

# ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION IN CONTEXT OF NEW EDUCATION POLICY 2020

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**ABSTRACT:** Environmental education is the need of the hour. As the world's progressing in its environmental problems such as climate change, global warming, deforestation and pollution the need of environmental education is necessary. Different countries of the world have taken initiative towards environmental education for the masses so has India. In new education policy 2020 sustainable development has been given due importance but it does not talk about the need of environmental education for all. This paper focuses on the need of environmental education in India and the role of educational policies in it.

Keywords- Environmental education, Environmental problems, New Education Policy- 2020

## INTRODUCTION

The long-term sustainability of traditional economic and cultural systems is the result of traditional educational programs that established human nature and the environment completely with each other. Unfortunately, traditional knowledge and wisdom have been undermined by colonial, industrial and global experience. In general, traditional priorities and education systems have been replaced by the narrow view that nature and culture are only as important as economic productivity. The neglect that followed the world and culture means that the knowledge, values and skills of sustainable living have been played out in contemporary education. Indeed, in many cases, the lessons learned and hidden play a major role in regenerating the social and environmental values of our modern, wealthy, consumer-centered society.

## ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Environmental education is a process that allows individuals to explore environmental issues, participate in problem solving, and take action to improve the environment. As a result, individuals gain a deeper understanding of environmental issues and have the ability to make informed and responsible decisions.

Five related objectives have been recommended to help achieve these goals:

**Awareness:** Helping social groups and individuals gain awareness and sensitivity to the whole environment and its associated problems.

**Knowledge:** Helping social groups and individuals discover a wide range of information, and gain a basic understanding of nature, the problems and problems associated with it.

**Attitude:** Helping social groups and individuals discover a set of values and feelings for the environment, as well as the motivation to actively participate in the development and protection of the environment.

**Skills:** Helping social groups and individuals acquire the skills to identify and solve environmental problems.

**Participation:** Provide social groups and individuals with the opportunity to participate at all levels in working to solve environmental problems (UNESCO-UNEP, 1978, p. 3)

## **NEW EDUCATION POLICY 2020**

The National Education Policy 2020 is the first education policy of the 21st century and aims to address the growing needs of our country's development. Based on the principle that education should not only improve cognitive skills - 'basic' reading and numeracy skills and 'higher' cognitive abilities, such as critical thinking and problem solving - but also social, moral, and emotional strengths. The new education policy aims to provide to all students, irrespective of their place of residence, a quality education system, with particular focus on historically marginalized, disadvantaged, and underrepresented groups. Education is an excellent tool for achieving economic and social mobility, inclusion, and equity.

This National Education Policy looks at an education system with Indian roots that directly contributes to the transformation of India. The policy stipulates that the curriculum and teaching of our institutions must develop among students a deep sense of respect for the Basic Works and values of the Constitution, harmony with the human world, and a clear understanding of human roles and responsibilities in a changing world.

## **NEED OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION**

Global Environment Outlook — confirmed in its various reports on environmental degradation. Human growth, economic activity and consumption patterns, have put increasing pressure on the environment. It means that the rapid growth in demand for energy, transportation and other forms of consumption has continued to lead to different types of pollution.

Unsustainable land use has led to land degradation in the form of soil erosion, nutrient depletion, water scarcity, salinity and disruption of biological cycles. Degradation reduces productivity, biodiversity and other ecosystems and contributes to climate change. Increasing water scarcities undermine development, food security, public health and environmental services. The quantity and quality of water and land resources, as well as environmental support services, are threatened by the effects of population growth, rural-urban migration and rising wealth and resource utilization and climate change. The decline in biodiversity and the loss of ecosystem services continue to be a major global threat to future development. Environmental degradation therefore undermines development and threatens future development and is clearly linked to human health problems.

India is also facing similar problems. The latest official report of Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) on the state of India's environment states that

- There were more than 50 lakh people evacuated within India last year, which is the highest in the world.
- Flooding caused by the **south-west monsoon** led to 26 lakh displacements, while **Cyclone Fani** alone led to 18 lakh displacements, followed by **Cyclone Vayu** and **Bulbul** and the report also broke down 2011 census data on **migrant populations**.
- There were more than 45 crore migrants in the country at the time of the disasters, most of them were migrating within their own State. In 2011, more than 1.7 new migrants attended employment purposes, mainly from rural to urban areas.
- 19 major weather events claimed 1,357 lives last year.
- Forest coverage has decreased by 38% in the regions, while five of the 21 river springs are now in a state of total water shortages.
- The report also provides an overview of forest, water, waste, air, land, wildlife and other natural resources. It notes that there were 747 more tigers in 2018 than in 2014. However, the net area meant for tiger conservation shrunk by 179 square kilometres.

