

Environmental Education

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Abstract: - Environment is the sum total of all surroundings of a living organism including natural forces and other living things, which provide conditions for development and growth as well as danger and damage. Environment Education is defined in its broader sense to encompass raising awareness, acquiring new perspectives, values, knowledge and skills, and formal and informal processes leading to changed behaviour in support of an ecologically sustainable environment. This paper deals with the promotion of environmental education and also the steps to enhance the features of environmental education.

Keywords: Environment, Education, Nature.

INTRODUCTION

Environment is a concept that is relative to whatever object it is which is surrounded. Environment could include virtually anything, indeed as Einstein once remarked, 'The environment is everything that isn't me'. However 'environment' has now taken on a rather more specific meaning, though still a very vague and general one, and may be treated as covering the physical surroundings that are common to all of us, including air, space, water, land, plants and wildlife"- (Ball & Bell,2000)

The word "Environment" means surroundings. The environment contains air, water, food, and sunlight, etc. Environment affects all the living creatures including the plants and trees. A number of necessities of life are fulfilled rather derived from the environment. Thus, it can be said that the environment is the life support system.

OBJECTIVES OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

The main objectives of the Environmental Education are as follows:

1. Awareness:

To help the social groups and individuals to acquire knowledge of pollution and environmental degradation.

2. Knowledge:

To help social groups and individuals to acquire knowledge of the environment beyond the immediate environment including distant environment.

3. Attitudes:

To help social groups and individuals to acquire a set of values for environmental protection.

4. Skills and Capacity Building:

To help social groups and individuals to develop skills required for making discriminations in form, shape, sound, touch, habits and habitats. Further, to develop ability to draw unbiased inferences and conclusions.

5. Participation:

To provide social groups and individuals with an opportunity to be actively involved at all levels in environmental decision making.

Aims of Environmental Education

The ultimate aim of Environmental education is to enable people to understand the complexities of the environment and the need for nations to adapt their activities and pursue their development in ways which are harmonious with the environment.

UNESCO has highlighted the following aims of environmental education:

The aim of environmental education is clearly to show the economic, social, political and ecological interdependence of the modern world, in which decisions and actions by different countries can have international repercussions. Environmental education should, in this regard, help to develop a sense of responsibility and solidarity among countries and regions as the foundation for a new international order which will guarantee the conservation and improvement of the environment.

The main aim of environmental education at the grass root level is to succeed in making individuals and communities understand the complex nature of the natural and the built environments. Further, to acquire the knowledge, values, attitudes, and practical skills to participate in a responsible and effective way in anticipating and solving social problems, and in the management of the quality of the environment.

3. Therefore, necessary steps for environmental education are:

- (a) Awareness;
- (b) Knowledge;
- (c) Attitude building for motivating to protect environment;
- (d) Evaluation of environmental measures; and
- (e) Skill and capacity building!

According to D.H. Meadows', environmental educators on every continent develop materials and methods as varied as the different cultures and ecosystems on earth. He lists some key concepts which underlie all environmental education. These are food for thought, levels of being, complex systems, population growth and carrying capacity, ecologically sustainable development, socially sustainable development, knowledge, uncertainty and sacredness.

Guiding Principles of Environmental Education:

1. Resource Principles:

- (a) Resource use demands long-term planning if we are to achieve truly sustainable development.
- (b) Rationale utilization of a renewable source is a sensible way of preserving the resources while obtaining maximum benefits from it.
- (c) A mode of life heavily dependent upon rapidly diminishing non-renewable energy sources (i.e. fossil fuel) is unstable.

2. Soil Principles:

- (a) The protection of soils and the maintenance of sustainable agriculture are essential factors into the survival of civilizations and settlements.
- (b) Soil erosion is the irreversible loss of essential resources and must be prevented.
- (c) A vegetation cover (grass, forest) is important for the balance of nature and for the conservation of soil, besides being exploitable natural resources.

3. Wildlife Protection Principles:

- (a) Wildlife population is important aesthetically, biologically and economically.
- (b) Nature reserves and other protected wilderness areas are of value in protecting endangered species because they preserve their habitats.
- (c) The survival of humanity is closely linked to the survival of wildlife both being dependent on the same life-supporting systems.

4. Environmental Management Principles:

- (a) Sound environmental management is beneficial to both man and environment.
- (b) Management of natural resources should be done in a rational manner.
- (c) Elimination of wastes through recycling and the development of clean.

Technologies are important to modern societies to help reduce the consumption of resources.

- (d) Human activities and technologies influence considerably the natural environment and may affect its capacity to sustain life, including human life.

5. Other Principles:

- (a) The relations between humans and their environment are mediated by their culture i.e.
- (b) Cultural, historical and architectural heritage are much in need of protection.

Concepts of Environmental Education:

Any curriculum should be based on well-thought out and clearly defined concepts that one wishes the learner to acquire. Some important concepts of environmental education have interdisciplinary significance such as environmental pollution, carrying capacity, ecosystems, ecology, and conservation etc.

Importance of Environmental education

- Environmental education trains us to conserve our fast depleting natural resources
- Environmental education helps us in careful handling of the issues like pollution menace, over exploitation of natural resources, food security and sustainable development
- Environmental education inculcates an increased civil sense and an awareness of the economic, political and ecological interdependence of the modern world
- Environment education provides the knowledge of ecosystems and biodiversity
- Environmental education helps to understand different food chains and the ecological balance in nature
- Environmental education directs our attention towards the problem of population explosion, depletion and natural resources and the pollution of environment and the methods of solving such problem
- Environmental education helps us in inculcating attitudes and values, conducive to environment protection and understandings of interdependence of nature and man
- Environment education is evolving to be the education for sustainable and ethical development, both at a local and a global level

CONCLUSION

Environment wellness prepares the next generation to plan appropriate strategies for addressing issues such as urban sprawl at a local level while still maintain focus of the challenges that globalization presents on an international level. Environmental education acts as an agent of change of attitude and behaviour and a step towards community empowerment. Changes in values, attitudes and behaviour towards the environment can ultimately result in a better quality of life. Environmental education provides programmes to raise consciousness about environmental conditions and to teach environmentally appropriate behavior. Thus Environmental studies is aimed at increasing the public awareness and knowledge about the environmental issues and provides facts, opinions or the skills to make informed decisions and take environmentally responsible actions.

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