Environmental Education - The Need of The Day

Meena Kumari
Research Scholar,
Dakshina Bharat Hind Prachar Sabha
Madras

Abstract
Environmental education is a holistic concept that encompasses knowledge of the natural world as well as emotions, dispositions, and skills. Polluted water destroys the flora and fauna living in canals and rivers. Along with, the importance of social environment should also be taught to children. Environmental education involves children, teachers and communities working collectively and democratically towards the resolution of environmental questions, issues and problems. It is interdisciplinary, multi-disciplinary and super disciplinary. It is about values, attitudes, ethics and actions. It is not a subject or an ‘add-on’. Nor is it an option. It is a way of thinking and a way of practice. It is a positive contribution to counteract & the ‘doom and gloom’ and helplessness that many feel about the enormity of environmental and social problems. It is certainly more than recycling, corn posting and keeping earthworms. The goal of environmental education, according to the is “to develop a world population that is aware of, and concerned about, the environment and its associated problems, and which has the knowledge, skills, attitudes, motivations, and commitment to work individually and collectively toward solutions of current problems and the prevention of new ones.” The ultimate goal of environmental education is the development of an environmentally literate citizenry. Environmentally literate individuals understand environmental issues and how human decisions affect environmental quality.

Keywords: Environmental Education, Positive Contribution, Commitment, Environment Problems, Literate Citizenry, Natural World
1 Introduction

Environmental education and training plays an important role worldwide in enabling the integration of the principles of sustainable development into international, national and local policies and programmes for the environment and for education. They also influence how the three pillars of sustainable development - biophysical, economic and social are understood and implemented. This requires a reorientation of educational systems, policies and practices to provide citizens with appropriate knowledge, skills and ethical commitment to engage critically in decision-making and action on current and emerging environmental and development problems. Today man is living in a world of crises. The social, economic, political and value crises are some of threats which the humanity faces and these threats are quite alarming. Added to this, in the recent decades, the environmental crisis has become another important factor which has made everyone in the world to think of its gravity. Though the environmental dimension has its own history, it has gained prominence in the recent past due to several reasons such as urbanisation, industrialisation, automation and population explosion along with pollution, acid rains, gas leaks, nuclear disasters which have made man a helpless victim. With growing awareness of the complexity of current environmental crises, we find that the boundaries between education and communication are blurred and strategies from multiple fields are called on to improve public involvement and solve complex problems. New and old terms encompass slightly different meanings and suggest alternative ways of designing environmental education programs: adaptive management, civil society, collaborative learning, public deliberation, environmental justice, social capital, service learning, sustainable development, education for sustainability, environmental citizenship, stewardship education, environmental literacy, and public engagement are but a few that intersect with the work of educating about and for the environment. Environmental education methods can form the foundation for addressing each of these concepts. Educational system plays an important role to solve those problems. Therefore, the teacher is a key agency of change or transformation. Education in, about, and for the environment are three categorical approaches of environmental education. Education in and about the environment are intended to develop knowledge, awareness, attitude, and skills. Education for the environment is intended to enhance values, ethics, problem-solving skills, and action. It is education for the environment that seems to have the potential contributing most to the general wellbeing of environment. Teaching and learning on environmental education is necessary. It is needed to teach students to act for the environment.

2 Fostering learning: Role Of Educators

Environmental education is a profession that maintains high standards for instruction and professional conduct. Environmental educators create a climate in which children are motivated to learn about and explore the environment. Environmental educators possess the understandings, skills, and attitudes associated with environmental literacy and teaching. Educators combine their understanding of child development and developmentally appropriate practice with a basic understanding of the goals, theory, practice, and history of the field of environmental education. This knowledge provides a solid foundation on which educators can build their own practice.
2.1 Foundation of early environmental education

- Educators should recognize the broad view that environmental education takes, incorporating concepts such as systems, interdependence, and interactions among humans, other living organisms, the physical environment, and the built or designed environment.
- Understand that early childhood education and environmental education share an interdisciplinary perspective and integrate knowledge from across academic disciplines (i.e., common goals between environmental and peace education include the development of empathy, caring, and sense of belonging to a community)
- The facts that environmental education takes place in a variety of settings, and that sources of support, program requirements, and other factors vary from context to context are understood.

2.2 Professional Responsibility of Educators

- Environmental education that is appropriate, constructive, and relevant for children is provided. Educators should
- Identify ways in which environmental education can enhance the development of a young learner behave responsibly, respectfully, and reasonably during instruction
- Respect the process of inquiry and the application of environmental investigations in instruction
- Identify and practice ways of continually updating information about the environment and early child pedagogy, current research, environmental education materials, and instructional methods

2.3 Planning & Implementing Environment Education

Educators provide interdisciplinary, investigative learning opportunities that are central to environmental education and developmentally appropriate for children. A range of instructional methods to meet the needs of different learners are employed. Educator should

