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Review Of Research

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION: PERSPECTIVE AND HURDLES

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ABSTRACT

Environment is the sum total of all physical and biotic factors that surround and influence an organism. Human population pressures and its divergent activities, developments in technology that made economic miracles have led to environmental disasters and destruction of habitats. However, now it is believed that decline of some earlier civilizations was due to environmental crisis caused by man's utter indifference and lack of proper knowledge about conservation and management of environment. The importance of environment



education in understanding, preventing and solving problems related to environment has been widely accepted (IUCN).

Sustainable Development seeks to correct the imbalance of the last few centuries. It tries to promote social-economic development with environment protection. WCED in "Our Common Future" accepts seven environment strategies for achieving Sustainable Development. It also needs: i) An education system that stimulates a sense of sincerity, ii) A cultural system that creates an attitude to cope, and iii) An ethical system that upholds the dignity of mankind.

The paper is an attempt to understand the steps taken to create global awareness by international institutions and present education system. Environmental education can neither be ignored nor

overlooked in the interest of mankind. Schools and colleges are playing an active role to insure the preservation of quality environment. Sustainable Development stresses everything that one can do to save the planet. The paper is supported by a survey conducted by degree students who study the subject and take part in NSS, community awareness programs like waste recycle, tree plantation etc.

KEYWORDS:sustainability, holistic approach, preservation, Bruntland Report, inexhaustible resources, present generation, compromising, awareness, training.

INTRODUCTION:

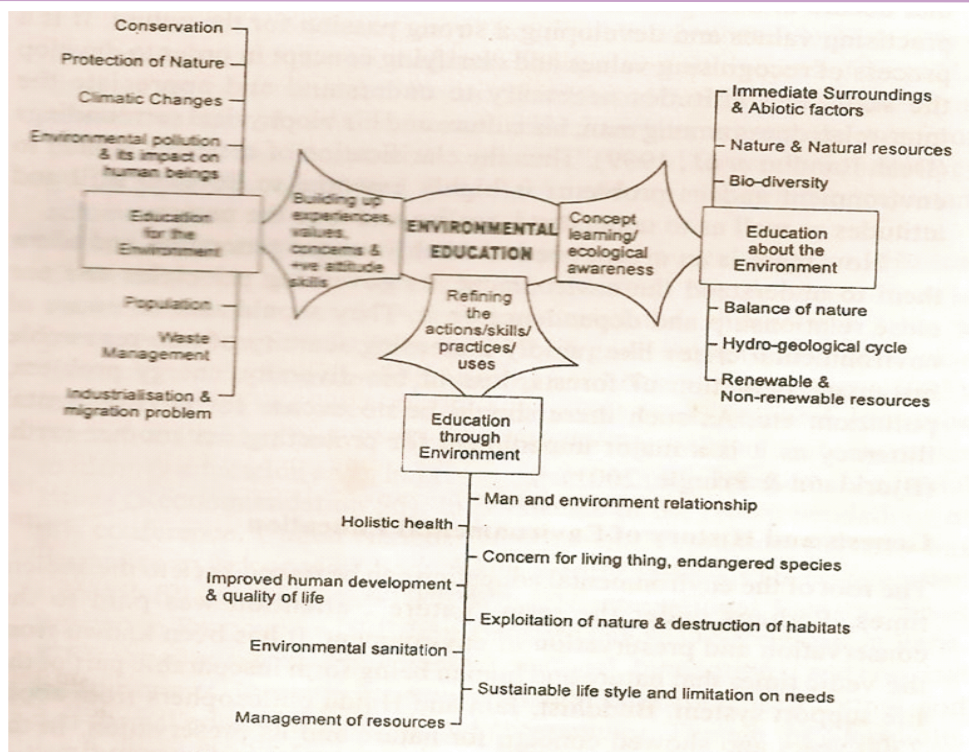
Environment is now a typical talk of the day all over the world. It comprises the whole range of diverse surroundings in which we perceive, experience and react to events and changes. Humans have considered it as a reservoir of resources but not a vital component of life. The recent Tsunami bears testimony to it. Fortunately some people are considering it seriously to take some measures to save the endangered environment. With mankind facing climatic changes all over the globe, extinction of species, pollution leading to destruction of habitats etc. advancement of the ecological thought has awakened the whole mankind for the protection of nature and its sustainable existence. Environmental consciousness has become a serious theme for discussion and deliberation at the global as well as national levels. To this process, much stress is being given on the environmental education to improve the awareness and attitude of the people so that they can care of the earth.

