

## APPROACHES TO ENVIRONMENT EDUCATION

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### Abstract :

*In order to educate people there are different approaches available. Which approach is to be adopted depends on many factors such as the age group and the interest of the target group, the nature of the content, the objective of the person in charge of the task of educating people etc. The major responsibility lies with the policy makers and the curriculum designers in formal education stream while in non-formal education it is with the parents, the NGOs, nonetheless with every caretaker of the environment that they have to select appropriate approach to ensure the success of the endeavor.*

**Key Words :** Approaches, Environment Education.

### Introduction :

When any subject is to be taught at any level, one has to think how one is going to impart it. This can be called as the approach or a way to look at the subject. The approach really helps to decide the teaching strategy and methods. Approach forms the basis for the teaching methods and even the teaching aids. Before going for actual teaching of Environmental Education, we are supposed to be well familiar with the fact that Environmental Education can be taught in formal as well as in non formal way i.e. Environmental Education could be imparted in a the formal type of education, Environmental Education can be imparted through curricular activities or even through co-curricular or extra curricular activities. Thus there are various approaches to Environmental Education.

### Approaches to Environmental Education :

It is a well-known fact that there a various approaches to impart knowledge of any subject. Different subjects could be taught by different approaches. As this is true, it is also true that same subject could also be taught with different approaches. Two main approaches for teaching any

subject are (a) formal and (b) informal.

For Environmental Education also, these two approaches can be employed. Environmental Education could be imparted informally right from childhood at home and also through 'out of school education'. In formal way, it could be given to the students through curricular aspects i.e. various subject and also through extra or co-curricular modes of education. Curricular approach further could be classified into two more categories namely, 'integrated and separate'. In the 'Separate Subject' approach the subject could be taught as compulsory or optional one. All these approaches are further discussed in detail.

The moment a newborn baby starts breathing, its 'environment education' begins. This education includes education about the environment, education for the environment and education through the environment. Light, sound, movement of air, movements of human beings are some environmental stimuli, to which the infant responds. From the constant flow of stimulus-reaction chains, the baby keeps learning. Non-living elements like clothes, furniture, food, air, toys and living beings; and especially the parents and other family members contribute to the initial environmental education of the child. When the child starts going to school, formal education starts. Primary education is the first phase of formal education. Schools, colleges and institutes of higher education are part of formal education system. It is based on the curriculum developed by educationists, taking into consideration their knowledge, experience, studies and researches.

It is customary to revise the curriculum approximately after say every ten years to incorporate essential new concepts and to delete outdated ones due to the fact that rate of generation of knowledge is changing fast and knowledge explosion thus makes curriculum revision imperative. Environment Education is an important part of formal education at the Primary, Secondary and Higher education. Dynamic nature of the environmental scenario makes it imperative that revision in the Environment Education curriculum is frequent and appropriate. These are the two main approaches to Environmental Education.

**This Chapter tries to-**

- tell about the various approaches to Environmental Education
- differentiate between formal and non-formal approaches to Environmental Education.
- present some more categories of non-formal approach of education.

Environmental Education is the subject, which could be taught right from childhood up to the higher or highest levels of education. In the childhood, it is imparted informally at home or even from various other sources in the society. It is a lifelong education which starts as soon as the child

steps in the world for the first time and lasts till his last breath. Even if a person doesn't join formal stream of education, he gets the Environmental Education. In school, gradually, hygiene, nature study, population education, conservation, pollution, environmental values can be compulsory content.

In countries like Korea, Israel and China compulsion of some environmental topics have created countrywide awareness and responsibility for environment. Many times compulsion leads to negative response. When children are told not to do something, often they do it purposely. This suggests to take proper precautions in the delivery of the subject so that repulsive effect is not created.

#### **Optional Subject Approach :**

Greater attention can be paid to environmental issues when they are studied in detail at the higher level, under the 'Separate Approach'. But at this level, the students undertake specialized studies in the subject of own choice. At this level, students would like to have option of selecting a subject. Thus at postgraduate or higher level, environment education usually occupies a position of an optional subject to lead to specialization. Optional curriculum can deliver the message to the society that the choice is available to people to work in the area of interest and it is not a thrust upon them.

#### **Points for Discussion :**

Non curricular and curricular approaches are complementary to each other-Discuss approach- a way or perspective to look at any subject education has not reached many a nooks and corners of the country. The poor, tribes, villagers, nomads form a large bulk of our society who cannot be educated through the formal mode. Hence various modes of imparting to them are being experimented.

Non-formal education approach is a friendly, informal way of educating. The feature of 'compulsion' is absent, and so there is scope for heart to heart communication. Effective environment education including essential topics requires that people 'accept' eco-friendly ways, put their mind and heart to it. The willing acceptance is possible only through a friendly approach, which is a non-formal approach.

