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**Abstract**

*This paper explored that teacher education has a significant role in responding to the environmental problems. For effective teacher education, it needs to be re-oriented. Our education system has traditionally been very weak in nurturing such capacities i.e. Capacities to feel, examine the prominence of environment related issues. Policy planners and teachers should actively participate to this change. Necessary political actions should be planned for environmental awareness at all educational level.*

**Keywords:** *What is Environment? Environmental Education, Teacher Education and Environmental Awareness*

Environment may be extensible understood to mean our surroundings. It can be divided into non-living and living components. The Environment provides resources which support life on the earth and which also help in the increase of a relationship of exchange between living organisms and the environment in which they live. It is important to realize that humans enjoy a unique position in nature due to their exceptional ability to effect and pattern the environment. In the recent past the term nature has been used as parallel to word environment. It has been generally believed that nature is what man has not made. In our discussion environment and nature have been used as synonym, which incorporate most of the clear revelation of geography.

'Environment' is a term derived from the French word 'Environner' that means 'to surround'. There was a time when environment just meant surroundings. It was used to delineate the physical world surrounding us including soil, rocks, water and air. Gradually it was realized that the excessive variety of plants, animals and micro-organisms on this earth, including human beings are an integral part of the environment. Hence, to make a sensible definition of environment, it was necessary to include the interactions and inter-relationships of all living organisms with the physical surroundings. Later, it was further recognized that all types of social, cultural and technological activities carried out by human beings also have a deep influence on many components of the environment.

Today Environmental Education in the formal educational system in India is handled at three levels. It is a composite subject called Environment at the primary, secondary level. But it is a separate subject at the third level i.e. higher education or college / university level. For EE to be effectively taken up in the curricular and extra-curricular pattern, resources and facilities have to be built up and increased both within and outside the college/ university education system.

**Components of the environment:** (i) Biotic components, which include living beings, including humans; (ii) Abiotic

components, which include all non-living things, around the organism. These two components have an effect on each other. For example, if it does not rain for some days and the temperature is very high, the plants will dry up and animals, including human beings, will find it difficult to live in such an environment.

**Environmental Education in Teacher Education :** National Council for Teacher Education and Centre for Environment Education have worked together over the last 2 years towards strengthening environmental education in teacher education in the country. A set of three resource books on Environmental Education (EE) has been developed and published in both languages (English and Hindi). Experts in teacher education and environmental education guided the development of these Resource Books. They are based on the NCTE-developed curriculum of EE in teacher education and are suitable for use by teacher educators at different level of teacher education like; B.El-Ed., D.Ed., B.Ed and M.Ed levels. The books are being scattered to teacher education institutions by NCTE and through a series of six workshops being conducted by NCTE and CEE. The first workshop was inaugurated by Prof. M.A. Siddiqui, Chairperson, NCTE, New Delhi, organized in Lucknow in November 2008 for faculty from teacher education institutions in some northern Indian states.

**Teacher Education and Environmental Education :** According to the National Policy on Education (1986) "There is paramount need to create a consciousness of the Environment. It must permeate all ages and all sections of society, beginning with the child. Environmental consciousness should inform teaching in schools and colleges. This aspect will be integrated in the entire educational process". The National Policy of Education (1986 & 1992) visualizes a national curricular framework (NCF) which contains a common core including many elements having direct bearing on the natural and social environment of the students. These core areas are expected to occupy a place of prominence

not only in reference materials but also in lecture hall and out of college activities. Environmental education is the principal means of enhancing such awareness, both among the public at large, and among focused groups. Such education may be formal or informal or a combination of both. It may rely on educational institutions at different levels; electronic, the print, or live media; and many other formal and informal settings. Many steps to expand and enrich the content of the environment awareness and education programmes have been taken. The Supreme Court has also mandated that "Environmental Education" must be imparted at all level, including higher education in the formal education system.

#### **Importance of Environment for human life**

**Individualistic Importance of Environment:** Environmental studies is very important since it deals with the most mundane problems of life where each individual matters, like dealing with safe and clean drinking water, hygienic living conditions, clean and fresh air, fertile land, healthy food and sustainable development.

**Global and Local Importance of Environment :** Environment is one subject that is actually global as well as local in nature. Issues like global warming, depletion of ozone layer, dwindling forests and energy resources, loss of global biodiversity etc. which are going to affect the mankind as a whole are global in nature and for that we have to think and plan globally. For dealing with local environmental issues, e.g. impact of mining or hydroelectric project in an area, problems of disposal and management of solid waste, river or lake pollution, soil erosion, water problem in local population and etc.