The COVID lockdown experiences have ensured that the main causes of urban air pollution are vehicular emissions and industrial activities. With mean annual rainfall of about 1200mm, dearth of appropriate water management strategies has led to scarcity of this resource. Many Indian cities have started to experience moderate to severe water shortages, triggered by the simultaneous effects of agricultural expansion, industrialization and urbanization. This deficit will also be exacerbated by changes in rainfall patterns and amount of rainfall, decreased glaciers and decreased freshwater resources. Human pressure, irrigation and industrial needs are major pressures for water insecurity. Lack of proper water prices for domestic use, improper sewage, uncontrolled discharge of groundwater by industries and discharge of industrial waste, toxic and chemical wastewater treatment, inefficient irrigation and overuse of chemical fertilizers and pesticides have affected water in terms of quality and quantity.

While India is still one of the world's 17 most biodiversity hotspots, 10 percent of wildlife are on the list of threats posed by habitat destruction, deforestation, poaching, invasive species, overuse and pollution. Although India contributes only about 5 percent of greenhouse gas emissions leading to climate change, some 700 million Indians are directly exposed to the threat of global warming today. It affects farming, causes drought, floods; storms are more frequent and more severe and raise the sea level. These problems are therefore leading to climate change which threatens food security, water security and energy security which threatens to cripple India's full development efforts.

These are just a few reasons why we should look forward to a better environmental education. Understanding our connection to nature is essential. We rely on our environment. Understanding our connection to nature and that we are one of the many species on a planet full of life is crucial to facilitating a sustainable environment. Our actions have resulted in beneficial changes, such as longevity, material possessions, travel, and leisure time. However, many other unpleasant changes have come from air and water pollution to soil erosion to extinction that threatens human well-being and threatens human health. Most importantly, we need to understand our connection with the environment because that knowledge is an important first step in solving our most pressing environmental problem that ultimately ends up in the health, social or economic systems. Recognizing this and exiting international conferences and efforts became the concept of Environmental Education at various levels.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND EDUCATIONAL POLICIES**

Berberet (Fien, 1993, p.107) notes that, although nature has become “too small for the common sense of education”, education has played a major role in perpetuating uncertain practices: Historically, the numbers of schools and colleges reflect those of a larger society. It is not just that education has unequivocally embraced the organization of progress and an unbridled growth economy, trained engineers and managers, conducted research, and developed technologies that have had such a negative impact on the environment.

A fundamental reorientation now needs to occur with the development of new assumptions in education which treat the interactions of ecological processes, market forces, cultural values, equitable decision-making, government actions, and environmental impacts of human activities in a holistic, interdependent manner.

After the UN conference in 1972 the government of India through 42<sup>nd</sup> amendment in the constitution instigated environmental concern by giving responsibility to the state to “take measures to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country” (Article 48 -A). It further made every citizen responsible through Article 51 A with the heading “Fundamental Duties” clause (g) “thereof requires, every citizen to protect and improve the natural environment including forest, lakes, rivers and wildlife and to have compassion for living creatures”. With this background the Department of Environment was established by the Government of India in 1980 and upgraded as Ministry for Environment and Forests in 1985.

The NPE 1986 and the subsequent educational policies (NCFSE, 2000, NCF 2005) have given environmental education an explicit place in school education. As a consequence, today, the infusion of environmental awareness and understanding has become an integral part of every pupil’s curriculum (formal or non-formal), with a view to enabling them to explore and understand their environment, leading to informed concerns and values, and active participation in working for solving environmental problems /issues.

The National Policy on Education, 1986 (NPE) has stated “protection of the environment is a value which must form an integral part of the curriculum at all stages of education”. With this backdrop

environmental education was infused through other subjects in the Indian schooling system. The shortfalls in the existing systems and low level of environmental awareness and deteriorating environmental conditions led to the recognition of need for non formal education and training.

Environmental Education (EE) is introduced at the elementary level as Environmental Studies (EVS). EVS for classes III to V deals with the study of our environment (physical, biological and socio-cultural) with an emphasis on its preservation and conservation (NCF 2005).

