

Need for Environmental Education

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Abstract

Environment education is about people as part of the living planet and focuses on the interaction of the natural, built (urban and rural), social and cultural aspects of the environment. It deals with facets of this interaction, from the personal to the global.

Environment education is the development of:

- Understandings about our environment,
- Positive attitudes towards the earth and its life,
- Confidence and skills to make positive changes,

Environment education is dynamic, reflecting our growing understanding of our relationship with the environment. Environment education is interdisciplinary. It derives shares and applies knowledge, concepts and skills from all disciplines. The processes, which support life, must be protected. The protection of the world environment for the long-term benefit of life on earth is a task entrusted to all people. It is the task of educators to ensure that young people are made aware of their responsibility to protect the processes that support life and their ability to meet this challenge.

Environment education seeks to respond to this challenge and also to foster enjoyment, understanding and appreciation of the fragility, diversity and beauty of life on earth. It teaches students about the environment, by giving those skills in investigating questions and issues in the environment, and attitudes of care and concern for the environment.

Keywords – Environment, education, awareness.

Meaning of Environmental Education

Environmental education is defined in its broadest sense to encompass raising awareness, acquiring new perspectives, values, knowledge and skills, and formal & informal process leading to changed behaviors in support of an ecologically sustainable environment.

Why Environmental education

Though the history of human beings is about 500 to 600 thousand years old and since his very inception on the planet, man has been modifying the environment. It is during the last three centuries and particularly since the Industrial Revolution in which man has made galloping progress, and this exploitation of nature has led us to a crisis. In this period man has plundered the natural treasures with the help of modern technology. But this exploitation of nature has threatened the very existence of human being on this planet Earth. In the recent past industrial (Bhopal gas tragedy, India), nuclear (Chernobyl radiation catastrophe, U.S.S.R) and maritime disaster (oil leakage on coast of France and Alaska) have forced the scientist, Sociologist and independent research workers to realize the seriousness of the impending catastrophe. The revelation of hole in the ozone layer over Antarctica, Green-house effect, destruction of rain forest, poverty and population are the problems of greater magnitude for Homo sapiens.

Goals of environmental education in India

The Environmental Education Program in India is based on the following goals: to improve the quality of life; to create an awareness among people to environmental problems and conservations; to help citizens acquire the necessary knowledge for the importance of environmental protection; to develop necessary skills to solve the environmental problems; to create an ability in people to evaluate the different strategies for development in terms of social, political, cultural and educational point of view; to create the necessary atmosphere to make it possible for citizens to participate in decision-making when it concerns the environment; to provide an awareness of economic, political and ecological interdependence.

A deeper analysis shows poor response of major population of the country to environmental education. There are certain problems which are faced by the people such as: (i) Deficiency of environmental education knowledge among enforcing authorities, (ii) Lack of responsibility due to ecological illiteracy on part of community, (iii) Lack of provision for training of professional manpower in the field of environmental education, (iv) Non-availability of information on environmental issues, (v) Lack of coordination among the administrative institutions and educational institutions on environmental activities.

In the light of the above problems importance of non-formal education, i.e., environmental education for general public planners and administrators is imperative. Unless the public in general and decision makers and planners become aware of problems and consequences of their actions, little success would be achieved in attaining the ultimate goal of environmental education—the improvement of quality of life, since it is a theory of education which recognizes value clarification through self-awareness, knowledge through environmental awareness and synthesis through life experiences.

Fundamentals of Present Day Environmental Education

The essence of the aspects of present day environmental education as described above can be stated in the following essentials

- Environmental problems regarded as problems of society
- Environmental education regarded as interdisciplinary and problem orientated, and much emphasis is laid on student participation in decision-making and responsibility.
- Emphasis is placed on working with the conflicts of interest in the exploitation of nature, as well as the students having the opportunity to assess and take a standpoint on the ethical aspects of the problems
- Emphasis is placed on the students getting out of school and investigating the problem being worked on, part of which consists of getting into touch with people with different opinions on the particular problem
- It may prove productive for the students to gain experience in testing some action possibilities related to the environmental problems

Conclusion

Environmental education is a positive response to the global challenge of how to live sustainably, without compromising the quality of life for generations to come. Environmental education starts with what is relevant to the learner. For young people connecting with the natural world is an important first step. From there, environmental education motivates and empowers students to take responsibility for their local environment. From direct conservation action (planting trees, monitoring local stream health) to considering sustainable lifestyle choices (recycling, walking to school, office) Environmental education challenges learners to engage with the environmental, social, cultural, and economic influences that shape the future of the planet and people's roles within it.

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