Till today nature bounties are overused indiscriminately in economic development and environmental assets are not factored in economic costs or priced very inadequately. The developments in Science and Technology that made economic miracles and needs of outraging human population have led to environmental disasters. How can we make education a perfect and integrated process of development of the brain and the souls of individuals for the sustainable progress of the States and the World? The Nations are classified as developed, developing and less developed and so confront different problems. The rich Nations can divert more resources for the cause of improving the quality of life of poor nations facing poverty, hunger and political upheavals. In order to make sustainable Development effective maxim were formulated by WCED (Our Common Future, 1987) to be accepted and practiced sincerely. It insisted sustainability from holistic point of view should be realized from—economic, environmental and socio-cultural milieu. Sustainable development seeks to correct the imbalance of the last few centuries. It tries to promote economic development without compromising the environmental issues. It stresses the need to view environmental protection and economic growth as mutually compatible and not necessarily conflicting objectives. It needs that many things be in place in society - peace, human rights, protection of children, safe shelter, education for all, food and nutrition and crucially a stable population.

As such, a nation's ability to develop sustainably depends on the capacity of the people to understand the complexity of human environment interaction and their eco-friendliness. An effective and meaningful environmental education is a challenge we must take it seriously if our future generations are to enjoy the benefits of national heritage.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION: CONCEPT AND PHILOSOPHY

It is the education about the environment, education for the environment and education in the environment. While education about the environment includes concepts and skills (Fig1.1), that are



necessary to understand, education for environment covers those aspects of education that cover preservation, conservation and up-gradation of the environment. Education in the environment looks into education outside classroom in the social and biophysical contexts in which it exists. It supposes to teach a person to interact fully with the surrounding world and at same time to improve his own inner world. It helps in maintenance of life and health, in self-preservation and in the preservation of human race as a whole. It provides each and every person, knowledge, opportunities, values, attitudes, interests, skills and commitment to protect and improve our environment.

The most common definition as given by the U.S office of Education states: “Environmental Education is the process that fosters greater understanding of society’s environmental problem solving and decision-making. It involves development of skills and insights needed to understand the structure, requirements and impact of interaction within and among various environmental entities, subsystems and systems.”

Thus, being a vital component of efforts to solve environmental problems, it must stay relevant to the needs of the community and yet constantly adapt to the rapidly changing social and technological landscape.

GENESIS / HISTORY:

Its root can be traced to ancient times, where nature and human beings form inseparable part of the life support system. In the modern sense, George Perkin has noted the concern for environment, in his book “Man and Nature”. Publication of books like Silent Spring by Rachel Carson and the Limits to Growth by Meadows, were significant landmarks in environmental education, as these publications started hot discussions on environmental issues.

With increase in rapid deterioration in environment, the intellectuals, politicians and common people were compelled to think about it leading to the formation of IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources.). The milestones of Environmental Education were

initiated in the 1970s, with major attention in Stockholm, Belgrade and Tibilis Conferences.

