

## ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION: THE DEADLY NEED

**Dimple Saluja**

Department of Extension and communication, Faculty of Family and Community Sciences  
The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Fategunj, Vadodara (INDIA)

E-mail : dkshatriya@rediffmail.com

*Received September 14, 2007      Accepted March 4, 2008*

### ABSTRACT

Global environment and ecology are rapidly becoming the most demanding subjects for debate, decision and action as the emergence of environmental problem pose shift challenge fro physical sciences as well a social sciences. Environmental education has single, defined but multi faced object the environmental crisis. Environmental learning about the factor cases and solutions to the environmental crises learning about the environmental is `immediate' reaction to concrete problems in management of natural resources. Environmental education seek to develop the ability to assess environmental situations and casual chains of relationships leading to environmental damage the interaction among social economic and physical factors, mutually related and over lapping developments networks and feed back responsibility for future generations economy and care in use of all natural resources respect of revolution nature and life recognition of the limits of natural human action and self restriction and (i.e.) acquiring the ability to perceive nature Environmental education aims at ultimately for reaching and manifold behavioral changes in everyday life and at the work place. University education in India has three major components : teaching, research and extension. Out of more than 100 universities, there are about 20 universities teaching courses in environmental areas. Besides these, there are also research institutes and professional institutions like Indian Institutes of Technology, several Engineering Colleges, Schools of Planning and Architecture etc. which offer courses in environmental engineering.

Environmental education is the tool for sustainable development. Environmental education serves society in a variety of ways. Environmental education also serves society by providing a critical reflection the world, especially its failings bad injustices, and by promoting greater consciousness and awareness, exploring new vision and concepts, and inventing new techniques and tools. Environmental education, humanity's best hope and most effective means to achieve sustainable development. Environment education must not be equated with schooling or formal environmental education alone. It include non-formal and informal modes of instruction and learning as well including traditional learning acquired in home and community. This community of teachers can be widened to include all those. Whatever their role in society, who percieve a need or duty to inform and educate people regarding the requirements of a sustainable future. While sustainable development is a long-term goal for human society and a process that necessary needs to take place over time, there is a sense or urgency to make progress quickly before time runs out. There is now a new vision of environmental education.

**Key words :** Environment, Environmental education, Integrating approaches, Sustainable development, Environmental policies, Action and Cooperative networking

## INTRODUCTION

Global Environment and ecology all rapidly becoming the most demanding subjects for debate, decision and action as the emergence of environmental problem pose shift challenge for physical sciences as well as social sciences. The world over development resulted in disparities in terms of socio-economic conditions between rich and poor countries. Economic trends had benefited a privileged minority and had done little to meet the basic needs of the vast majority of people which degrading the environment through pollution and deforestation.<sup>1</sup>

### Environmental education

Environment refers to all those condition and their effects which influence the life of man at any place and at any time. "environment may be defined as the sum total of all condition and influences that affect the development.

Environmental education has a single clearly defined but multifaceted object the environmental crises. Environmental learning is learning about the factor, cause and solutions to the environmental crises learning about to environment is immediate reaction to concrete problems in management of natural resources.<sup>2</sup>

### Need for Environmental education

For approximately more than twenty years, the educational institutions of the world have been making substantial efforts to met the challenges arising from politics, science and public opinion towards integrating environmental concern. A popular slogan of the international ecology movement is "thank globally act locally" for students of environmental education in India. It is important to learn to differentiate between aspect in environmental education that in typically Weston, European or Indian and global.

Today environmental education is an important segment within the educational system. In some countries at also constitutes a political pedagogical action programmers to be developed and pursued by social groups,

government the scientific community and educational institutions. This programme includes all educational activities consciously confronting and attempting to overcome the environmental crisis.<sup>3</sup> It is a new programme encompassing the following aspects :

- I. Goals concepts and components of the specific educational measures.
- II. Relationship between environmental crises and environmental education.
- III. Subjects and actors – teachers and pupils and their qualifications.
- IV. Target groups.
- V. Local government.
- VI. Educational Institutions.
- VII. Conditions of access and participation.

