programmes etc. and how it is closely associated with the sustainable development concept is also enumerated. In an era of globalization, these two concepts should work hand in hand in promoting a holistic viewpoint of development covering all its major aspects- social, ecological, economic and environmental.

Index Terms - Environmental Education, Sustainable Development, Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change.

I. INTRODUCTION

Environmental Education is considered a lifelong and comprehensive education that adopts changes in the age of globalization. It invariably integrates society, humanity and the environment. “Environmental Education is a process aimed at developing a world population that is aware and concerned about the total environment and its associated problems and which has the knowledge, attitudes, motivations, commitments and skills to work individually and collectively towards the solution of current problems as well as the prevention of new ones.” (Environmental Education, 1980) International Union for the Conservation of Natural Resources mentions environmental education as a process of recognizing values and clarifying concepts for the development of necessary skills and attitudes to know and appreciate the union among humans, their culture and the environment.

Environmental education aims to develop awareness and commitment for preservation and conservation of the environment for a better future. The concept covers three major areas; namely, education for, about and through the environment.

II. MODELS

Two important conceptual environmental education models proposed and recommended by the UNESCO training workshop on environmental Education in 1980 are:

- 1) **Interdisciplinary or Infused model**:- that constitutes disciplines containing models or courses relevant to different components of environmental education.
- 2) **Multidisciplinary or Infusion model**:- here various skills related to environmental education are incorporated into different disciplines and separate modules or courses are created.

III. AIMS

The major **aims** of environmental education are as follows:

- a) to inform and provide experiences so that students can appreciate the diverse ways in which the use of natural resources can affect people and their effect on them.
- b) to provide knowledge of both the art and science of making decisions about the balance between environmental exploration (on, management) and human needs.

IV. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The **goals** and **objectives** of environmental education proposed by UNESCO are-

- i) to develop awareness and concern about social, political, ecological and economic interdependence in urban and rural areas.
- ii) to provide the opportunity to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to protect and improve the environment and
- iii) to create a new behaviour pattern for individuals, groups and society towards the environment.

V. TARGET GROUP

Environmental education is aimed at all, irrespective of age, caste, creed, socio-economic status, space, time and levels. The target group consists of both formal and non-formal levels of education, organized primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education, consists the rest of the population- people from all sections of society- educated, uneducated, working, non-working, men and women.

VI. LEARNING THROUGH PARTICIPATION

Participatory learning by the learners will be helpful for acquiring knowledge, reasoning and problem-solving skills and motivation for conserving the environment. So both formal and non-formal sectors require to emphasize participatory technique of learning.

VII. SUITABLE METHODS OF TEACHING OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

For the purpose of independent study several methods may be helpful:

- i) pupils will be encouraged to work in small groups that will foster collaborative and cooperative learning among them where individual differences can be mitigated,
- ii) teachers will encourage students to choose topics and to be involved in decision-making processes on their own,
- iii) they will feel free from the constant monitoring of teachers and self-evaluation is necessary in this respect,
- iv) positive and productive attitude will be encouraged,
- v) pupils' tension and anxiety will be reduced when they are interacting with each other,
- vi) pupils are encouraged to perform experiments, watch films, talk in seminars and participate in different activities. These will help to develop independent study habits for them.

IX. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Sustainable development is fulfilling the needs of the present without affecting the needs of the future. So, environmental education is key for maintaining the balance and providing the necessary knowledge, attitudes and skills to individuals for promoting sustainability.

X. RELATION BETWEEN THEM

- A) Environmental education is a commitment for countries to achieve sustainable growth and development.
- B) Issues like teaching and learning are included for sustainable development in environmental education.
- C) For the protection of the planet and improved quality of life, environmental education equips people to make informed decisions.
- D) Issues like climate change, biodiversity loss and resource overuse etc. are addressed and people are encouraged to take appropriate actions through environmental education for sustainable development.
- E) For sustainable development, necessary knowledge, skills and values can be developed through environmental education.
- F) EE can help to understand the interactions among social, environmental and economic issues that can help sustainable development.
- G) Critical thinking skills can be developed by environmental education to make informed decisions that will help in sustainable development.

XI. NEGLECTED ATTITUDE

The attitude towards environmental education for sustainable development among teachers and stakeholders of educational institutions needs to be improved.

In formal education set-ups, relevant topics and issues of environmental education should be incorporated in related texts and implementation of various programmes in educational institutions should be carefully monitored and organized with coordinated efforts of members associated with it. There is a dearth of information regarding environmental issues to the teachers and proper training and availability of trained teachers are big issues. Training courses especially teacher training courses do not give enough attention to environmental education and skill development. The lack of research on these topics is a hindrance to the development of environmental education.

The non-formal sector also shows very little signs of light on these issues.

XII. CONCLUSION

Though various seminars, workshops, awareness campaigns and projects are organized in identified areas, this sector needs several infrastructural developments to attain excellence. Mass media and social media should also have significant roles to play for public awareness and for motivating people. The need is an engrossed commitment towards implementing projects and programmes on environmental education and sustainable development. A coordinated effort by the teachers, students, administrators and stakeholders for the fulfilment of policies for preservation and conservation of our environment is strongly needed and highly recommended.

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