

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNICATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

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Abstract

The paper presents about effective application of environmental Communication to create Environmental Awareness in all the age groups of people. It gives idea about various ways and aspects of communicating with people regarding Protection of Environment. It focuses on the need and importance of active support and implementation of various strategies to not only make the people aware about but also to train people regarding reduction of environmental damage through education, communication and many other modes such as media and journalism ,environmental groups, corporate efforts Government policies. It gives information about stakeholders and their responsibilities regarding Environment.

Introduction :

Environment refers to anything that is immediately surrounding an object and exerting a direct influence on it. Our environment refers to those thing or agencies which though distinct from us, affect our life or activity. The environment by which man is surrounded and affected by factors which may be natural, artificial, social, biological and psychological. The environment is part of everyone's life, but the degree to which there is public disagreement and uncertainty about issues like climate change, water issues, pollution and global warming, shows that there are difficulties in communicating these complex environmental problems to the society. **Social awareness** in this respect is of very much importance.

Environmental education is just as important in the developing world as it is in industrialized nations; however, reaching out to the people in those countries can be very difficult. Thus communicating with people by different means and modes is the need of today, not only to create environmental awareness but also implement the same in day to day life. In this respect **environmental communication** is the effective way of creating active awareness in society.

Environmental Communication:

“**Environmental Communication** refers to the study and practice of how individuals, institutions, societies, and cultures craft, distribute, receive, understand, and use messages about the environment

and human interactions with the environment.”(Wikipedia;)

"**Environmental Communication** pertains to any profession which communicates an environmental or scientific message. This message can range from conservation of resources to promotion of products to education about community programs and anywhere in between, and environmental communications professionals are working in every sector of the economy from the largest corporations to the smallest newspapers.”

(<http://www.enviroeducation.com/majors-programs/env-comm.html>)

Environmental Communication is the pragmatic and constitutive vehicle for our understanding of the environment as well as our relationship to the natural world; it is the symbolic medium that we use in constructing environmental problems and negotiating society’s different responses to them. (P.Cox Environmental Communication and Public Sphere)

Effective communication of an environmental message can determine the fate of an environmental campaign at any level - local, regional, national or global. It helps definitely to create active awareness about environmental issues amongst people.

Need and Importance:

Environmental Communication creates Environmental Awareness through educating, making people alert, persuading, mobilizing and helping to solve the environmental problems.

Now a billion and half people are using and abusing environment, in the coming decades it will get doubled. E.g. if we continue our wastage of water, approximately half the world population will live in area experiencing severe water stress.

Although the public concern regarding environment issues is significant, considerable differences exist individually as well as in different social groups regarding solving environmental issues. The difficulty in changing people’s behaviour has been a concern, especially in public information campaigns, encouraging consumers to save energy or install energy efficient appliances at their homes. Fuller explained that when information campaigns „address the issue of energy efficient benefits; they neglect the issue of how to motivate consumers to actually take the action. (Mandal 2010) More serious is, scholars have found that while many individuals believe global climate change is real and happening now, they may not feel the urgency to change their own behaviour or speak out. Population explosion, rapid movements toward urbanization and industrialization, increasing demands of energy, water pollution and scarcity, and so many aspects are there which are responsible for imbalance in nature and degradation of environment. If we need improvement in the situation, collective thinking and efforts are crucial.

Environmental awareness through environmental communication:

Environmental Communication is the communication of environmental data and information between various audiences using different media. Such communication is the foundation for establishing relationships between people and the environment and a means for enhancing environmental literacy and sustainable environmental practices (Environmental Communication Resource Center 2000)

There is a need to develop a strategy for the management of environment. This should be expressed in a language which will appeal to the common man in a creative manner by establishing the relevance of environmental education to their day-to-day lives. Man's basic needs are food, shelter, clothing and recreation. The concern about the environmental education arising out of food production, enhanced ways of earning livelihood, effect of technology on day-to-day life and also the impact of all these developments on health will be more relevant to a common man.

Ways of communicating for environmental awareness:

Environmental Communication is about information, Education and Communication.

1. The Media and Environmental Journalism

The use of print, broadcast, and Internet media can be a great way to communicate and increase education and awareness. By working with the media, government agencies and non-profit organizations can help spread their message, either by holding press briefings, issuing printed press releases, or even setting up online databases that can be used as information centres. Information centres can be useful tools to educate both the public and journalists about environmental concerns. Studies in environmental media are also beginning to explore online news and the role of social media in engaging environmental concerns.