The United Nation also took on its agenda to spread environmental consciousness among the common people. Man and Biosphere Program, World Conservation Strategy, publication of Red data book etc. are some important achievements. The first UN sponsored Conference (1972) on 'Human Environment' held at Stockholm, stressed the need for environmental education. In pursuance of the recommendation UNEP (United Nation's Environment Program) was created as an independent body. Subsequently, UNESCO launched the IEEP (International Environmental Education Program) in 1975 in Paris. These aimed at assisting government, national, international and regional institutions to incorporate environmental education into formal and non-formal education systems and programs. The Belgrade Charter recognized the urgent need of designing environmental education program. The Tibilis Conference outlined a substantive structure, which was to become prototype of Environmental Education Program worldwide. By 1980s the term encompassed environmental studies, field studies, environmental sciences, urban studies, heritage education and conservation, as promoted by different organizations. The Agenda 21 of famous Earth Summit recommended that development and environment should be incorporated as an essential part of learning. In the Brundtland Report, Our Common Future, environmental agenda acquired a new term called sustainable development. The Millennium Development Goals (2000) agenda, stressed on environmental sustainability as a part of comprehensive development. The World Summit held in Johannesburg (2002) noted that much of current education falls far short of what is required and calls for a new vision and deeper and more ambitious way of thinking about education.

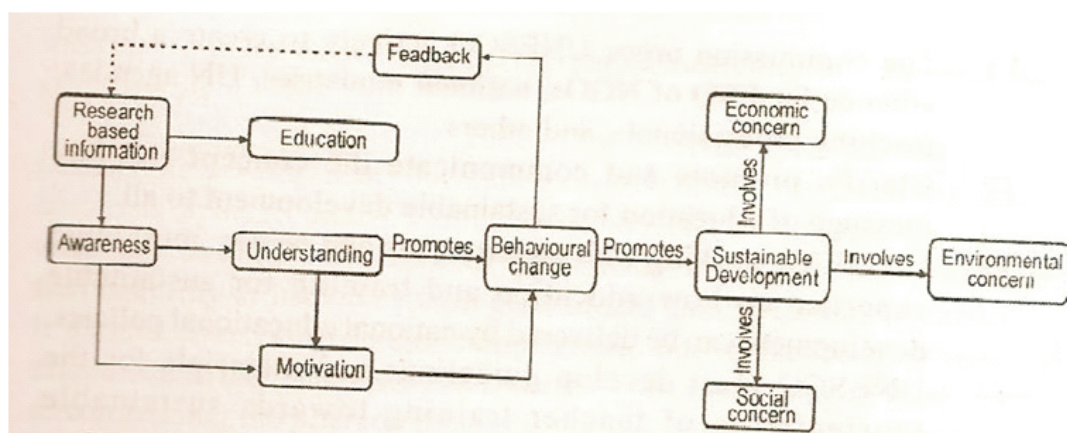
The ultimate aim of Environmental education is to formulate a responsible attitude in the young mind towards sustainable development. The development of sharing and caring habits help them to grow as responsible persons for solving problems. The principles of Sustainable Development, viz. 'live together' and allow others to live, will create broad minded, kind hearted human who can easily take care of his own environment without having a callous nature. Thus a child will come out from the cocoon of long years of getting environmental education with appreciation of planet earth, its beauty and with an assumption of environment ethics.

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:

It is a broad concept of social and economic progress. The term was coined by Gro Harlem Brundtland, who defined it as: "development that meets needs of the present without comprising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs".

It is not a concept that can be implemented through a 'top down' approach unlike high-end technologies, which can be acquired and put to use. In India, the first International Conference on Environmental Education was held at New Delhi in the year 1981 and the Late Mrs. Indira Gandhi outlined the objectives as:

"Environmental Education is to arouse social consciousness and make community aware of the fact that the interests of the individual and that of the community are both harmed by ecological disruption."



Education for Sustainable Development has three dimensions –environmental, economic and social, each of which is a function of a whole constellation of several factors, as everything on this earth is interconnected, inter-related and inter-dependent. Sustainable Development today means development along the lines of each culture and not development along a common centralized one. At the practical and operational level, it means ensuring self-sustaining societies and improvements in productivity and quality of life of communities and societies including basic needs, basic human rights and freedoms to participate in the political, economic, social and environmental spheres of their societies.

