

International Multidisciplinary  
Research Journal

*Indian Streams*  
*Research Journal*

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RNI MAHMUL/2011/38595

ISSN No.2230-7850

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## ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION: NEED OF THE HOUR



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### Short Profile

Vipinder Nagra is working as an Assistant Professor at D.A.V. College of Education , Hoshiarpur.



### ABSTRACT:

Man has always been an inseparable part of the environment. With the passage of time he started ruthless tapping of natural resources leading to various environmental problems. The need of the hour is environmental education that can be imparted through formal education at various levels. Besides, this informal education, voluntary agencies, mass media and teacher also play significant role in this direction. An attitudinal change is necessary to implement environmental education in an effective way to save the already deteriorating environment.

### KEYWORDS

*Environmental Education , informal education, voluntary agencies .*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The interaction between man and environment is as old as the very existence of mankind on the earth. It is the exigent responsibility of man to preserve the enigmatic environment and improve it qualitatively, not only for himself but also for the posterity. But, man's desire and greed for more joy and comfort has led him to exploit nature's free goods to the extent of reducing its natural capacities for self-stabilization. The result is the erosion of environmental problems, a challenging situation.

Environmental problems like pollution of land, air, water and noise, climatic changes, ozone layer depletion, global warming, acid rain, loss of biological diversity, deforestation, waste disposal problems and other environmental hazards had become a global issue now a days. Not just these problems but also the problem of population explosion is adding fuel to the fire. Environmental issues have become a matter of great concern for all. The growing concern about these issues is evident from the fact that many reports about environment at the national and international level had frequently come up since the last thirty years (UN Conference on the Human Environment. Stockholm Report 1972, Belgrade Charter 1975, Tbilisi Report 1977 and Agenda 21 of Rio Declaration 1992, etc.). Not only reports but many campaigns, organizations and nations had come forward to arouse environmental awareness and for banning activities that endanger environment. However, these are only external and superficial measures that do not get to the root of the problem. Solving environmental problems requires greater cooperation and coordination between nations both at the regional and worldwide level leading to attitudinal shift among the masses.

The attitudinal shift is possible only through education, obviously a powerful vehicle bringing about change. In the field of environmental awareness and protection too the role of education becomes an important tool. Environmental education is the need of the hour for understanding of the multi-dimensional problems of depleting resources and ever increasing populations. A long term planning is vital to the survival of human species. Environmental education leads the way to such an understanding by helping the society and its individuals to develop their attitudes towards each other and their biophysical and social environment. Environmental education is a way of creating knowledge, understanding, values, attitudes, skills, abilities and awareness towards the environment and its protection.

The National Policy of Education (1986) and the Programme of Action (1992) have also stressed for the need of environmental education. The concern for developing environmental consciousness through education is also reflected in the document on National Curriculum of Elementary and Secondary Education- A Frame Work 1988, prepared by National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) in pursuance with the National Policy Of Education. This document proposes for the school curriculum to create a commitment on the part of the pupils to protect the environment and conserve nature and its resources. The current syllabus and the way it is taught across India, has largely been laid by the NCERT's efforts.

Many attempts to incorporate environmental education in curriculum at all levels have been made. The syllabi, textbooks and other instructional materials had been developed to follow an interdisciplinary approach at primary level and multidisciplinary approach at secondary level. But when it comes to actual teaching learning process level its basic objectives are totally ignored. It just remains as a part of knowledge domain and other domains (skills, attitude, etc.) are totally ignored. The lack is surely with the proper implementation of the rules and policies. The need of the hour stresses for an integrated, wholistic and participatory perspectives and that can be achieved only through proper formal and non-formal education.

The formal education system comprising of primary, middle, secondary and higher secondary level should include syllabus in a well-planned manner. At the primary level, where the child learns from his surroundings, the teaching should be about the general concepts of environment like nature study, health and hygiene, sanitation, food air, water etc. These contents should be taught in easy and interesting way through activities. More stress should be on the practical contents rather on the theoretical ones. These concepts should come in a natural way to them and that is possible with the cooperative efforts of the parents and teacher. At the middle level, more effective concepts of environment like our environment, environmental problems and their reasons, floods, droughts, earthquakes should be included. Interest should be created through practical and participatory approach. The stress should be on the thinking and reasoning power of children by making them to find out the reasons of various environmental problems and their solutions.