2. Representations of nature in corporate advertising and culture

The use of nature images in film, television, photography, music, and commercial advertising is hardly new or surprising. What is new is the growing number of studies of how such popular culture images influence our attitudes or perceptions of nature and the environment. Scholars explore such questions by examining a range of cultural products—film. For example, Brereton (2005) has traced the evolution of images of nature in science fiction, Westerns, nature, and road movies from the 1950s to the present, including films like *Emerald Forest*, *Jurassic Park*, *Easy Rider*, *Thelma and Louise*, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, and *Blade Runner*. (Study and Practice of Environmental Communication- www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/47777_ch_1.pdf)

3. Classroom Education

The big part of the world's population is under the age of eighteen, according to UNEP, which is why educating children and young adults about environmental problems is crucial to long-term success. Awareness about the environment in the Classroom will help them foster a sense of responsibility and "proactive citizenship," so that when they become adults they will make choices that help the environment rather than harm it.

One can use variety of methods and techniques to communicate with this population for creating awareness .Schools can teach their students about environmental issues. Integrating environmental education through science teaching or teaching environmental science as a separate subject is the best ways for environmental communication. We can make them aware about various environmental issues and also give real experiences of solving them.

4. Public Participation in Environmental Decision Making

Public education is increasingly important to a well-functioning environmental regulatory system. Knowledge about environmental issues allows the public to carry out the role envisioned in major environmental legislation of identifying violations, applying community pressure, enforcing laws, and contributing to permitting and rulemaking.

Thus educating and informing public, incorporating public values into decision making, reducing conflicts, active participation is the need for environmental awareness.

Stakeholders for Environmental Communication:

- Environmental groups
- Citizens and community groups
- Corporation and business lobbyists
- Anti-environmentalist groups
- Media and Environmental Journalism
- Public officials and regulators

Environmental groups: is an organization that seeks to protect, analyse or monitor the environment against misuse or degradation from human beings. The organization may be a charity non-government or government organization. E.g. Green Hills group in Pune has been working for last ten years in rain water harvesting and tree plantation in Pune. They have a panel of trustees and a lot of devoted nature lovers. Bhumi Aranyak , Aawaz foundation and many more groups are working in communicating and protecting environment.

Corporation and business lobbyists: Corporate field need to operate in an environmentally

sustainable way. It is in their long term interests to ensure that the environment is healthy. Societies should apply the precautionary principle which puts the burden of proof on corporations to demonstrate that their practices and products will not harm our health or the environment.

Anti-environmentalist groups: Anti-environmentalism refers to the way that corporations and conservative groups in society have sought to counter the gains made by environmentalists, to redirect and diminish public concern about the environment, to attack environmentalists, and to persuade politicians against increased environmental regulation.

Media and Environmental Journalism: Environmental journalists are expected to be advocates for changes to improve the quality of the planet. They should educate people about the serious state of the environment and use the power of the news media to bring about changes to improve the quality of the air, water, wildlife and natural resources. (Environmental Journalism and its Challenges-). Environmental Journalism fall under the scope of Environmental Communication. It is the collection, verification, production distribution and exhibition of information regarding current environmental issues.

Public officials and regulators: Regulation involves the enforcement of government controls and restrictions on a particular activity conducted by the public sector. A good regulatory environment is an essential foundation for high performing nations to make their country a great place to work and live and to protect their environment. High performing regulators are a key lever to encourage innovation across the economy and foster productivity growth

Region wise objectives of environmental communication could be;

- To communicate with the people of a particular region about environment management of the region.
- To conduct community environments education and training programs that is based on sustainable living better life choices and attitudinal change regarding environmental damage.
- To develop nature reserves, biodiversity network sites, heritage sites, as key training sites.
- To build partnerships with industries, non-government organizations, national and local government departments to develop the effective networking for sustainable development.
- To support the links between environmental education and training regarding environmental health, water literacy, waste and pollution control, disaster risk management.
- To set up effective communication through co-ordination, sharing of resources, best practices etc.
- To implement relevant monitoring and tools to assess the effectiveness of programmes, projects and campaigns.

We can increase awareness about protection of environment by

- Communicating the importance of applying „Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle.“ People should make it regular practice.
- It should be taught as a core subject from primary level of education.
- Communicating with industrial sectors and motivatin them with awards for greening and reduction of pollution.
- Educational camps in rural and urban areas regarding orientation about benefits of protecting environment.
- Use of multimedia like internet, satellite, television advertisements, rallies, would definitely play important role in communicating the importance of environment protection.

Conclusion:

Thus becoming more transparent and accountable citizens, we can work as a mediator for creating awareness about environment. Active Public support, environment friendly policies by corporate lobbies and government, constructive work by environmental groups, educational support in the classrooms and many more strategies would definitely be helpful in successful environmental communication.

Thus we all have the duties and the rights as citizens, to know, understand, participate in what concerns as community. We are human community and environmental communicator which will definitely play a role in protecting the mother earth.

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