



## Environmental Education and Public Awareness

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### ABSTRACT

Environmental sensitivity in our country can only grow through a major public awareness campaign. The tremendous signification of the message of environmental education for the survival of man has made the relatively new academic discipline to attract great attention. Lack of adequate environmental knowledge is an obstacle in achieving a sustainable future for humankind at both global and local levels. Environmental awareness programme can help reduce the impacts of human activities on the environment. Environmental education has an effective role in creating healthy awareness and preparing suitable environment for the development and maintenance of human minds. It includes both formal and informal education and training that increase human capacity and capability to participate in environmental management and in solving environmental crisis and challenges. This could be achieved by increasing awareness and effectively changing the individual outlook on the environment. Educating adult, community, traditional and religious leaders on the importance of environmental health and on the well use of the natural environment is also very critical to sustainable development. This paper is an attempt to review the meaning of environmental education, its aims and objectives, and ways of promoting environmental awareness in the society. It also considered how environmental education can be implemented in many contexts. The paper concluded with recommendations of ways of sensitizing the public on the need to be environmental conscious.

### Keywords:

Education, Environment, Awareness

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Environment is a physical, chemical and biological setting in which people live. It is a sum total of water, air, and land, interrelationship among themselves and also with human beings, other living organism and property. The most terrible problem in the 21st century is rapid degradation of environmental quality. The rapid growth of population creates situations like more people need more food, more energy, and more things of daily use. So we use more water resources, fertilizers, pesticide etc. for more production and it turns it increase the level of pollution of air, water and soil which creates the ecological imbalanced in the ecosystem. Lack of environmental awareness in the preservation and conservation of environment effectively made the situation more critical. All these are responsible for rapid degradation of environmental quality. If such situation would be continued in the near future, the whole human civilization will face very dangerous situation in various spheres. In this context, the only alternative is to create Environmental awareness among the masses in respect of protection and preservation of environment and also for the alleviation of environmental degeneration. Therefore, it is essential to provide environmental education to the public to raise awareness about environmental issues.

## **Environmental Education**

Environmental Education (EE) is a learning process by which people develop awareness, concern knowledge of the environment and learn to use this understanding to preserve, conserve and utilize the environment in a sustainable manner for the benefit of present and future generation. It focused on the protection and improvement of our total environment, developing and conserving those components traditionally recognized as natural resources like soil, water, air, forest etc, making the population



aware of problems, skilled and willing to participate in environmental management. Environmental Education helps to improve the “quality of the environment”. It is also improve the quality of life of man.

Environmental Education is not a separate branch of science or subject but it has been formulated into a definite discipline with clearly defined content area and it should be carried out according to the principle of lifelong education. Environmental education includes both formal and informal education and training that increase human capacity and capability to participate in environmental awareness programmed. This could be achieved by increasing awareness and effectively changing the individual outlook on the environment.

### **SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

This paper discusses the goal, objectives, importance of environmental education and includes a descriptive study on how environmental education can raise public awareness and how environmental awareness can contribute to a healthy environment has been taken.

### **IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY**

This is worth mentioning that Earth is the most precious gift of the universe. It is the sustenance of nature that is the key to the development of the future of mankind. It is the duty and responsibility to each one of us to protect nature. It is here that the understanding of the “Environment” comes in to the picture. The degradation of our environment is linked with the development process and the ignorance of people about retaining the ecological balance. Indeed, no citizen of the earth can afford to remain aloof from the issue related to the environment. It is therefore essentially important that the study of the environment becomes an integral part of the education process. Because Environmental education increase the public awareness and



knowledge about environmental issues or problems. It will help to keep our environment healthy and strong. And for that a thorough study or research is much needed.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The primary goals of this study are to review the status of Environmental Education and to sensitize the public on the need to be conscious about their environment and to suggest ways by which the public could be educated about the environment. The main objectives are –

- 1) Review briefly the goals of Environmental Education.
- 2) Sensitize the public on the need to develop positive attitude towards a better interaction with the natural world.
- 3) Suggest ways of educating the public on the need to be environmental conscious.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study is basically concerned with the Environmental education and Public awareness. The method used for study is descriptive in nature. Secondary data have been used for the purpose of the study which were collected from the published sources like books, journals, magazines, newspaper etc. whatever information is collected is simply arranged and described.



## **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION**

Environmental education has to develop a sense of responsibility amongst the nature of the world to take collective actions towards the conservation and preservation of the natural world. It encourages the individuals to learn about nature and develop skills to protect it. The main goal is to develop concern and awareness among world population about the total environment and its associated problems.

