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Review of Importance of Environmental Education and Awareness Strategies

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ABSTRACT

Environment constitutes a very important part of our life. To understand life without studying the impact of environment is simply impossible. The need to protect environment can be ignored only at our peril. We use environmental resources in our day-to-day life. All human activities have an impact on environment. But in the last two centuries or so, the human influence on environment has increased manifold due to the rapid population.

Thus, environmental education plays an important role in today's running and busy lifestyle. This review distinguishes and relates environmental awareness and environmental education and considers how they are implemented in different contexts.

1) INTRODUCTION

Indian Our lives depend on the environment. During the last five to six decades it has been increasingly observed that the life-supporting potentials of our planet Earth has been eroding rapidly and may ultimately threaten the very existence of Biosphere. The root cause for depleting life supporting potentials of the earth is the environmental degradation through anthropogenic activities. The ozone depletion, climate change, desertification, tropical deforestation, species extinction, and pollution of water, soil and air are some of the environmental issues of global concern. Environmental degradation has emerged as a serious issue in the world today. Environmental Education is a new focus for education. Environmental education programs often aim to: (i) help students develop factual knowledge about the natural environment, particularly with regard to how ecosystems work and human impacts on the natural environment; (ii) foster more positive perceptions about the value of the natural world; (iii) develop eco-friendly habits, such as getting people to recycle and to produce less waste; (iv) Engage students in environmental rejuvenation projects and action; (v) Develop students' psychological and spiritual relationship with nature. Environmental Education is a key to the success of any overall environmental strategy, determined to help in the setting up of a Centre of Excellence in Environmental Education, to play the vital role of setting the pace and agenda for Environmental Education in the country [1].

Environmental Awareness: Environmental Awareness is concern towards environment or environmental problems. In other word it is defined as "an idea holding a general impression or consciousness about something without having to know much about it" [2]. In the past two decades, environment has attracted the attention of decision makers, scientists and even

laymen in many parts of the world. The environmental issues are important because the absence of their solutions is more horrible. Unless environmental issues are not solved or not taken care of the coming generations may find earth worth not living. The need of the planet and the needs of the person have become one.

Environmental Attitude: Environmental Attitude a learned predisposition to respond consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to the environment" [3].

Environmental Degradation: Environmental degradation is the decline of land productivity and forest cover due to human and environmental factor. Environment constitutes a very important part of our life. To understand life without studying the impact of environment is simply impossible. Therefore, there is a need to create 'awareness' about Environmental protection. While efforts are being made at the national and international level to protect our environment, it is also the responsibility of every citizen to use our environmental resources with care and protect them from degradation.

Even though growing public awareness about environmental issues is evident, lack of adequate environmental knowledge can play a big role as an obstacle towards achieving a sustainable future for humankind at both global and local scales.

Proper media-assisted civic education and awareness campaigns regarding the importance of environmental health are vital to enhance the protection and well use of natural resources, and to reach a sustainable future in any community.

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This review distinguishes and relates environmental awareness and environmental education, and considers how they are implemented in different contexts.

2) ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Environmental education (EE) is a cross curriculum topic promoting global awareness, sustainable living and active citizenship. It involves a structured and planned process that seeks the implementation of environmental curriculum at educational institutions at different levels (elementary school, high school, university, graduate and post-graduate levels). Cross-cutting subjects that are integrated in a global perspective but that can be learned and applied locally should implement this curriculum [4].

An urgent need to educate humankind on conservation and sustainable uses of natural resources through environmental education has been accepted as a global necessity. The concept of environmental education gained great momentum at the UN conference in Stockholm in 1972. In Agenda 21 a holistic view of EE was adopted and acknowledged by 175 countries at the first UN Earth summit in Rio de Janeiro on environment and development. [5].

The now famous “Agenda 21” identifies education as a vital aid to support all the needed changes for sustainability to take place. Signatory nations agreed to pursue actions to include environment-sustainable development as a cross cutting matter in curriculum at different levels of education, and also to ensure it reaches different audiences, including those located at remote communities [5].