According to the National Curriculum Framework (NCF)-2005, the components of environmental education are very much a part of different subjects such as Physics, Mathematics, Chemistry, Biology, Geography, History, Political Science, Health and Physical Education, Art, Music, etc.

"As a follow-up of NCF-2005, the syllabi and textbooks for all stages of school education have been developed by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). For Classes I and II, Environmental Studies (EVS) components are integrated with language and mathematics. For classes III to V, the NCERT has developed EVS syllabus and the textbooks integrating Science and Social Science components", the Minister added in his reply.

The NCF 2005 indicates the following as some of the objectives of teaching EVS.

- To train children to locate and comprehend relationships between the natural, Social and cultural environment;
- To develop an understanding based on observation and illustration, drawn from lived experiences and physical, biological, social and cultural aspects of life rather than abstractions;
- To create cognitive capacity and resourcefulness to make the child curious About social phenomena, starting with the family and moving on to wider spaces;
- To nurture the curiosity and creativity of the child particularly in relation to the natural environment (including artifacts and people); To develop an awareness about environmental issues;
- To engage the child in exploratory and hands-on activities to acquire basic cognitive and psychomotor skills through observation, classification, inference, etc.
- To emphasise design and fabrication, estimation and measurement as prelude to the development of technological and quantitative skills at later stages;
- To be able to critically address gender concerns and issues of marginalisation oppression with values of equality and justice, and respect for human dignity and rights.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND NEW EDUCATION POLICY 2020**

NEP-2020 provides us with a roadmap for reclaiming, re-articulating and restructuring the Bhartiya self for becoming a global leader (Vishwaguru) where equity, equality and fraternity will be celebrated.

It does not add anything in the present environmental education system. It is satisfied with the present arrangements of environmental education. It does give due importance to sustainable

development goals which is further concerned with environmental benefit. The policy also emphasizes on spread of indigenous knowledge which is also very beneficial for the betterment of environmental challenges.

But Lack of acknowledgement towards better environmental education is very disappointing as Indian education system is failing in environmental education. The products of Indian education system are not concerned about the environmental issues. India is lagging behind in environmental research due to this attitude. So it was imperative that we talk about the much needed curricular and pedagogical changes in environmental education.

The current level of environmental destruction is unique in the history of humanity, and that if it is left to continue at the current rate, we will, within our generation, experience the initial phases of a trend that seriously risks destroying the very fabric of our lives. Over-consumption lies at the heart of the environmental crisis, that environmental education must teach consumption control, and that ultimately we can help preserve biodiversity and our own environmental welfare by changing our consumption patterns.

These challenges to environmental education require that we re-examine the way we do research and train environmental professionals and educators, the policies we make, as well as the way we communicate environmental information to the general public.

We can do this by first updating the recommended environmental science books to discuss relevant problems of the day. For example, many Indian textbooks still talk about ozone layer depletion as an issue. After the ratification of the Montreal protocol in 1987, the ozone hole over the Antarctic has been steadily closing. This global issue, as declared by many, is now solved. These books should rather put more emphasis on specific national environmental problems rather than just the few popular global ones.

Another way to let them form more personal reasons to protect their environment is to actually expose them to it. For example as Indian students should have knowledge about the flora and fauna of their respective country. If they only see the tiger/elephants/rhinoceros as species which are in dire need of conservation in this country, they are dangerously ill-informed about the state of India's biodiversity. They also cannot do much about protecting those particular species other than contributing financially to their conservation, which is again a very indirect way of connecting to the cause. India is a highly diverse country in terms of its climate, geography, geology, ethnicity, flora and fauna, society and economy. Therefore, environmental education in the country has to be location-specific.

## **CONCLUSION**

We need to focus on global change to make environmental education more relevant. A problem that causes a lack of change in students' attitudes is that they do not view environmental issues as their own life problems.

We can address this shortcoming by allowing students to formulate more reasons to protect their environment. It is good that many natural science classes are appealing to their hearts and minds and encouraging them to think positively. However, studies have consistently shown that doing so alone may not always lead to positive results. One needs to point to his stake in any problem in order to consider any change. Teachers should empower this by creating environmentally friendly classrooms as a space that allows students to build a personal organization in their environment and immerse themselves in the issues that concern them.

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