Environment education must permeate to these lower strata of the society. These people form a large, section of our population which influences major changes in the Environmental wealth of our country. To inform and to educate them about population control, pollution control, water, forest and energy conservation etc from the point of view of local need, safety and future well-being must be done through the non-formal approach.

The farmers, factory workers, laborers, retired elders, nomads, etc are afraid of the 'formal'

education because of its formal nature and its rigidities. Hence such cliental must be addressed informally.

However, non-formal approach must supplement the formal approach to reach out those who are left outs and for those who are educated. The problems of environment are snowballing and every possible mode of formal and non-formal education must be used to educate people without the loss of time.

Due to its flexible nature, non-formal educational approach can be used very efficiently and effectively.

A single issue like hazards of smoking can be addressed at a time. A talk, seminar, exhibition, group discussion, drawing-painting competition etc. are just a few methods which could be used to address the issue. The participants in the environment related programme can vary in number, in occupation, in age and gender e.g. a group of neighborhood - women can gather to tackle the issue of garbage disposal in the vicinity with the help of a social worker friend.

In short, there is complete freedom in the implementation of environment education through non-formal mode. The casual unofficial ways of non-formal approach provide scope for creativity, originality and freedom in achieving its objectives and therefore it has a high potential to bring about positive transformation of environment. It can create bold crusaders out of the common man, brave environmental leader out of a small innocent child, a staunch activist out of a homebound housewife, a devoted senior worker out of an aged retired man, each of one being active to improve the environment.

#### **Voluntary Agencies for Non-formal education :**

In India, Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) can play a crucial role in the expansion and extension of environment education. They are more than thousand in number and include registered societies, government sponsored organizations, autonomous financial institutions, public trusts, charitable trusts, educational trusts. All these are working in both urban and rural area. These organizations work independently with least interference from the Government. Being local organizations, most of them know about the various facets of local problems, local likes and dislikes and accordingly undertake programmes for environment education. These programmes range from nature trails, nature study camps, seminars, discussions, plantation drives etc. They can reach each home and can inspire people to explore nature, love it, respect it care for it and conserve it; develop responsible attitude in keeping the surroundings clean and hygienic and so on. The Government should provide support and motivation to these organizations to flourish and assist in educating the

masses.

#### **Mass Media In Non-Formal Educations :**

Mass media include newspapers, radio television films etc. These media can play extremely in reaching the masses with the messages of environmental issues. They are very useful in creating awareness and concerns about environment among people in remote areas.

The backward areas, the inaccessible areas where formal education fails to reach, radio and television can reach and make impact.

Because of their low cost, newspapers are very useful in reaching all literate people. But audiovisual media like film, T.V., Video, only audio media like radio and audiocassettes can reach even to the illiterate people. Among these, television has very high potential in creating awareness and develops positive attitude, interests and skills among the masses about environment. Telecasting deforestation disasters, programmes of conservation of water and energy, hazards of air and water pollution can create defined impact. Topics like population explosion, its effect on environment, role of women and youth in improving local environmental conditions can be well perceived through the audiovisual media.

The programmes which become successful on environmental scale can be telecast to motivate the people in the region to solve their own similar problems.

Regional and national networks must reserve special time-slots for environmental education of the masses. Various programmes prepared by students, local groups, NGOs etc. can be broadcast and telecast.

Newspapers, magazines and other print media can help spreading relevant stories, reports, articles, photographs and creative features like poems. In today's world, we cannot afford to forget computers as the latest effective audio-visual medium. The Internet facility has made communication possible between any two parts of the world and gain access to a variety of up-to-date information about environmental issues.

#### **Formal Approach :**

Development is not an instantaneous process but it needs endurance to constitute the responsive changes to the rapidly changing world. It cannot be created rapidly but it needs long research, resources and human understanding. All these requirements and expectations can be fulfilled through the formal approach to education. Formal means the one, which is methodical, regular, customary, standard, official, legal, precise and exact. All these advantages can be accrued

to environmental education when it is imparted through formal mode. In formal education system, the time schedule for completing the syllabus is fixed. The goals, curriculum, teaching methods, techniques are predetermined. Education is provided in controlled and organized atmosphere. Knowledge, skills and values related to environment can be developed among the students, at all levels of formal education. At Primary and Secondary level, general and easy concepts of environment, major environmental problems, their solutions in practical and theoretical manner so as to develop the interest of the students, should be given preference in the syllabus. At the higher level, environmental education should be included as a separate subject of curriculum. At this stage, complicated problems relevant to national and global environmental issues can be induced. At the higher level, research on environmental issues should also be included in the curriculum. Teacher training institutions, industrial training institutions, engineering colleges, in fact all professional courses should include Environmental Education.

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