

A Study of Secondary School Student's Participation in Environmental Awareness Program

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ABSTRACT

Environmentally responsible actions may be acquired via comprehensive understanding of the problem, according to research results in the area, and information affects individual attitudes. Individuals also choose their environmental activities based on their prior knowledge; thus, it can be stated that establishing accurate and thorough environmental knowledge or environmental education is one of the most effective methods to solve environmental issues. This support has developed to the point that it can now be stated that environmental education's ultimate objective is the creation of ecologically responsible behavior and engaged citizens. Despite this agreement, the objective has yet to be met. Environmental educators and experts across the world have consistently said that any solution to the environmental problem would require environmental knowledge and awareness at all levels of education. Environmental education aims to increase people's awareness, knowledge, attitudes, skills, and involvement in environmental protection. The primary aim of environmental education, whether official or informal, is to raise awareness among a country's people. Environmental awareness, according to Madsen (1996), is required for environmental preservation and restoration. Madsen highlighted the importance of the general people understanding environmental issues. Leaders in the area of environmental education must have a broad grasp of environmental issues as well as environmental consciousness in order to address these issues. They must be ready to "take action based on information and comprehension." The necessity of the hour is for a robust environmental education programme to make people more sensitive to nature. Environmental education is a method of instilling information, understanding, values, attitudes, skills, abilities, and awareness of environmental preservation among people and social groups.

Keywords: Secondary School Student's, Environmental Awareness Program, environmental problem, environmental consciousness

INTRODUCTION

Environmental education's main goal is to "develop a world population that is aware of and concerned about the environment, its associated problems, so that the population has the knowledge, skill, attitudes, motivation, and commitment to work individually and collectively toward the solutions of current problems and the prevention of new ones" (UNESCO, 1990). It's a method of assisting people and communities in resolving basic problems with the world's present and future resource usage. However, increasing awareness of these problems alone will not result in change. To achieve sustainability, it must aggressively emphasize the importance of personal initiative and social engagement. Environmental Education is also the study of the connections and linkages between dynamic nature and human systems. In other words, it refers to the methods through which individuals of all ages are assisted in learning about environmental problems, either as part of their regular curriculum or via specialized activities. Environmental education also bridges the gap between people and nature, prepares kids for the future, empowers environmental stewards of all ages, fosters community, and transforms lives. Environmental education seems to be a process that provides people with environmental awareness, information, skills, attitudes, and dedication. Environmental education should be a lifelong process that begins in preschool and continues through all formal and non-formal phases, with an emphasis on interdisciplinary discipline in order to achieve a comprehensive and balanced viewpoint. Environmental education has many advantages, according to Suzana Ariff Azizan (2009):

i. Better understanding of the environment: By taking these courses students will have a better knowledge regarding the topic. The experiential learning adopted gives the opportunity for students to understand the relationship between human and the environment.

ii. Raise awareness on the importance of environment: Students will be exposed to the various issues pertaining Mother Nature and its environment. This will give them ideas on how they can contribute in protecting and preserving the environment and allow students to be more responsible with their surroundings.

iii. Form an ethical society: Throughout the courses, students are taught to look at the impact of human actions on environment and how the environment influences our life. Moreover, the discipline the students and help them to be environmentally ethical; to think wisely and make appropriate decisions to protect and preserve the environmental value.

iv. Enhance students' good characteristics: The strategies applied in the curriculum such as the development of critical thinking and skills motivate students to build up good characteristics in them. This includes making the right decision, problem solving and learning to work as a team.

v. Produce a balanced human being: With environmental education included in their curriculum, students' lives will be more balanced, since they will not be exclusively focused on

career-based education in the different areas they are studying, such as law, engineering, and architecture (Ibrahim, 2012).