At the secondary level, where the child is more mature, stress should be on the knowledge of various natural resources, their uses and conservation. They should be made aware about the various plans and policies of environmental protection and its conservation. Along with this, practical implementation of various activities in the form of camps and community services should be organized. At the higher secondary level, environmental education should be included as a separate subject in the curriculum. The main area of stress should be on the research work related to different environmental problems, their effects and to find out effective solutions to combat these problems. The students should also be given training in dealing with the problems in the practical situations. Projects should be taken where maximum number of people should be made aware of the environment, its components, factors affecting the environment, effect of environmental problems at the local, regional, national and international level and to come up with concrete solution of the problems.

Environmental education should also be included in the curriculum of other training institutes also, like teacher training institutes, polytechnics, engineering colleges, extension services training centers, industrial training, administrative training and such like other institutes. The main objective of doing this is to make environmental education approachable to each and every individual of the society so that effective and logical steps could be taken to protect the already degrading environment. Otherwise, time is not far away when we will not be able to see our children playing happily on this planet, 'earth'.

Besides the formal system of education, non-formal system is also the best possible mode of disseminating environmental education to the masses. In India, where maximum percentage of the total population is not able to get formal education, this non-formal education acts as a best source to educate them regarding environment and its problems. People living in urban, rural, slum, tribal areas can be taught through non-formal mode of education. In this mode, cooperation of students, teachers, administrators, ministers and even general public can be sought. They can organize seminars, workshops, group discussions, posters and banners, painting etc regarding environmental problems and its deleterious effects on the mankind.

Voluntary agencies also play significant role in imparting environmental education. A lot many such types of agencies are coming up through out the world that reaches the common man in an effective and interesting way. These agencies work out at the local, regional and national level. These non- governmental organizations all fight for a common cause to bring out better results. The popularly working voluntary agencies like autonomous bodies, industrial organizations, financial institutions, educational trusts, charitable trusts, non- governmental societies, all are cooperating with the government to fight for saving the environment. These agencies they have close relations with the various societies, communities and folkways etc and thus are in a better position to provide their services



to the people. With the financial assistance of the government these agencies are doing good job in this field. They make the people aware by organizing seminars, workshops, giving prizes, making use of audio-visual aids, demonstrations, plays, dance, puppet show, publications, posters, paintings, charts and banners etc. related with environmental issues. These organizations work along with other institutions in making their plans effectively implemented at the local and regional level. Certain organizations they also provide rewards to the persons working for the environmental awareness.

Besides all these agencies and institutions, mass media is the effective and efficient vehicle for imparting relevant information to the public. It can also be the voice for public concern and public opinion related to environmental issues. Mass media like radio, television, newspaper, feature films and documentaries etc. can be used to highlight the ill effects of environmental crisis. It can be used to inform to the masses that these are all due to their careless attitude towards their environment. They can improve it by following best possible measures and that too can be implemented with the help of mass media.

Teacher an important pillar of the education system plays significant role in the teaching learning process. He can be mobilized suitably to impart environmental education in an effective way. The environmental education being a part of the curriculum faces certain limitations, the reason being the resistance shown by the teachers. They themselves are not aware of the environment, its problems and their solutions. For making them an effective tool to impart environmental education it becomes imperative to develop their awareness level and an attitude of coping with the relevant issues. This is possible through proper training that can be imparted through pre-service and in-service training. The government should introduce not just theoretical but also practical aspects of environmental issues during their training period. Projects and action research should be introduced in their training curriculum to make them efficient tool for imparting environmental education. This would be more fruitful for the children who will come in their contact at all levels of formal and non-formal education. It would be worthwhile to have teachers, in all subject matter areas, involved in teaching experiences related to environmental quality as part of their training.

The rules and regulations drawn out for environmental protection and conservation should be strictly implemented. But all these measures and steps will prove superficial unless an inner urge develops within the individual to do something for the deteriorating environment. Until and unless that inner urge develops in the people neither externally enforced laws and norms will work out, nor will any of the activities and agencies can do good. The only way to develop that inner urge, to bring about attitudinal change, is by making people seriously know what exactly is going on in the environment and where it can lead them to, that is, the consequences of environmental degradation should reach the masses. We all together should unite and pledge to make environmental education programme a success for the sake of conserving and preserving the environment and to hand down to our coming generations a fresh, healthy and prosperous environment.

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