- Identify and use methods for presenting the environment or environmental concerns in appropriate and engaging ways for learners of different ages, backgrounds, levels of knowledge, and developmental abilities
- Select environmental education materials and strategies that are developmentally appropriate recognize and acknowledge the validity of varying cultural perspectives present in a groups of learners; tailor instructional approaches to respond to these perspectives and use them as an educational resource
- Use a variety of teaching methods and strategies appropriate for the environmental education content and context use culturally, linguistically, and developmentally. Appropriate teaching methods appropriate for the learner and goals of the program.
- plan age-appropriate environmental education instruction and programs that meet specific instructional goals produce a plan for environmental education instruction that enhances coordination or integration across disciplines or helps meet specific goals of environmental education or help with the development of the child.
- Identify and use sources of information about instructional materials and other resources including training offered by national, state, and local environmental education and use
diverse settings for early childhood environmental education, appropriate to different subject matter and available resources. These may include the schoolyard, laboratory, field settings, community settings, museums, zoos, demonstration sites, or libraries.

3 What can be done?
Environmental education is essential to understand and tackle the environment problems. The following suggestions are given below for facing the environmental problems through the environmental educational programme:

(1) Environmental education should be closely linked with Gandhian thought.

(2) Environmental education should result in the development of an ecological ethics—a change in attitude of man towards man, society and nature, in realization of man as part of nature, not alien to it.

(3) The UGC should accord high priority in establishing courses in colleges and universities on environmental education.

(4) The instructional materials on environmental education should be produced according to the local needs. The text books and teaching aids should be developed to supplement instruction. Writing of text books on environmental education should be encouraged.

(5) Trained teachers should be appointed in schools.

(6) Teachers, parents, public, doctors, engineers, planners administrators and scientists should be involved in environmental education programme.

(7) The inter disciplinary research projects on environmental problems should be undertaken.

(8) Seminars, conferences and workshops should be organized from time to time on environmental education.

(9) The general public should be educated about the environmental degradation and improvement of the environmental quality through mass media and visual aids etc. Documentary films should be prepared on these themes and exhibited for the benefit of the people.

(10) The Govt. should establish Environmental Research Centers in every state.

(11) Adequate funds should be provided by the UGC, Department of Science and Technology Central and State Governments for effective implementation of environmental education programme.

4 Improve Skills
Some education and communication programs aim to do more than develop knowledge and understanding. They seek to build skills that enhance or change practice, performance, and behaviour. In this category, learners apply or implement a skill, or organize and critique information. Like the
previous two categories, educators purposefully facilitate learning toward a particular goal. Unlike the previous two categories, the educator may more actively incorporate theories of diffusion to improve the adoption of behaviour’s. School programs can enable youth to practice citizenship, critical thinking, and group communication skills through activities such as service learning and issue investigation for environment awareness. Employers can increase staff effectiveness by providing hands-on training of new techniques and tools. Community-focused initiatives may provide instruction for a new activity, such as planting a rain garden, or use social marketing techniques to encourage adults to adopt a behaviour that has been identified as a priority by the affected community regarding to environment conservation. In all cases, information is an essential core of the effort. In all cases the ultimate outcome is not disputed. The community and learners agree that clean water, resource conservation, or effective waste utilization are important goals; they just need targeted assistance to practice the desired behaviour. The effectiveness of strategies in this category is enhanced by using instructional materials created through interactive communication between learner and educator and by focusing efforts on issues that are more relevant to the learner for environment education. Several education authorities identify practice and application as an essential component of effective learning. The greater the involvement of the audience in defining these skills and skill-building strategies, the more closely they resemble those in the next category.

5 Approaches to environmental education

- Responsive to the need for enhancing the knowledge, skills and commitments required by individuals and groups to work towards a sustainable future;
- Responsive to environmental and development issues and risks at all levels, which are broaden the understanding of environmental complexity and interdependence;
- Cognisant of different systems of knowledge and social values about environment and development, mobilising prior knowledge, fostering critical engagement, and encouraging action taking;
- Responsive to changing context and needs, and promoting flexible processes that allow for meaningful learning and skills development;
- Socially transformative and supporting educational approaches that promote empathetic understanding, ethical reasoning, and a commitment to action;
- Environmental awareness raising initiatives are often unstructured and do not follow the basic principles of environmental education. Often such initiatives target people with specific messages aimed at changing their attitudes and behaviours without an understanding of the context of their daily lives.
- Many international organisations, government departments, civil society and industry groups as well as institutions of learning around the world are involved in Environmental Education and Training. To promote sharing of lessons of good practice from these programmes in order to avoid duplication of efforts, to encourage innovation, and to enhance high quality of programmes. It does this through establishing networks, partnerships and various mechanisms for communication. It also facilitates dialogue between countries and programme leaders through conferences, seminars and workshops.
6 Conclusion

Although there are some good programs to train pre-service and in-service teachers in environmental education, these programs tend to be inconsistently available. Teachers often express misgivings about their ability to conduct environmental education programs and with outdoor classroom management. Further, many agencies and organizations that have environmental education as part of their missions, but lack the expertise among their staff to develop and implement effective education programs. Further discussion is needed to improve the quality and availability of professional development for pre-service and in-service teachers and for future non-formal environmental educators.

7 References

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