Environmental education seek to develop the ability to assess environmental situations and the causal chains of relationships leading to environmental damage the interaction among social economic and physical factors, mutually related and ones capping developments networks and feed back responsibility for future generations economy and call in use of all natural resources respect of revolution natural and life recognition of the limits of reaction and (re -) acquiring the ability to perceive nature.

Environmental education aims at ultimately for reaching and man fold behavioral changes in everyday life and at the work place. The guiding principle and pedagogical ideal of environmental education is the environmental responsible consumer, industrial producer employee citizen, policy maker, traveler, athlete, tourist and farmers- every farmer who is aware of nature and lives in harmony with it. whoever learns about ecology, develops problem oriented and action oriented capabilities and insights.<sup>4</sup>

In this process to some extent elementary cultural processes and behavioral patterns must be learned a new scientist in many specialized areas of research agree that environment values, norms and behaviors patterns that have developed with industrial society and must

develop new attitudes and priorities. however, environmental education is essentially one of the hiatus and not one of compromise Education is preparation for and adoption to the compels daily life and work place world of the developed Western industrial System, on the one hand, and on the other education as preparation for active participation in confronting the problems created by this industrial system.<sup>5</sup>

### **METHODOLOGY**

Most of the research work has done on the basis of primary data. Although secondary data work has also been performed.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

University education in India has three major components; teaching, research and extension. Out of more than 100 universities, there are about 20 universities teaching courses in environmental areas. Besides these, there are also research institutes and professional institutions like Indian institutes of Technology, several Engineering colleges, schools of planning and Architecture, etc which offer courses in environmental engineering. At postgraduate level, four major areas are being offered.

1. Environmental Engineering: It includes subjects like architecture, civil engineering, town and country planning, including human settlements, slum improvement, landscape architecture, industrial design, regional science and urban ecosystem studies
2. Conservation and Management: It includes fields like land use, forestry, agriculture, energy, waste management, wildlife management, national parks, biosphere reserves, biological diversity, water management, mining management, non-pollution renewable energy development, etc.
3. Environmental Health: This includes public health and hygiene, sanitary and chemical engineering, occupational health, toxicology, nutrition and drug use.

4. Social Sciences: It includes subjects like human ecology, sociology, Social planning, cost-benefit, community organization and services, psychology and counseling environmental ethics and related areas of humanities

There are some institutions and centers assisted by Ministry of Environment and Forests, which provide formal education and training in environments areas such as Centre for environmental education (CEE), Ahmedabad, Indian Institute of Forest Management, Bhopal and India Gandhi National Forest Academy, Dehradun.

### **Integrating Environmental Concerns and Knowledge into Regular Education**

Environmental education is a comprehensive and cohesive whole that both draws on and advances broader educational goals and instructional methods.

Environmental education is at its heart an integrative undertaking. It includes different disciplines, wherein the methods and content of natural and social sciences, arts, mathematics, and humanities are linked to help learners fully understand and address complex environmental issues. To undertake environmental education, there is a need for the ability and the commitment to keep the whole picture in mind as the students are guided towards environmental literacy.

### **Three Important Approaches are Included in Environmental Education**

#### **Surroundings**

Understanding of the students is enhanced when the environmental education begins close to home, encouraging learners to explore and understand their immediate surroundings. Such a knowledge helps in understanding the larger systems, broader issues, and a lifetime of learning about causes, connections, and consequences.

#### **Systems**

The idea of systems helps make sense of a large and complex world. A system has

parts that can be understood separately, but the whole cannot be understood completely without recognizing the relationships among its parts. The human body can be seen as a system; so can galaxies. Organizations, individual cells, communities of animals and plants, and families can all be understood as systems. And systems are nested within other systems.

### **Interdependence**

The inculcation of a responsible attitude is possible by enlightening the student about the interdependence of every part/species in given system – especially, human beings should recognize that they are only a part of the system. Human societies, politics, economics, cultural activities, and technologies affect the systems and cycles of the rest of nature. Since we are ‘in’ the systems, a part of nature rather than outside it, we are challenged to recognize the ramifications of our interdependence.

### **Environmental Education : The Tool for Sustainable Development**

Environmental education serves society in a variety of ways. The goal of environmental education is to make people wiser, more knowledgeable, better informed ethical, responsible, critical and capable of continuing to learn, and become more productive and creative in the workplace. It is widely agreed that environmental education is the most effective means that society possesses for confronting the challenges of the present and for shaping the world of tomorrow. Access to environmental education is the sine qua non for effective participation in the life of the modern world at all levels.