It is obvious there is a need to tackle environmental problems globally by means of a systematic process that requires changes in traditional education schemes. The entire scientific community is reasonably responsible for getting involved in adequate public relations efforts that enable communication of its research, concerns and uncertainties, to the institutions, organizations and governing bodies responsible for education. Similarly establishments responsible for education should make efforts that direct to the public information received from scientists in effective and understandable ways [6].

3) ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION IN CHILDREN

Childhood is perhaps the age that fathers the most important memories in a person’s life. Most adults retain and unconsciously use information commencing from upbringing experiences. It is during this early stage where personality begins to take form. Almost everything that children learn is provided in different ways by the outside world. The natural environment is a significant component in this learning process [7].

Knowledge gain passed on from children to parents (and other adults) indicates that awareness can be delivered in a consecutive way from the classroom to the community [8].

4) ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS AND THE PUBLIC

Environmental awareness relates to the recognition by the public of environmental issues and values, and the implications they have in relation to economic issues and social standards of living [9]. It is best produced and developed by personal exploration and discovery of people’s surroundings [10]. Public environmental awareness and participation is vital to the goal of achieving a sustainable future. Social involvement in this

course of action can only happen when the communities are aware of the importance of maintaining healthy and productive ecosystems [11].

Environmental public awareness is shaped by economic, social, professional, religious, ethnic, cultural and educational factors. Civic context must be well understood before an awareness campaign is planned. The most appropriate way to deliver context-aware information will often depend on the activities and type of social interaction the target groups experience [12]. Public environmental education and applied communications are the key tools for expansion and effective delivery of awareness campaigns to different types of audiences. Campaigns and programs should be designed in a sustainable way to assist target groups with the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are necessary to solve actual and local environmental problems [13]. Outside and intersectional cooperation may be necessary to initiate them. Partnership efforts between different institutions, like government and nongovernmental organizations, private businesses or educational entities, are means that can produce positive results in communicating environmental topics [5]. Effective communication among scientists, academic institutions and different type of organizations is critical to this process, but the main purpose is that the general public somehow embraces the application of sustainable and ecologically sound policies [13].

5) EFFECTIVE USE OF MEDIA OUTLETS

The media’s role in environmental education is important because it is through newspapers, magazines, radio, and television that people gain awareness. Awareness is simply a step in EE. Modern communications have provided information for the growing public demand of related information; we now see more environmental magazines, newsletters, and journals, along with TV and radio programs [14]. Recently, public radio and television broadcasting considered all of its programming to be educational by including topics like science and nature, drama, music and dance, in addition to varied civic issues. It has a vast delivery span given the fact it can reach audiences in homes, schools and public places [15].

Communicating environmental information is very challenging due to the dynamic and complexity of natural systems. The scientific community must focus on learning to communicate more effectively [13] with policy officials and educators. With proper conduction, media can offer us good communication tools that can be used as educational aids to reduce the gap between scientific knowledge and civic awareness.

6) MAPS, RADIO AND VIDEO

Production of artistic community maps has proven to be a successful tool in developing a cost effective yet efficient way to increase community awareness. According to Wood [10], what we communicate with maps is our relationship to the territory we inhabit. Maps are also a way of communicating with the environment that can be stimulating, emotionally linking and context aware. This creates a “sense of inclusion” and thus, the map becomes an excellent tool both as an educational aid to create awareness, and as a public participation tool that helps unite the community [10].

Even in the poorest and most remote communities, radio ownership is high. Therefore, it is an excellent medium that permits messages to be delivered to large audiences at low cost [16]. When radio broadcasting, reinforces environmental

awareness campaigns, changes can be positive and significant. The use of this media is very effective in producing a “sense of place” [17] to their audiences.

Tyson and Snyder [18] examined the effectiveness of direct mail video campaigns used to move the public towards the acceptance of positive values and attitudes in long-term initiatives that focus on the improvement and protection of local natural resources. Due mainly to its simultaneous audible and visual character, it is easier for video to deliver information and captivate audiences more rapidly than printed material [18].

7) CONCLUSION

Environmental education is a vast and relatively new subject. It is very important to arrange community activity programmers and make students to actively participate in them. Government and other policy makers should invite authors, field workers and artists to work with creativity to produce special modules to promote environmental attitude.

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