Due to a lack of ongoing and thorough environmental education in educational institutions, youngsters have come to disregard the significance of environmental preservation in their everyday lives. This is due to the fact that kids do not get constant exposure to environmental problems and knowledge via official or informal schooling (Hansen A, 1991). Furthermore, research in this field shows that, although environmental education is included in the curriculum, it confronts certain challenges in terms of effective implementation. It is possible to improve the effectiveness of the information given to pupils as well as maintain their inner desire for good behaviors by adding topic specialization. Environmental education plays an essential part in the preservation and conservation of the world's environment, alongside the use of new eco-friendly technology to reduce the stress of human activities on the environment.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS – GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, having met at Stockholm from 1972, was the first evaluation report that took the environmental problems into consideration globally. The agenda of the conference consisted of the following:

- (a) Planning and management of human settlements for environmental quality.
- (b) Environmental aspects of natural resource management.
- (c) Identifications and control of pollutants and nuisances of broad international significance.
- (d) Educational, Information, Social and cultural aspects of environmental issues.
- (e) Development and environment.
- (f) International Organizational implications of action proposals

The results of the deliberation of this workshop were spelled out a framework and statement of objectives and guiding principles for environmental education. The Belgrade workshop was followed by a series of regional meetings. Belgrade Charter, which was issued in the environmental education workshop held at Belgrade, Yugoslavia in 1975, emphasizes the basic aim of environmental education as, "To develop a world population that is aware of and concerned about the environment, its associated problems, so that the population will have the knowledge, skill, attitudes, motivation and commitment to work individually and collectively towards the solutions of current problems and prevention of new ones" (UNESCO, 1990).

The Inter-governmental Conference on Environmental Education (UNESCO, 1978) recommended the primary categories of environmental education curriculum goals and objectives of: (a) awareness, (b) knowledge, (c) attitudes, (d) skills, and (e) participation. While these components have been cited in many documents, articles, and books in the last decade (Athman and Monroe, 2000; Callicott and Rocha, 1996; Day and Monroe, 2000; Gough, 1997; Palmer, 1998), not all authors agree upon the degree of importance of one objective over the other.

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, the Earth Summit, gave high priority in its Agenda 21 to the role of education in pursuing the kind of development that would respect and nurture the natural environment. It focused on the process of orienting and re-orienting education in order to foster values and attitudes of respect for the environment and envisaged ways and means of doing so. By the time of the Johannesburg Summit in 2002 the vision broadened to encompass social justice and the fight against poverty as key principles of development that is sustainable. The human and social aspects of sustainable development meant that solidarity, equity, partnership and cooperation were as crucial as scientific approaches to environmental protection. Besides re-affirming the educational objectives of the Millennium Development Goals and the Education for All, Dakar Framework for Action, the Summit proposed the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development as a way of signaling that education and learning lie at the heart of approaches to sustainable development.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS – INDIAN PERSPECTIVES

Mrs. Indira Gandhi's involvement in the United Nations Conference on Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972 officially launched India's environmental movement. The department of science and technology created a national committee on environmental planning and coordination as the apex authority. The word "environment" was first used in the fourth five-year plan (1969–74), which said that "harmonious growth is only possible on the basis of a thorough assessment of environmental problems."

The first international conference on environmental education was held in New Delhi in 1981, and the late Mrs. India Gandhi stated that the purpose of environmental education is to help raise social consciousness and make the community aware that ecological disruptions harm both the individual and the community. New Delhi hosted the second International Conference on Environmental Education in 1985.

According to the National Policy on Education (1986), "creating an awareness of the environment is a vital necessity." Beginning with the infant, it must pervade all ages and sectors of society. Environmental awareness should be included into school and college curricula. This element will be included into the educational process as a whole. In this regard, the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India (22nd November, 1991) directed state governments and education

boards to make environmental education a compulsory subject at all levels of education (schools and colleges) and entrusted the responsibility for preparing environmental education syllabus at various levels of school education to NCERT (18th December, 2003). (class I to XII). At the elementary level, focus must be placed on making the most of school and home environments, as well as other settings, in order to develop environmental knowledge and appreciation. Children should engage in basic projects linked to various environmental concerns and problems in upper primary school, while real-life circumstances and possibilities for community-based environmental action should be presented in secondary school. At the senior secondary level, students must be exposed to real-life situations where environmental issues are present, and appropriate action must be done via extension work. Students at this level are extremely responsive and active, making them well-suited to comprehending the consequences of environmental damage and taking preventative measures. Various studies have shown that attitudes are established at this period of childhood that tend to last.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS – INDIAN CONSTITUTION