Environmental education also serves society by providing a critical reflection on the world, especially its failings and injustices, and by promoting greater consciousness and awareness, exploring new visions and concepts, and inventing new techniques and tools. Environmental education is also the means for disseminating knowledge and developing skills, for bringing about desired changes in behavior, values and lifestyles, and for promoting public

support for the continuing and fundamental changes that will be required if humanity is to alter its course, leaving the familiar path that is leading towards growing difficulties and possible catastrophe, and starting the uphill climb towards sustainable development. Environmental education, in short, is humanity’s best hope and most effective means in the quest to achieve sustainable development.

Environmental education must not be equated with schooling or formal environmental education alone. It includes non-formal and informal modes of instruction and learning as well, including traditional learning acquired in the home and community. By defining environmental education broadly, one also widens the community of teachers to include teachers, lecturers, administrators, support staff, trainers, forest conservation staff, environmental health and planning officers, staff with non-governmental organization (NGOs), non-formal environmental education teachers, youth leaders, parent association members, media people, and representatives of learners in all contexts.

This community of teachers can be widened to include all those, whatever their role in society, who perceive a need or duty to inform and educate people regarding the requirements of a sustainable future. This would include international organizations, government departments and institutions, organizations and many others who are deeply involved in environmental education in the broad sense of the term used here. Many firms in the private sector also see the need to play their part in promoting awareness and are doing so in innovative ways – for example, through sponsoring the publication of articles in newspapers and journals exploring environmental and social issues.

This vast community of teachers represent an enormously potent, but largely untapped human resource for sustainable development that can be invaluable in a range of contexts as well as environmental education. It represents, above all, a means for bringing

the struggle for sustainable development into communities and local institutions around the world. Such as inclusive process would help in furthering the cause of sustainable development.

### **Environmental Awareness and Understanding**

Environmental Awareness and Understanding among the people are, at once, consequences of environmental education and influences on the environmental educational process. Curriculum in educational institutions would necessarily change with the support of well-informed people. Common information and shared understandings are therefore important not only for mobilizing public support, but also for carrying out consultative work and participatory approaches in all fields.

An approach that emphasizes upon local issues, rather than global ones, is often more effective in promoting public interest and understanding. This may account, in part, for the success of non-formal community environmental education people to environmental and development issues in both urban and rural areas. A particular benefit of such programmes is that they are often directly linked to action to control or solve the problems identified.

### **Environmental Policies : Mobilizing for Action**

While sustainable development is a long term for human society and a process that necessarily need to take place over time , there is a sense of urgency to make progress quickly before time run outs. Humanity is pressed to act even as new concepts and new methodologies are still being worked out, even while change is pursued in structures and mindsets.

An international negotiated framework for action has emerged from the series of United Nations Conferences dealing with different aspects of sustainable development. Beginning in 1992 with Rio( environment and development) , and followed in 1994 by Cairo

(population), in 1995 by Copenhagen (social Development) and Beijing (women) and in 1996 by Istanbul(human settlements). Each of these conferences, as well as the three conventions on biological diversity, climate change and desertification, contain explicit recommendations or whole chapters devoted to environmental education and public awareness. The international consensus that these agreements represent is a solid and comprehensive basis for moving forward.

There is now a new vision of environmental education, public awareness and training as the essential underpinning for sustainable development, a linchpin to support advances in other spheres such as science, technology, legislation and production.

Today , environmental education is seen as a means to :

1. Changes in values, behavior and lifestyles that are needed to achieve sustainable development, and ultimately democracy, human security and peace.
2. Knowledge dissemination, know-how and skills that are needed to bring about sustainable production and consumption patterns.
3. Improve the management of natural resources, agriculture, energy and industrial production;
4. Ensure an informed popular that is prepared to support changes towards sustainable development emerging from others sectors.

Agenda 21 provides a framework of integration for environmental education into national and international agenda. Implementation of this framework is to be undertaken by international institutions such as the UN Nations System, and also by national and local entities. For this, UN had identified a range of major groups including women, youth, farmers, parliamentarians, scientists, business and industry and others as well as governments and non-governmental organizations at all levels.