Sustainable Development is simply impossible if degradation is allowed to continue. Environmental education is needed for wise management and efficient use of resources. The important goals of such education are:

- Produce the human resource required by society;
- Promote research in industrial growth, survival and social progress;
- Generate knowledge for promoting a better socio-politico and economic order; and
- Lastly making the environment suitable for human habitation forever

CONCLUSION:

In India religious, spiritual or ethical efforts exist to understand Nature and human well-being. God has been identified with nature, wild animals and men. Daya, Marut, Agni, Varun, Mitra, Prithvi and Usha are the incarnation of nature. Nature is an embodiment of Truth, Beauty and Goodness. It therefore goes without saying that the very existence, survival and progress of man on earth depend on the quality of environment. The Directive Principles of State Policy on environment have been articulated in Article 48A, and Art 51A of the Constitution, stating that the State and citizen shall endeavor to protect and improve the environment. The national concern for Environmental Education is reflected in the National Policy on Education document. It observes: “There is a paramount need to create a consciousness in the environment. It must permeate all ages and all sections of the society beginning with the child. Environmental consciousness should be in the form of teaching in schools and colleges. This aspect will be integrated in the entire educational processes.”

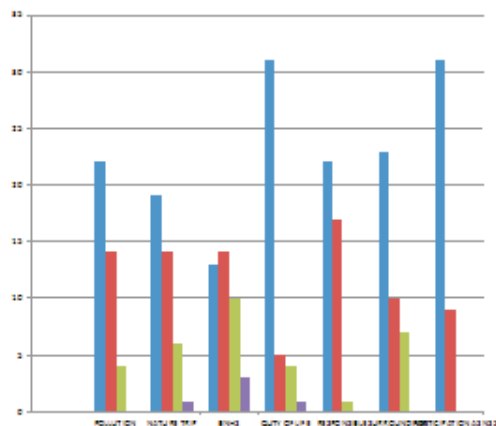
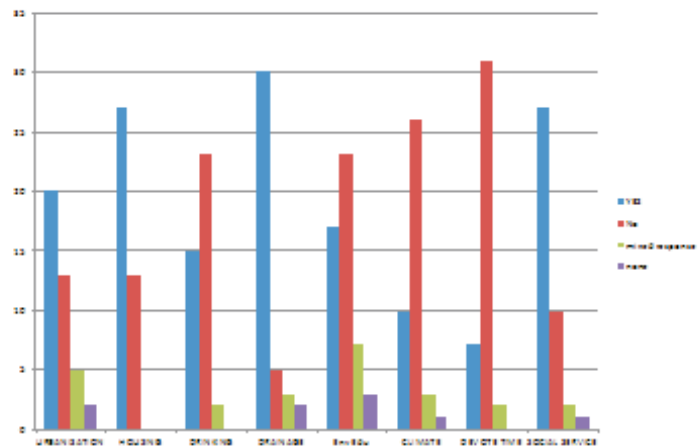
The scheme to implement environmental education in curriculum, as a compulsory subject is inbuilt and it is taught at all levels of education (School, College and University) in our country. Beside this many NGO’s are active today throughout the country in creating awareness besides developing study material and resource materials for the purpose. The Centre for Science and Environment, New

Delhi is regularly monitoring environmental scenario. The Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MoEF) is the nodal agency of the central government for planning, promotion and coordination of environmental and forestry programs. It accords itself through diverse activities such as National Environment Awareness Campaign, establishment of national and regional museums, and setting of eco-clubs in educational institutions, production and dissemination of films, popular publications and institutional awards maintained without much public participation. Any strategy for environmentally sound development needs the awareness, the help and active participation of citizens. Hence the most important task of environmental education for sustainable development must be to motivate people to get involved in community action and to ensure people’s participation in various environmental protection and management projects. In general, environment, education and development are the three pillars on which man can sustain life on earth.