Our cultural beliefs and customs include environmental preservation. “Man's paradise is on earth; this living planet is the favorite location of everyone; it contains the benefits of nature's gifts; live in a beautiful spirit,” according to the Atharvaveda. The Indian constitution contains the foundation for environmental conservation and preservation, without which life cannot be enjoyed. Knowledge of constitutional provisions relating to environmental preservation is essential nowadays in order to increase public involvement, environmental consciousness, and environmental education, as well as to raise public understanding about the need of preserving ecology and the environment.

The Indian Constitution's chapter on basic responsibilities clearly states that every person has a responsibility to preserve the environment. Article 51-A (g) states, "It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to protect and improve the natural environment, including forests, lakes, rivers, and wild life, and to have compassion for living creatures." The Indian constitution's directive principles are geared toward the creation of a welfare state. One of the components of a welfare state is a healthy environment. Article 47 states that increasing the quality of nutrition and standard of life of its citizens, as well as improving public health, are among the state's main responsibilities. Public health improvement also includes environmental preservation and enhancement, without which public health cannot be guaranteed. Article 48 is about agricultural and animal husbandry organisation. It instructs the government to take measures to modernise and scientificize agriculture and animal husbandry. It should, in particular, take efforts to preserve and improve breeds, as well as ban the slaughter of cows and calves, as well as other milch and draught animals. “The state must strive to preserve and enhance the environment, as well as to safeguard the country's forests and wild life,” according to Article 48-A of the constitution.

Part III of the Indian Constitution provides basic rights that are necessary for a person's growth and to which a person is naturally entitled just by virtue of being human. The right to the environment is also a right without which an individual's growth and full potential cannot be realised. This part's articles 21, 14, and 19 have been utilised to preserve the environment.

Every person in India has a basic right to practise any profession or carry on any activity, trade, or business, according to Article 19 (1) (g) of the Indian constitution. This is subject to some limitations. A citizen cannot do business if it poses a health risk to the society or the broader public.

As a result, environmental protections are built into the system. In *Cooverjee B. Bharucha Vs Excise Commissioner, Ajmer* (1954, SC 220), the Supreme Court said that where environmental protection and the right to freedom of commerce and occupation collide, courts must balance environmental concerns with basic rights to carry on any activity.

Article 21 protects the right to life as a basic right. It includes the right to an environment free of illness and infection. The right to a healthy environment is an essential aspect of the right to live in dignity. *Rural Litigation and Entitlement Kendra vs. State*, AIR 1988 SC 2187, was the first case to recognise the right to live in a healthy environment as part of Article 21 of the Constitution (Popularly known as Dehradun Quarrying Case).

It is the first case of its type in India, including environmental and ecological concerns, in which the Supreme Court ordered that unlawful mining be stopped under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. The Supreme Court regarded the right to live in a pollution-free environment as part of the basic right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution in *M.C. Mehta vs. Union of India*, AIR 1987 SC 1086. Parts IX and IXA of the Constitution were introduced in 1992 by the 73rd and 74th Amendments, respectively, to provide constitutional legitimacy to democracy at the grassroots level via Panchayats and Municipalities.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION, AWARENESS AND TRAINING (EEAT)

The 'Environmental Education, Awareness and Training (EEAT)' is a flagship scheme of the Ministry for enhancing the understanding of people at all levels about the relationship between human beings and the environment and to develop capabilities/skills to improve and protect the environment.