At national level, it is felt that overall strategies for sustainable development must be given clarity and impetus. There is a need to integrate environmental education into such strategies in creative and effective ways. This requires the involvement of the governments—which has the leadership role—major NGOs and associations, citizens groups, including corporate citizens, and educational and other specialized institutions. The media, including the most modern and traditional ones, should also be engaged to explain the purposes and goals of programmes and in making government plans and action known to the public.

Government should play a leading role in explaining the vision and benefits of sustainable development to the public. They should do so through all means available, public and private. The national school curriculum, at all levels, must incorporate the message of sustainable development. These message must also be emphasized in pre-service and in-service programmes of teacher training. Specialized institutions of all sorts should be actively involved.

It is essential for politicians to give priority to sustainable development. Leaders should understand that public awareness-raising, environmental education and training as essential means for achieving national development objectives.

The national civil society at all levels could extend its support for vigorous action aimed at advancing towards sustainable development. Teachers associations, for example, should carefully assess the progress being achieved in reorienting the environmental education system towards sustainable development and should keep both their members and the public-at-large informed of the situation.

### CONCLUSION

Finally, the framework for action identifies the following objectives of environmental education at all levels.

- Natural ecosystems should be conserved and their biodiversity maintained. More versatile and better organized use of a wider range of products yielded by different ecosystems can bring these goals measurably nearer. The natural, social and economic contribution of ecosystems to sustainable development should be properly managed and given scope to increase in quantity and quality.
- Living standards, welfare and security of communities should be improved in a format that persists from generation to generation. Efficient and rational utilization to recover the full value of goods and services yielded by forests will help such sustainable livelihoods. Profitable activities in forest and village lands that will generate more income and new employment opportunities, should be fostered within managed programmes and projects for sustainable rural development.
- A wider range of products and services should be utilized and the productivity of such products and services raised in order to boost the benefits to rural and urban communities from sustainable development efforts.
- Political and general awareness of the importance of environment should be raised in order to attract investment and orient activities in this field.
- Investigative research, surveys and other means of collecting and accessing information and quantitative data on environmental problems should be given top priority in order to increase the knowledge base. Personal skills, technical expertise and management capability to formulate policies, plans, programmes and activities affecting environment should be constantly improved and widely shared through training and other means of information exchange

- Relevant national institutions should be given optimum scope to raise yields and enhanced the productivity of environmental goods and services from natural sources, given due attention to effective conservation of such resources.
- International , regional and national cooperation should be mutually developed through cooperative networks. Coordination and liaisons between intergovernmental organization such as FAO, UNDP, WB, ITTO, UNEP, UNESCO, UNIDO, ILO and other non-governmental and private voluntary organizations involved in promoting and improving the use of natural resources should be strengthened.
- Aim should be to optimize benefits to local communities and should be custom made allowing full participation of local people in all programme or project phases from conception to completion. This participatory approach should blend local knowledge and skill with science-based principles of environmentally sound resource management and sustainable utilization.
- To succeed, popular approaches to improved management of environment

should encourage new and closer relationships between governments, NGOs and local community associations.

#### REFERENCES

1. Abrams K. and Ballas J., Teaching Naturally: Using Environment to Improve Teaching and Learning. *Tallahassee: Florida Gulf Coast University, Florida Department of Education, (1997).*
2. Bardwell L.V.M. Monore, and Tudor M., eds. Environmental problems solving: theory, Practice and possibilities in Environmental Education. *Rock Spring, GA: North America Association for Environmental education, (1994).*
3. Grundtland G.H., Our Common Future: the World Commission on Environment and Development. New York, *Oxford University Press, (1989).*
4. Disinger J.F. and Monore M.C., Defining Environmental Education. *EE Toolbox-Workshop Resource Manual, Ann Arbor, MI: National Consortium For Environmental Education and Training, (1994).*
5. Stapp W.B, Wals A.E.J. and Stankorb, S.L., Environmental Education for Empowerment: Action Research and Community Problem Solving. *Dubuque, IA: Kendall/hunt publishing, (1996).*



---

Good **environment**  
is  
Good **health**

---