

ENVIRONMENT EDUCATION AND POLLUTION

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Introduction

Different people in different contexts have defined the term “environment” in many different ways. It is therefore impossible to give a universal definition of the word “environment.” Rather, we need to articulate understandings that are useful in particular contexts. The term “environment” means surroundings (environment-English). This includes all the conditions under which an organism survives. These conditions play a bigger role in influencing the development and behaviour of living things in a given environment, thus the concept environment is socially constructed.

Dichiro (1987) says the concept environment is understood to be the conceptual interactions between our physical surroundings and the social, political and economic forces that organise us in the context of our surroundings.

Environmental Education

Environmental education is the process of recognising values and clarifying concepts in order to develop skills and attitudes necessary to understand and appreciate the inter-relatedness among man, his culture, and his biophysical surroundings. Environmental Education also entails practice in decision-making and self-formulation of a code of behaviour about issues concerning environmental quality.

The above definition is widely accepted, as it was adopted by the inter governmental conference on environmental education at Tbilisi – USSR (1977) and it was used as a basis for the education component of Agenda 21, the global framework for action adopted by United Nations conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (1992) which states that:

“Education including formal education, public awareness and training should be recognised as *a process* by which human beings and societies can reach their fullest potential. Education is critical for promoting sustainable development and improving the capacity of people to address environment and developmental issues. While basic education provides the underpinning for any

environmental and developmental education, the latter needs *to be incorporated as an essential part of learning*.

Both formal and non-formal education is indispensable to changing people's attitudes so that they have the capacity to assess and address their sustainable development concerns. It is also critical for achieving environmental and ethical awareness, values and attitudes, skills and behaviour consistent with sustainable development and for effective public participation in decision-making" (UNICED Agenda 21, Chapter 36).

Nine Principles for Environmental Education

1. **Education should emphasize our interdependence with other peoples, other species and the planet as a whole.**

More than anything else, education should explore the connections between peoples, between people and other species, and between people and the planet. When we appreciate how dependent we are on having a healthy global environment, we will want to take steps to preserve biodiversity, reduce global inequalities and promote cross-cultural understanding with others.

2. **Education should help students move from awareness to knowledge to action**

Knowing about the environment doesn't necessarily lead to action. Students must have opportunities to "act" on their knowledge. It is only when we try to solve environmental problems that we can fully understand them. This can't be done solely by studying from textbooks. When students try to solve environmental problems, they discover that these issues are not black and white, and learn why these problems have not been solved already. This provides them with opportunities to develop the critical thinking skills needed to develop solutions.

3. **Teachers, students and schools in the world's richer countries should reduce their consumption of the world's resources.**

It's estimated that the 20% of the world's population in the richer countries consume 80% of the world's resources. Does our planet have enough resources for everyone to have the same living standards as this 20%? Besides asking students to consider this question, we can challenge them to think of ways their school can save energy and can use less water, paper and other resources.

4. **Students must have opportunities to develop a personal connection with nature.**

It's impossible to save the environment if you don't know it. Yet, most people live in cities where it's difficult to develop an emotional bond with nature. Environmental education can help people recognize that there is more nature in cities than we realize. Many North American schools are replacing the concrete in their school yards with nature study areas, full of native trees and plants. This is cheaper than taking students on trips to nature areas.

5. **Education should be future-oriented.**

Traditionally, we have studied history in order to understand the present. But to solve environmental problems, we need to think about the future. As British educator David Hicks says, "the future is that part of history that we can change". One way is to ask ourselves what kind of future we want to leave our children. Native peoples in North America based their decisions on what would be best for those people born seven generations after them. Another method is to develop alternative views of the future. We can consider where our current path of development is taking us, then consider environmentally-friendly alternatives. This allows students to consider what future they prefer, and how we might get there from here.

6. **We must relearn "old wisdoms" from native peoples to re-connect to the planet.**

In our communities, there are grandparents and other elders who can tell us what life was like before today's consumer society. It is important for young people to realize that our consumer society is a very recent development in human history and that many people enjoyed happy, satisfying lives before this. In North America, many educators invite aboriginal elders from native Indian or Inuit tribes to class to share their views about life.

7. **Teachers should incorporate media literacy into every school subject.**

In North America, young people encounter 2,000 advertisements each day - on TV and radio, on outdoor ads and on consumer products. These advertisements help form the self-image of boys and girls, and promote materialism as a goal in itself. We need to remember that our "mental" environment can get as polluted as the natural environment.

8. **Teachers should be facilitators.**

We don't need to be experts to teach about the environment. As we study environmental problems with our students, we can learn about these problems at the same time. One role is to provide opportunities for learning - we don't need to tell students what conclusions should be reached.

Environmental pollution

Environmental pollution is the biggest menace to the human race on this planet today. It

means adding impurity to environment. The environment consists of earth, water, air, plants and animals. If we pollute them, then the existence of man and nature will be hampered.

It is true that trees are being cut down rapidly. Our earth is becoming warmer. If pollution continues, the day is not far when our earth will be a boiling pan and become a desert. Or it will be covered with sea water causing destruction of mankind.

Pure air is always needed for inhaling. If we take pure air, our health improves. On the other hand impure air causes diseases and impairs our health and causes our death. Smoke pollutes the air. It is the root of air pollution. The smoke which is discharged from industries, automobiles and kitchens is the mixture of carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, methane etc. These are all poisonous gases. These cause lung-cancer, tuberculosis etc. which take a heavy toll of life. The glaring incident is the Bhopal gas leak in December 1984. Thousands of the residents of Bhopal died due to lungs problem which was caused by methylamine gas from the Union Carbide Plant.

The garbage emitting foul smell, the decaying plants and animals also cause air pollution. Hence the doctors advise the patients having lungs trouble to settle in some rural places because the air of villages is pure and free from population.

Then comes sound pollution. The harsh sounds of buses, its, mopeds etc. affect our power of hearing and causes fart trouble. It has been reported that there are two villages named Biraspalli and Devadas Palli near Dum Dum airport in Calcutta where a large number of people have lost their power of hearing. This is because of the frequent sounds of planes coming in and going out of Dum Dum Airport. The evils of sound pollution can be imagined from this example. The water of rivers and seas is being constantly polluted all over the world by various dangerous chemical and biological wastes. Mills and factories discharge very harmful waste waters into many rivers and sea. The water of the Ganges flowing by the side of both Varanashi and Calcutta is extremely polluted and contains all sorts of dangerous bacteria. It is really very strange and laughable that large number of the Indians regard this water as holy. They even drink this water for salvation. There is no doubt that the fish that grow in such waters are poisonous too. Reckless application of chemical fertilizers, insecticides and pesticides pollutes the soil. Vegetables and fruits are quite injurious today, because they contain the poison of insecticides and pesticides.

If the air we breathe, the water we drink and the soil which produces our crops, vegetables and fruits, all become more and more impure, then our chances of good health and longevity will be very less and less. Environment pollution is a serious menace to our existence. Realising the danger, we must plant trees in large number to absorb impure air. Impure water from industries can be sent

back for purification and then it can be used for irrigation purpose. Our government is well aware of the fact and is taking steps to save environment from pollution.

Conclusion:

The terms environment, definitions of environmental education, aims, objectives and principles of environmental education as they apply to the teaching and learning process. In addition, looked at environmental issues, risks and discussed how environmental education can be a response to environmental crisis. These aspects are meant to consolidate the knowledge you have gained and apply it. In this paper we have looked at some trends in development and how in turn development has affected the environment, we have also discussed some of the responses to the environmental crisis at global and national level. All these aspects are meant to help you to understand the environment and some of the concerns.

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