

Curricular and Co-Curricular Dimensions of Environmental Education

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ABSTRACT

The planet Earth is the abode of man, an intelligent creature of nature. It also houses other living beings. Man influences and is influenced by all these living & non-living creations of nature. The totality of all such subjects is usually referred to as his environment. As civilization progressed and science advanced, man started creating his own artificial environment. The consequence of this was the emergence of several serious problems for natural environment. Therefore, there was a need to create awareness in our students. A need was felt for an 'Education about Environment', which should form an integral part of curriculum at all levels of schooling. In recent years, Environmental Education has become a necessity for existence of human life. Various educational organizations (UGC, NCERT etc.) are engaged in making provision for the imparting of this education at various educational stages. The present paper attempts to highlight the major curricular and co-curricular dimensions of Environmental Education. It emphasizes the need to make the curriculum transaction more activity oriented, locale specific, problems and issues oriented. The paper explains the various pedagogical approaches, which can be followed for effective teaching-learning of environmental issues. The paper attempts to relate some of the well-known teaching methodologies & techniques with the teaching of environmental education. It is evident that both the curricular & co-curricular activities play major role in imparting quality education. Therefore, the paper presents the importance of some of the co-curricular activities like environmental games, songs, activities, competitions in making environmental education more interesting, effective, and active.

Keywords: Emphasize, environment, dimension, circular, methodology.

The planet Earth is the abode of man, an intelligent creature of nature. It also houses other living creatures and non-living entities like air, water, oceans, and stars etc. Man influences and is influenced by all these creations of nature. In totality, all these are usually referred as man's environment. As a rule of nature, all these constituents of environment support the

existence of one another on the planet. An inbuilt harmony existed between man and his environment. It was a 'balanced' exploitation of one another for mutual survival.

However, of late, as a result of advancement in science and progress in the civilization, man started creating his 'artificial' environment: machines, satellites, chemicals, weapons and tried to fit them into the natural environment. This led to disturbance in the natural balance and harmony in the environment. Natural resources were over exploited leading to scarcity. These consequences became serious and created problems of population explosion, global warming, environmental pollution, energy crisis. Therefore, there is a need to create awareness in our 'future citizens' namely, our children and students. This education about environment should form an integral part of the curriculum at all levels of schooling.

Environmental education has assumed great importance in recent years. UGC (1991) and NCERT (2003) have been directed by Supreme Court to prescribe courses on environment and to prepare a model syllabus for environment education. Various commissions have also stated that protection of the environment is a value, which must form an integral part of curriculum at all stages of education.

Various non-formal agencies, NGO's and educational institutions are also actively involved in creating environmental awareness among all sections of society through various programmes.

Environment education may be considered from different angles:-

1. **Knowledge:** Education about the present status of environment and related values.
2. **Attitudes and Action:** Education for protecting the environment.
3. **Resources:** Education in and through the environment. Knowledge (curriculum content) gives the foundation. Participation in suitable programmes involves values, attitudes & skills to convince one's own self and persuade others, while the community provides a rich resource for positive interaction. The school and college systems play a key role in providing this education and in re-educating the society about its responsibilities.

The present paper focuses on the curricular and co-curricular dimensions of environmental education. The paper attempts to highlight the major aspects related to curriculum of environmental education and also tries to explore various opportunities of imparting environmental education through co-curricular activities. First, the paper throws light on some of the important considerations, which are to be kept in mind while framing and implementing the curriculum. Secondly, the paper discusses the role played by various co-curricular activities in making environmental education more interesting and effective.

The curriculum of environment education should be locale specific. It should be appropriate according to the local conditions. It should have attractiveness for the student. It should be

affordable for all sections of the society and all the relevant and complete reliable knowledge should be made available to the students. Thus, a curriculum, which has appropriately collected relevant information, is balanced, has considered the interest of all, and is fulfilling in respect of environmental needs, will be able to conduct a successful environmental education programme.