#### **Efforts for green and healthy Environment**

**Public Awareness for Environment:** Any government at its own level cannot achieve the goals of sustainable development until the public has a participatory role in it. Public participation is possible only when the public is aware about the ecological and environmental issues. The public has to be educated about the fact that if we are degrading our environment we are actually harming our own selves. A drive by the government to ban the littering of polythene cannot be successful until the public understands the environmental implications of the same. The public has to be made aware that by littering polythene, we are not only damaging the environment, but also posing serious threat to our health.

**Role of Indian Environmentalists in Environmental Awareness:** There are some environmentalists in the present time who have made a mark in our country through environmental activism. Sh. Sunderlal Bahuguna, (Environmentalists) known for his 'Chipko movement' and 'Tehri Bachao Andolan', Smt. Medha Patkar (social worker) and Ms. Arundhati Roy (writer) known for their 'Narmada Bachao Andolan', the Magsaysay awardee Sh. Rajender (water man) Singh known for his water conservation efforts are some such contemporary figures. In modern India, our late Mrs. Indira Gandhi (Ex Prime Minister of India) was instrumen-

tal in introducing the concept of environmental protection in the Constitution of India as a fundamental duty while Mrs. Maneka Gandhi (formerly environment minister) has worked a lot for the cause of wildlife protection. Even with many such key persons leading the cause to environment, India is yet to achieve a lot in this field.

**International Efforts for Environment:** Environmental issues received international attention about 35 years back in Stockholm Conference, held on 5th June 1972. Since then we celebrate World Environment Day on 5th June. At the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held at Rio de Janeiro, in 1992, known popularly as Earth Summit, and ten years later, the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held at Johannesburg in 2002, key issues of global environmental concern were highlighted.

**Role of Government:** In order to increase consumer awareness about environment, the Government of India has introduced a scheme of eco labeling of consumer products as 'Ecomark' in 1991. Unfortunately, environmental awareness campaigns have very often been exploited for political propaganda rather than being an integral part of our educational programmes in theory and practice.

**Education can help in Environmental awareness :** The educational policy planners need to realize that adding a new subject called "environmental science" or "environmental education" or something similar is at best a small first step. We need flexible frameworks that allow teachers to engage the students in interesting ways. We need teacher's educators interested enough and knowledgeable enough to do this. The syllabus needs to be responsive to local issues and has to accommodate local knowledge. Recently, there are many different websites where you can read about the latest developments regarding environmental laws and environmental compliance. What is really important is to understand their importance. Environmental laws are very often nothing but a dead letters on the papers, something that is there but has no real purpose, as profits are the one that really count in many countries of the modern world. Environmental law in United States is especially covered in these federal statutes; (a) National Environmental Policy Act; (b) Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act and etc.

**Programs of Teacher Education for Environment Education:** There are growing numbers of examples of linkages between NGOs, government and educational institution to reach environment education in to college and university levels. The modules are aimed at helping IGNOU and NCTE effectively organizing EE training workshops teachers in developing training materials in EE and effective use of these materials. The modules include introduction to EE, processes and methods in EE, educational technology for EE, and EE activities in college / university. In this context, during 1995-96 a broad curriculum framework



and relevant instructional materials were developed through a participatory process involving B.Ed. colleges Departments of Education, facilitated by National and Regional institutions. The national Ministry of Environmental and Forests support part of the initiative. The MHRD, NCTE, IGNOU, NCERT supports development of locale specific teaching learning materials by this website. (<http://www.ncte-in.org/>, <http://www.ncert.nic.in/>, <http://www.ignou.nic.in/>)

**Conclusion :** Teachers' educators need to be prepared to become Environmental Education communicators, who will proactively take-up the activity oriented approach to teaching and learning process. This will require in extra to teacher training, ongoing support that will reach into colleges / university and effect the Environmental Education programme. This support could be perhaps from an external resource agency that closely exchange with the educational system on an ongoing basis. "Education, broadly understood, is an important part of the response to the challenges that Indian community might face due to the environmental problems. Educational initiatives have a significant role to play in communicating the nature of the problem and in nurturing the critical intellectual, ethical and emotional capacities that are likely to help create a meaningful response."

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