

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS THROUGH EDUCATION

(Amit Chaturvedi , Reena Kumari and Satyendra Singh, Regional Director, Asstt. Regional Director, IGNOU Regional Centre, Varanasi and Assistant Director, Directorate of Higher Education of Allahabad, U.P., India)

Abstract

The most hazardous event of the present century is rapid degradation of environmental quality. The population explosion creates situation like more people needing more food, more energy and more things of daily use, such as housing, clothing and automobiles. As a result, we use more water resources, fertilizers, pesticides and sophisticated machines for production and in turn, increase the level of air pollution, water pollution, soil pollution, noise pollution besides disturbing balance between biotic and a biotic components in the ecosystem. All these conditions cause diseases and death of flora and fauna. Similarly, the indiscriminate use of renewable and non-renewable physical resources leads to severe problems.

Key words: Environmental Education, Cognitive, Affective and Connative.

Lack of environmental awareness about preservation and conservation of environment effectively add fuel to fire. All these are greatly responsible for rapid degradation of the environmental quality at grass root level. If similar situation continues in the near future, the entire human civilization will face disastrous situation in various spheres. At this juncture the only alternative is to create environmental awareness among the people in respect to protection, preservation, conservation of environment and also for the mitigation of environmental degradation. Further, the environmental awareness moves people towards environmental protection and improvement. All these are possible only through environmental education.

Environmental Education not only educates the world population about the natural environment and its problem; but also aims at developing in them the knowledge, attitude and skills necessary to protect the natural balance in. environment besides working for its enrichment. Environmental Education is nothing but teaching a man how to interact fully with the surrounding world, so as to improve his inner world. Environmental education enables one to maintain his life. This in turn, helps in the preservation of human race. It canalizes man towards diminishing natural resources, environmental pollution and problem of population explosion. As such, environmental education generate wide spread awareness of environmental problem.

The role of teacher is to help the children as well as illiterate adults to know, to protect and to enrich the environment. Traditionally, teacher has been regarded as an agent of social change and modernization. Children emulate their teacher and draw inspiration from them. A teacher therefore plays an important role in providing environmental awareness and developing a positive attitude towards environment among students by shaping cognitive, affective and psychomotor or the cognitive domains simultaneously.

Environmental Awareness

Awareness means having update knowledge of realizing the possible danger of a thing. As such, by environmental awareness we simply mean having the latest knowledge of/or visualizing the possible dangers, threats of environmental degradation. It includes making the people conscious of the physical, social and aesthetic aspects of the environment. These elements are interrelated and interdependent and are essential for the survival of humanity. Awareness needs sensitivity. If one

feels his co-existence with the nature he will be called sensitive. A sensitive person concerns the environment from its reckless exploitation. He believes in the sustainable development and recycling of waste material. When we see the very potential of education, it can safely be concluded that such awareness can be realized through education, whatever mode it comes from.

Environment Awareness Education under various domains

Bloom's Taxonomy defines the educational goals in terms of three domains viz. the cognitive, the effective and the psychomotor or the connative. Environmental education also comprises the three domains. Information regarding the various aspects, of environmental hazards is related to cognitive domain. All the possible latest information should be imparted to the people, so that they may have update knowledge of the environment. Here the role of the environmentalist, scientists, sociologists and teachers matters to great extent. They are regarded to work in an integrated manner to leave a positive impact. This information will surely result in creating belongingness among the people with the nature. They will be emotionally attached with various environmental protection movements as a result of such an inner urge of the people. It comes under the affective domain. The psychomotor domain seeks physical involvement, i.e. the activities demanding manual labour like plantation, cleanliness, recycling, skills of waste materials, increasing forest cover. The three domains are mutually inclusive.

Focus on Environmental Awareness Education

The environment awareness education lays emphasis on certain crucial points as alertness, location, specificity, conservation skill and sustainable development etc. Alertness includes making the person conscious about the physical, social and aesthetic aspects of the environment. Location specificity means making the people conscious of the situation of the particular location around them. Conservation emphasizes the judicious and balanced utilization of the resources rather than their increased misuse. Sustainable 'development or' recycling of the waste material aims at saving natural resources, forest cover, discover alternative sources of energy and protecting the environment from being polluted and cut down green house gases, to protect earth from global warming. Education must focus on the above mentioned points. Only then ecological imbalance can be curbed. Such education may be integrated at primary, secondary or higher level. It may be imparted through formal/non- formal mode as well.

Objectives of Environmental Education

According to Belgrade Charter-1975 the goal of Environmental Education is to develop a world population aware of, and concern about the environment and its associated problems which has the knowledge, skills, attitudes, motivations and commitment to work individually and collectively towards solutions of current problems and the prevention of new ones. The Charter has suggested the following six objectives for teaching Environmental Education.

1. **Awareness:** to create' an overall understanding of the impact and effects of behaviours and life styles on both the local and global environments and on short term and long term.
2. **Knowledge:** to help individuals and social groups to acquire basic understanding of the total environment and its associated problems.
3. **Attitude:** to help individual and social groups to acquire social values, strong feelings of concern for the environments and motivation to actively participate in its protection and improvement.
4. **Skill:** to help individuals and social groups to acquire the knowledge and skills of solving

environmental problems.