The transaction of the curriculum should be more activity oriented, locale specific, problem and issue oriented. Emphasis should be more on the process of transformation than on achieving the final product. Development of skills, positive attitudes, values, and appreciation should be stressed rather than imparting simple knowledge and understanding. The activities need to be experiential in nature. Value orientation, development of critical thinking and problem solving should be the objective. Probing questions, questionnaire, rating scales, observation and case study can be used as appropriate tools and techniques of curriculum evaluation.

Environmental Education is an integrating discipline bringing in a different perspective through the inter-relationship between teachings in Science, Social Studies, Mathematics and different aspects of Eco-system. Activity oriented approach through projects is the best but it requires formal system to be flexible. Interdisciplinary approach can use concepts from various subjects to highlight the environmental perspective. Multidisciplinary approach integrates this perspective into other disciplines. This integration with other subjects leads to a detailed complete and scientific study of environment, which in turn develops environmental ethics in society. The disciplinary approach enhances deeper understanding of environmental issues, which requires in-depth study.

Various teaching methodologies and techniques can also be applied to environmental education. Lecture method and lecture-cum-question and answers method can be the most convenient method. Discussion, Symposium, Debate, and Seminars can help a lot in developing expression and skills. Methods like Problem-Solving, Project, Discovery, Exhibition, Simulation, Experimentation, Demonstration help in developing heuristic attitude towards solving environmental problems. Role-playing and Brainstorming are very effective techniques for detailed study of environmental issues. In environmental education, process and continuous evaluation is perhaps, more important than product and summative evaluation.

Environmental education lays more emphasis on development of attitudes; skills, and values. Co-curricular activities are an effective means of achieving the objectives of affective domain. The paper presents a brief review of the various activities, which can be conducted to impart this education. These are as follows:-

1. **Environmental Games:** Games and play help in keeping good health, mental balance, emotional control, social qualities development. Centre of Environmental Education, Ahmadabad has initiated the use of games in the field of environment. Games like 'Web Of Life' help in inter-relating various aspects of nature and visually communicate the concept of 'Web Of Life'.

2. **Environmental Songs:** Songs and poems about Nature, Environment, Living Beings, and Beauty of Universe have always been a source of inspiration and knowledge. Thus, environmental education can be imparted effectively and interestingly to the students with the help of songs.
3. Different Environmental activities:
 - A. **Nature Conservation Work-** Activities such as massive plantation, cleaning of water bodies and preservation of forest and conservation of natural resources can help in developing spirit of environmental awareness. These activities can be conducted by educational institutions, scout and guide associations etc.
 - B. **Study Of Environment-** Various research projects at University or College level can help in dealing with environmental problems. Action researches at local and school level can also contribute in this field.
 - C. **Environmental Awareness Programmes:-** Eco development camps and lectures series make the students aware about the various environmental aspects. Film shows and exhibitions are also an entertaining and active means of raising environmental awareness.
 - D. **Environmental Discussions-** Conducting various seminars, workshops, symposia, interaction meets helps in developing a wide and broader outlook towards environmental education.
4. Different Environmental Competitions: Competitions help in realizing the desired objectives of environmental education. Drawing and Painting Competitions, Essay Writing Competitions, General Knowledge Competitions, Quiz Competitions, Debates, Inter-School Beautification Competitions, Paper Reading Competitions, Photography Competitions, Philately Competitions, Plays, Poster Competitions, Slogan Writing Competitions, Environmental Message Competition, Song and Poem Competitions are the various illuminating, interesting, entertaining means of providing environmental education to students of different educational levels.

Curricular and Co-Curricular inputs go together in achieving the targets of quality education. Environmental Education is not an exception. Thus, there is a need to review and refocus our attention towards Curricular and Co-Curricular dimensions of Environment Education. This will surely help in imparting a quality, effective Environment Education and help Man and this planet Earth to survive and prosper in the Natural Environment.

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