This scheme was launched in 1983-84 with the basic objective to promote environmental awareness among all sections of the society and to mobilize people's participation for preservation and conservation of environment. EEAT Scheme has the following objectives:

- (i) To promote environmental awareness among all sections of the society;

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- (ii) To spread environment education, especially in the non-formal system among different sections of the society;
- (iii) To facilitate development of education/training materials and aids in the formal education sector;
- (iv) To promote environment education through existing educational/scientific/research institutions
- (v) To ensure training and manpower development for environment education, awareness and training;
- (vi) To encourage non-governmental organizations, mass media and other concerned organizations for promoting awareness about environmental issues among the people at all levels;
- (vii) To use different media including films, audio, visual and print, theatre, drama, advertisements, hoarding, posters, seminars, workshops, competitions, meetings etc. for spreading messages concerning environment and awareness; and
- (viii) To mobilize people's participation for preservation and conservation of environment.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

For children to develop environmental ethics, we must redefine the objectives of formal education. Schooling has been an exercise for the purpose of enabling the individual to extract the maximum advantage from the natural and social environment in which he operates. This, perhaps, was reasonable when we could move away from the ecological crisis, with our growing awareness of the finite capacity of the biosphere, and man's ability to alter its life support systems drastically and permanently, we realize that the central objective of education must shift. Man and environment must now be presented in schools as a single system in which the activities of the individual must be adjusted to the capacities of the environment. Only in this way, can both man and environment be maintained in a healthy state. We must help children "to perceive themselves as part of their environment". The "object" environment is to be taken as a personal responsibility a pre-requisite for self-determination. Accordingly, the ideas to be developed in schools are:

1. The complementary character of organism and environment.
2. The selectivity of the individual into input and output.
3. The extent of interconnectedness from an individual outwards.
4. The enabling and constraining properties of energy and material resources.
5. The significance of short term and long term changes.
6. The consequences of individual, society and environment of human life styles.
7. The choice of criteria and the procedures available for guiding and managing changes.

1. Environmental Education and School Curriculum

The formulation of the curricula material on environmental education is of a more difficult nature than that of history of literature. A well-designed program should be based not only on the needs but also should be on the skills of the learner. The curriculum projects should be planned horizontally as well as vertically. Disciplines, such as social sciences and science should not be studies in isolation. The curriculum should be flexible so material can be presented according to the backgrounds, needs and aspiration of the student, the curriculum should have vocational, citizenships and personal goal. There are two models of environmental education curriculum suggested by Hungerford and Peyton (UNESCO Environmental Education Series 22) one model is called the interdisciplinary (single subject) model. This relies primarily on all disciplines and relevant components of many disciplines drawn upon to create a distinct environmental education unit, course or module. The other module is called multidisciplinary because environmental education components are infused into other established disciplines where appropriate.

2. Environmental Education at the Pre-Primary and Primary Levels

Environmental education starts at home and in its immediate neighborhood, activities, particularly group activities, are important at this stage. Manipulative skills are developed through helping in the home and at play. Some informal training is received in personal hygiene, and problems of food and water contamination.

At the pre-primary level the basic objective is to address the child's emotional orientation to nature and to the environment of home and neighborhood. This level is followed by more formal schooling at the primary school (ages 5-7 years and 11-14 years). Mental alertness towards the environment seems to develop in most children at the age of 9-10 years. They can appreciate the interactions of man and nature and the relationship between hygiene and nutrition and are ready to accept the demonstrations of such interrelationships. These ages provide a most challenging task for teachers and curricula designers, activity planners and teaching educators. Teachers of these age groups often need a choice of resource materials, help and counseling services.