5. **Evaluation ability:** to help individual and social groups to evaluate environmental measures and educational programmes in term of ecological, political, economical, social, aesthetic and educational factor.
6. **Participation:** to help individual and social groups to develop a sense of responsibility and energy. Regarding environmental problems to insure appropriate action for solving the problems.

These objectives are related to all levels and both formal and non-formal systems of Education.

Environmental Awareness through Formal Education

The required activities under the various levels of the formal education are being given below:

- (i) At elementary level the main focus must be the awareness or the consciousness of the nature general. The environmental material should be embedded with the contents in language, social science and the natural sciences. The teacher concerned should follow the teaching strategies of direct observation supported by audio-visual aids.
- (ii) Location orientation awareness and conservation knowledge and skill should be given due emphasis at the secondary level of formal education. Here, content may remain the same as it is at the elementary level, but the teaching strategies employed should be action oriented.
- (iii) Higher education has the most important role in curbing environmental imbalances. It should focus on the sustainable development, conservation and recycling knowledge and skill depending upon the nature of the courses offered. Research activities must be encouraged in this respect at the maximum. It should include extension works too.

Environmental Awareness through Non-Formal Education

A sizeable section of society is illiterate. They have been deprived of the formal schooling. They are not in a position to ponder over the environmental imbalances. But, still they are the user of natural resources without the caring for its conservation. They need to be educated properly. This group is diverse and scattered everywhere. This includes forest dwellers, tribals, poor villagers etc. They are quite in touch with locality. So, their education for the environment should be locality specified. They should be taught to be eco-friendly, and co-existent with their environment.

Forest dwellers and tribal population is also quite alarming. The forest to them is same as the pond to the fish. They cannot live without it. But they must be taught to conserve the environment as well. They need to be sensitive to their surroundings. The convention to the worship, the tree, nature and the earth should be logically explained to them. These are the part of life support system. Any deterioration in this system is bound to affect their own life, their leaders women, youths and Adivasis should be properly made aware of the environmental issues. For this Nehru Yuva Kendras, conservation development care, Eco-development camps for youth; Eco-friendly clubs etc. may be organized. Radio, television, posters, various audio-visual aids can be an outmost utility. The concerned NGO's should be encouraged the tamashas, the nukkad plays and the nautankies may be organized to sensitize the people. In Garhwal Hills of Utrakhand, there is concept of a 'Maiti Andolan' wherein the bride along with her groom plants a tree at the time their marriage ceremony. It has been a popular practice among the hill people. On the line of it, the concept of birthday tree can also be promoted among the parent and their children. The marriage ceremony tree or the birthday

tree may be an exciting practice in this regard.

Teacher's Role

Education acts as a powerful tool in the socio-economic transformation of a society, community and nation. It sharpens the eye of knowledge, develops awareness and makes mind logical. Teacher being the agent of social change, play an active role in shaping the behaviour of children to promote desire for environmental awareness. Teachers adopt age/level specific strategies to impart environmental education.

Apart from usual classroom teaching, teacher can play their significant roles as -

- (i) Providing opportunity to observe local environment features, problems and phenomena and changes in community.
- (ii) Allowing children to classify living and non-living things on the basis of criteria chosen by children themselves.
- (iii) Helping them to draw obvious inferences from their observation and such classification.
- (iv) Organizing out of class activities based on learning on immediate environment.
- (v) Co-relating the environmental issue while teaching the curricular subject.
- (vi) Creating awareness on renewal and non-renewal resources.
- (vii) Enabling students to acquire basic knowledge and understanding of the total environment, its problem and role of human being.
- (viii) Encouraging students in acquiring social values through active. Participation in environmental protection activities.
- (ix) Providing ample knowledge and skill regarding Gandhian concept of development.

Apart from these the teacher should tell students the fundamental duties of Indian citizen with regard to environment as incorporated in part IV-A of Indian Constitution to protect and improve the natural environment including forest, lakes, rivers and wildlife and have compassion for leaving creatures.

Teaching methods used by teacher in a formal system of education integrate environmental component with the education are role play, discovery method, observation method, dramatization, storytelling, games and puzzles, project method, educational visit and excursion up to secondary stage of education, seminar, symposia, project, group discussion, action research. Research project can be used at higher level of education.

Educational excursion and visit can be organized to study a chosen natural area, the culture of city or a town, the wild life, flora and fauna. The natural trails, cultural trails and zoo visits etc. will help the children to get firsthand knowledge of the environment. Beyond the class room the co-curricular activities can also be utilized in form of debate, essay writing competition, wall magazine, news bulletin etc. on the topic related to environment.

At the same time role of the teacher should be changed according to the new paradigm of education embodying the spirit of science democracy, and care for environmental, emphasis on number of key elements such as learning rather than teaching, building capacity of critical thinking and problem solved in along with local specificity in the context of a global education (NCF, 2005). At this juncture teacher's role becomes very vital.

References

1. Bloom, B.S. (1956). **Taxonomy of Educational objective Hand Book: The Cognitive Domain**, New York: Long Mans, Green and Co.
2. Pandey, S.N. (1990). **Vidayalay Starpar Parygran Shiksha**. New Delhi: NCERT.
3. Singh, K. (2007). **Creating an environment to educate about the environment J. School Science**, New Delhi: NCERT.
4. Shukla, R.P. (2004). Environment education & value. **Value education and Human Right**, New Delhi: Sarup & Sons.
5. N.C.F.S.E. (2005). **The National Curriculum frame work for school education**. New Delhi: NCERT.