The paper is supported by a study showing degree college students participating in community awareness programs, organized by NSS unit and NGO’s (Swadhar, YWCA). The observations reveal lack of interest and indifference towards environmental issues but thematic dramas related to environmental education were well accepted by all. The residents of Motilal Nagar were more vocal about the inconveniences around, caused by clustered houses, dirt on the roads, lack of proper amenities and at times too hot climate. Some elders were even expressing that the municipal corporation has cut down trees, in which as a common man they had no say.

A SURVEY – URBAN AREA

- Students & their surroundings
- Questionire to support
- Responses & Analysis
- Conclusion – Co-curricular Activities - NSS volunteers & Unit in their efforts are introducing awareness about the Environment in which they live
- Coordinators & Volunteers engage themselves in Project Work, Visit to the Nearby Slums, Adopting it, Thematic Street Plays, Visit to Museums & Places of Historical Importance, Exhibitions, Debates etc.
- Special training workshops on Disaster Management
- Optimistic View – Students are making paper bags & distributing, Collection of e-waste



A SURVEY – URBAN AREA ...2

- Observations
 - Certain questions relating to drinking water facilities, drainage cleaning is a matter of everyday concern
 - Tree Plantation or active involvement in Environmental Programs is almost absent among the elders & residents, but NSS volunteers enthusiastically participate as part of College event
 - Felling of Trees due to construction / roads causes a fear in their mind – media reports, surroundings
 - At College level, projects by NSS & specific note of collection of e-waste NGOs (Stree Mukti Sangha) has made a difference in a negligible %ge of Students
- Conclusion of Survey – NSS volunteers are understanding meaning of Sustainability & contributions as citizens in disasters.

Under the Stree Mukti Morcha's programme for Rag-pickers, the college students collect old news papers, text-books, papers from their house and neighbourhood. Where ever there is discarded office stationary or packing paper, electronic wastage is collected given to the above-said organization which in turn provides for 60% on return basis text-books and re-usable letter-pads and paper-cardboard folders etc. The organization has a team of self-help workers who have also taught students to make paper bags, which is distributed to local shopkeepers free of cost so that they use for carrying daily items. It helps to create awareness in a small way but now the shopkeepers are also extending support. Their response is friendly and they have openly started expressing that such paper-bags are better than polythene packets which cause more damage to water pipelines. These workers are also providing information to set up soil-pits with organic waste where cooperative societies or nearby college canteen where the kitchen waste is used in the pit to make manure which is used for gardening purpose.

SOCIAL CAPITAL

- Term used by Marianne E Krasny, Leigh Kalbacker, R C Stedman & Alex Russ, of Department of Natural Resources, Cornell University, USA
- Man most important resource
- Goals of Higher Education:
 - Produce the human resource require by society
 - Promote researches require for individual development, social progress & survival
 - Generate knowledge for promoting a better social, political & economic order
 - Environmental goal – making it suitable & sustainable for human habitats forever
- Man Roof & Crown of life on mother earth

MOTI NAGAR - GOREGAON



Fundamental pre-requisite is an adequately financed and effective education systems at all levels. Nations with strong educational systems need to reorient education, awareness and training to increase wide spread public understanding, critical analyses and support for SD. Education for sustainable future should engage a wide spectrum of institutions and sectors and should include the preparation of SD education plans. The core themes or education for sustainability should include lifelong education, interdisciplinary education partnership, multicultural education and empowerment.

Environmental and ecological educational programs in higher education must ensure that humans may remain the 'roof and crown of creation' forever on Mother Earth. The degree programs should contain relevant data on ecological issues; this will help the young mind work for sustainable progress on earth. This should require information on pollution, human rights, gender issues, health and population education be part of education. These are crucial issues related to the holistic concept of environmental education.

The main goal is to make the education system to promote human development for sustainability of life on earth in general and human species in particular. In short true sustainable development is that development that is pro-people, pro-nature, pro-job, pro-women and one that does not threaten future generation.

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