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## **ENVIRONMENT: THE EDUCATIONAL ASPECTS**

Environment is everything that is around us. It can be living or non-living things. It includes physical, chemical and other natural forces. Living things live in their environment. They constantly interact with it and adapt themselves to conditions in their environment. In the environment there are different interactions between animals, plants, soil, water, and other living and non-living things [1].

Environment is the complex of physical, chemical, and biotic factors that act upon an organism or an ecological community and ultimately determine its form and survival [2].

Environmental education connects us to the world around us, teaching us about both natural and built environments. It raises awareness of issues impacting the environment upon which we all depend, as well as actions we can take to improve and sustain it. Whether we bring nature into the classroom, take students outside to learn, or find spontaneous teachable moments on a nature walk with our families, environmental education has many benefits for youth, educators, schools, and communities.

Environmental education is defined as education that helps individuals to become more knowledgeable about their environment and to develop responsible environmental behaviour and skills so that they can improve the quality of the environment [3]. Environmental education is concerned with those aspects of human behaviour which are more directly related to

man's interaction with bio-physical environment and his ability to understand this interaction.

Environmental education refers to organized efforts to teach how natural environments function, and particularly, how human beings can manage behaviour and ecosystems to live sustainably. It is a multi-disciplinary field integrating disciplines such as biology, chemistry, physics, ecology, earth science, atmospheric science, mathematics, and geography. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) states that environmental education is vital in imparting an inherent respect for nature amongst society and in enhancing public environmental awareness [4].

Environmental awareness means having the latest knowledge of the possible dangers, threats of environmental degradation. It includes making the people conscious of the physical, social and aesthetic aspects of the environment. These elements are interrelated and interdependent and are essential for the survival of humanity. Awareness needs sensitivity. If one feels his co-existence with the nature he will be called sensitive. A sensitive person concerns the environment from its reckless exploitation. He believes in the sustainable development and recycling of waste material. When we see the very potential of education, it can safely be concluded that such awareness can be realized through education.

The environment awareness education lays emphasis on certain crucial points as alertness, location, specificity, conservation skill and sustainable development etc. Alertness includes making the person conscious about the physical, social and aesthetic aspects of the environment. Location specificity means making the people conscious of the situation of the particular location around them. Conservation emphasizes the judicious and balanced utilization of the resources rather than their increased misuse. Sustainable development or recycling of the waste material aims at saving natural resources, forest cover, discover alternative sources of energy and protecting the environment from being polluted and cut down green house gases, to protect earth from global warming. Education must focus on the above mentioned points. Only

then ecological imbalance can be curbed. Such education may be integrated at primary, secondary or higher level.

At elementary level the main focus must be the awareness or consciousness of the nature general. The environmental material should be embedded with the contents in language, social science and the natural sciences. The teacher concerned should follow the teaching strategies of direct observation supported by audio-visual aids.

Location orientation awareness and conservation knowledge and skill should be given due emphasis at the secondary level of formal education. Here, content may remain the same as it is at the elementary level, but the teaching strategies employed should be action oriented.

Higher education has the most important role in curbing environmental imbalances. It should focus on the sustainable development, conservation and recycling knowledge and skill depending upon the nature of the courses offered. Research activities must be encouraged in this respect at the maximum. It should include extension works too.

The aim of environmental education is clearly to show the economic, social, political and ecological interdependence of the modern world, in which decisions and actions by different countries can have international consequences. Environmental education should, in this regard, help to develop a sense of responsibility and solidarity among countries and regions as the foundation for a new international order which will guarantee the conservation and improvement of the environment.

The main aim of environmental education at the grass root level is to succeed in making individuals and communities understand the complex nature of the natural and the built environments. Further, to acquire the knowledge, values, attitudes, and practical skills to participate in a responsible and effective way in anticipating and solving social problems, and in the management of the quality of the environment.

Environmental education is hands-on, interactive learning that sparks the imagination and unlocks creativity. When it is integrated into the curriculum, students are more enthusiastic and engaged in learning, which raises student achievement in core academic areas.

Not only does environmental education offer opportunities for experiential learning outside of the classroom, it enables students to make connections and apply their learning in the real world. It helps learners see the interconnectedness of social, ecological, economic, cultural, and political issues.

Environmental education encourages students to research, investigate how and why things happen, and make their own decisions about complex environmental issues. By developing and enhancing critical and creative thinking skills, environmental education helps foster a new generation of informed consumers, workers, as well as policy or decision makers.

Environmental education encourages students to investigate varying sides of issues to understand the full picture. It promotes tolerance of different points of view and different cultures.

By incorporating environmental education practices into the curriculum, teachers can integrate science, math, language, arts, history, and more into one rich lesson or activity, and still satisfy numerous state and national academic standards in all subject areas. Taking a class outside or bringing nature indoors provides an excellent backdrop or context for interdisciplinary learning.

By exposing students to nature and allowing them to learn and play outside, environmental education fosters sensitivity, appreciation, and respect for the environment. It combats nature deficit disorder, and it is fun.

Environmental education gets students outside and active, and helps address some of the health issues we are seeing in children today, such as obesity, attention deficit disorders, and depression. Good nutrition is often emphasized through environmental education and stress is reduced due to increased time spent in nature.

Environmental education promotes a sense of place and connection through community involvement. When students decide to learn more or take action to improve their environment, they reach out to community experts, donors, volunteers, and local facilities to help bring the community together to understand and address environmental issues impacting their neighbourhood.

Environmental education helps students understand how their decisions and actions affect the environment, builds knowledge and skills necessary to address complex environmental issues, as well as ways we can take action to keep our environment healthy and sustainable for the future.

Environmental education promotes active learning, citizenship, and student leadership. It empowers youth to share their voice and make a difference at their school and in their communities. Environmental education helps teachers build their own environmental knowledge and teaching skills, and incorporate environmental education into the curriculum.

Summing up, education acts as a powerful tool in the socio-economic transformation of a society, community and nation. It sharpens the eye of knowledge, develops awareness and makes mind logical. Teacher being the agent of social change, play an active role in shaping the behaviour of children to promote desire for environmental awareness. Teachers adopt the age and level specific strategies to impart environmental education.

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