3. Environmental Education at the Secondary Level

Students enter secondary schools between the ages of 11 and 14 and leave between ages 16 and 19. They thus enter as children and leave as adolescents. Secondary school students are usually receptive and strongly motivated, and are capable of assimilating an environmental education, that is (a) value oriented, (b) community oriented and (c) concerned with human well-being. Since secondary education was often oriented to traditional disciplines, there was little room for teachers to make use of integrative environmental elements. Multidirectional environmental knowledge implies a diversity of skills. In some countries the emphasis was on introducing environmental aspects into school science courses and integrating these later.

DEVELOPMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL KNOWLEDGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL ATTITUDES

Environmental knowledge is defined as the factual information possessed by a student about environmental issues. Facts and events in the content areas of ecological concepts, pollution, wild life, natural resources, population and persons and organizations are involved in the environmental movement. The influence of environmental knowledge on environmental attitude has been the focus of study and discussion. It is true that much of the damage caused to the planet is due to man's ignorance of how to deal with nature. At one time the focus of socio-scientific discussion on science, technology and man was how best to use science and technology in the service of man and how best to tap and utilize natural resources. Today the focus of discussion is how best to utilize science and technology without endangering the planet, and how best to conserve the remaining resources for our grandchildren. Following are some knowledge objectives of environmental education, the understanding of which are essential for change in environmental attitude.

1. The earth has finite resources. All life depends on how successfully human beings can learn to harmonize their use of the earth's resources with natural communities and ecosystems.
2. Due to increase in transport and communication planet earth is more like a spaceship than the planet it once was, and is more vulnerable to destruction.
3. The economic benefit created by a technology at the local level is not the only criterion which can be used to assess its value. It is equally important to assess its global influence on the planet.
4. Science and technology can be used for not only economic growth but also for improving the physical and mental health of individuals as well as civic hygiene and sanitation.
5. Economic growth may improve the standard of living, but it may not improve the quality of life, which is a better index of the wellbeing of a community.
6. Man, though biologically superior, is not the most important species on earth, because all species play an equally important role in maintaining the life support system of the earth.
7. Man is the only organism who consciously modifies his environment. Naturally he is solely responsible for maintaining the quality of life on this planet.
8. Continued contact with nature and an appreciation of the beauty of nature are essential to man's spiritual and emotional well-being.
9. The effects of ecological destruction need not be permanent, and can be reverted if the community acts fast. Prolonged indifference to an ecologically disturbed area can make it permanently inhospitable.

10. It takes millions of years for a species to evolve, but it can be exterminated in a very short time.
11. The extermination of a species of plant or animal is permanent and irrevocable.
12. the cost of repairing ecological damage is much less if the extent of damage is less. Prevention or early intervention is better than cure.
13. Technological progress is not incompatible with environment. Conservation provides man with spiritual and emotional benefits, technology provides material benefits.
14. Man's survival depends on the natural life support system of the planet and other species of plants and animals in these life support systems with which he is directly or indirectly related.
15. The environmental crisis can be averted only if people all over the world unite, and cooperate to protect the environment.

CONCLUSION

Environmental awareness has been focused in the area of environmental education by global educators and environmental experts in recent years, and it has been utilized with an assertive viewpoint on the environment. Environmental sensitivity requires a high level of awareness and goals in terms of attitudes. Environmental awareness goals are aimed at assisting social organizations and people in developing awareness and sensitivity to the environment, as well as environmental issues. Furthermore, attitude-related goals assist students in developing a set of environmental values as well as a sense of responsibility and desire for active involvement in environmental preservation and improvement. Environmental awareness is one of the prerequisites for developing sensitivity, values, and attitudes in people. Environmental awareness is described as the awareness of natural resources and the environment, as well as the desire to protect them. In other terms, environmental awareness is knowledge that leads to concern for environmental protection and enhancement. The amount of knowledge that people have about green consumerism has an impact on their attitudes and behaviors. Recent studies indicate that consumers are conscious to the degree that the product itself is a significant decision-making variable influencing environmental behavior. Studies on students' attitudes about the environment in connection to environmental knowledge, interest, behavior, and socioeconomic factors have been conducted all over the globe, in both developed and developing nations.

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