The main aims and objectives of environmental educations are -

- 1) To improve the quality of environment.
- 2) To create awareness among the people on environmental problems and conservations.
- 3) To create an atmosphere so that people participate in decision making and develop the capabilities to evaluate the developmental programme.
- 4) To develop the attitude to take steps for environmental protection. There should be a sense of responsibility among the population to protect the environment.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND ITS NEED**

Environmental education is a process of educating the people about the natural environment and its problems; way of understanding environment. It is concerned with the dynamic relationship between man and nature. Environmental Education is nothing but teaching a person how to interact fully with surrounding world so that to improve his own inner world, to understand and appreciate the inter-relationship between man and his biophysical surrounding. It is a life-long forwarded looking education and it means the generation of widespread awareness of environmental problem. Life on Earth depends upon the availability of land, water, air, energy, minerals, climate, flora and fauna. We with the help of our own efforts and technology transform these resources in to goods and services to raise the standards of living. The word environment includes all parts of nature require for health and happiness of man. The very existence of life on Earth depends on nature. Hence, it is the urgent need to the hour to take measures for the protection of environment, since the problems of



environmental pollution and ecological degradation is threatening the survival of mankind. Protection of environment is a fundamental duty of every Indian. Awareness, knowledge and understanding about environmental problems and its protection is very much relevant, indispensable and of great significance for each and every citizens in present society. Due to tackle the problem of environmental hazards effectively, the Government of India has passed several Acts for the protection of environment. The most important ones are –

- Wild life protection Acts, 1972-1986.
- Water (prevention and control of pollution) Acts, 1974.
- Water pollution less Act, 1980.
- Forest (conservation) Act, 1980
- Air (prevention and control of pollution) Act, 1981
- The Environment (protection) Act, 1986.
- Biological Diversity Act, 2002

In spite of all these efforts of the Government of India to take measure for protecting and improving the quality of the environment and preventing and controlling. Actually, no summit, no government effort, no organization can success in reducing Greenhouse effect, in protecting biological diversity, in reducing ozone layer depletion and so on until people sensitize it personally. Environmental protection is the prime need of our times. In this context, Environmental awareness movement is very essential. But lack of sufficient knowledge about the fundamentals to control various kinds of pollution has become a very serious problem. Hence it is in the time to march forward in spreading Environmental Education amongst all the section of the people.

### **IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC AWARENESS ABOUT ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

Public awareness and knowledge of environmental protection are crucial to avoid environmental pollutions. If we have to improve the environment, public awareness is



the primary requirement. Human activities are causing many kinds of environmental pollutions for which public awareness is necessary. Everyone needs to make aware and motivate each and every individual for environmental consciousness. There must be planning about the effects and control measures of environmental pollution. Government should initiate and help by awareness campaigns to save environment. There are a number of ways in which we can spread awareness and educate the public how to protect the environment.

- Running awareness campaigns
- Providing environmental education in school level.
- Regulating environmental legal rights and responsibilities
- Spreading awareness via (through) the media
- Encouraging public participation

Today, these initiatives are being undertaken by the government, the media, as well as by schools at a considerable level. This is particularly important because as citizens, most of the environmental issues arise out of our way of living. Population explosion, industrialization and urbanization are some of the primary reasons for environmental degradation. Awareness in all sections of the society can be spread through various general public awareness programmes. Only with collective thinking we will be able to restore balance in our environment.

The government plays an important role in creating public awareness. The 'Environmental Education, Awareness and Training' programme of the Government of India aims at developing public knowledge and skills to protect the environment. As part of the programme, during the year 2007-2008, 83372 eco-clubs were created in India. Between 2007 and 2008, 9938 associations were included in the awareness programme and financial assistance was provided. National TV and radio were used as a means of spreading awareness.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Government should organize Environmental Education campaign programmes for children, youth, men and women. The state government should establish appropriate funding mechanisms for raising public awareness of environmental education.
2. Government officials can make significant contributions to improve public awareness of environmental education.
3. NGOs (at national and community levels) should initiate and help by awareness campaigns to save environment.
4. Ban the littering of polythene cannot be successful until the public understands the environmental implications of the same.
5. Proper methods of disposal and its treatment should be applied otherwise they can be the causes of chronic diseases.

By exercising following actions, humans can protect global environment for sustainable development: these are -

- i. Preserve forest cover: Humans should minimize cutting of trees and using timber for aesthetic pleasure such as decoration of drawing rooms.
- ii. Preserve natural resources: Human should not extract unnecessarily and exhaustively the natural resources such as mineral resources, water resources, etc.
- iii. Conserve energy: Human should not harness too much energy from burning of fossil fuels.
- iv. Practice green technology: Everyone from a farmer in the village to a policy planner in the government should use green technology that incorporates: treatment of air emissions, treatment of waste waters, waste reduction, waste or emission management, use of non-conventional, renewable energy resources like solar energy on priority, etc.





## **CONCLUSION**

There is an urgent need to safeguard our environment to save the future generation. Environmental awareness is the suitable tool for conservation of our natural resources and their valuable components. Environmentally illiterate individuals cannot successfully solve complex problems. It requires understanding the immediate and real needs of a country like ours by initiating a local process through Environmental Education programme. Environmental training programme can also promote better health and hygienic conditions. The awareness programmes would empower the people to take up appropriate steps to preserve and protect our environment. Environmental education and environmental awareness programme are to be conducted from primary to university level of education are the better channels to which information can be disseminated to the grassroots level and these programmes would enable the masses to protect the environment which is very urgent for us to survive on Earth.

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