

Status & Scope of Environmental education in India

(Paper presented by V Selvarajan on the eve of Green Circle 20th Anniversary Seminar in association with GGIP University Delhi on 8.4.2022)

I was listening to a Botany teacher in her classroom about Pitcher plant (Nepenthus). She beautifully explained how the insects and bees that get into the bottle shaped flower of nepenthes plant and how they are trapped by the carnivorous plant. The children were awestricken when they heard that a plant can consume an insect. When the teacher came out, I had a talk with her about a tree planting program in the school. She was in charge of the eco club. When I completed my discussion, I expressed my curiosity to her. I put a simple question. Mam, have you shown the Nepunthus plant to the children? I was shocked at her reply. She said, In fact, I have not seen the Nepunthus plant myself till date. She is an MSc Botany, qualified PGT in a Delhi School. This is the status of environmental education

On another occasion, I entered into a class room and asked permission for addressing the Children. The teacher readily permitted. My curiosity was to understand the level of knowledge about pollution. I just asked the child, what is SMOG? Prompt came the answer that it is Smoke Plus Fog. Fine, the student knows what is SMOG. When I asked how do you sense it, they were looking each other. Further I was tempted to ask, What is AQI and What is PM 2.5. But none of the students who lived in one of the world's worst Gas Chamber were not aware what is PM 2.5 or 10. When I asked Is there Air pollution in Delhi, yes, many children were aware of that.

Environmental education as defined by United States Environmental Protection Agency is a process that allows individuals to explore environmental issues, engage in problem solving, and take action to improve the environment. As a result, individuals develop a deeper understanding of environmental issues and have the skills to make informed and responsible decisions.

Components of environmental education

From an NGO perspective, the following aspects must be given emphasize

- **Knowledge**
- **Sensitization**
- **Awareness Programs**
- **Attitude**
- **Skills**
- **Participation**
- **Capacity building**
- **Empowerment**
 - in activities that lead to the resolution of environmental challenges

Environmental education does not advocate a particular viewpoint or course of action. Rather, environmental education teaches individuals how to weigh various sides of an issue through critical thinking and it enhances their own problem-solving and decision-making skills.

In India, environmental education is mandated by the Supreme Court of India and overseen by the National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT). The National Curriculum Framework, developed by NCERT, includes a “Protection of the Environment” component. Educators may engage in EE professional development through distance learning, in-service teacher training, conferences, nature camps, and environmental courses. They may also engage with national and regional environmental education associations, including the [Centre for Environment Education, India \(CEE\)](#), the [South Asia Co-Operative Environment Programme \(SACEP\)](#), and the [South and Southeast Asia Network for Environmental Education \(SASEANEE\)](#). Within the national government, environmental education is supported by various ministries, including the [Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change](#), the [Ministry of Human Resource Development](#), and the [Department of Science and Technology](#). EE activities in

India may be funded by a variety of sources, including government grants, foundations, and corporate social responsibility initiatives.

Benefits

Imagination and enthusiasm are heightened

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

Beyond Classroom

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

Critical and creative thinking skills

EE 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, EE helps foster a new generation of informed consumers, workers, as well as policy or decision makers.

Tolerance and understanding are supported

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

State and national learning standards are met for multiple subjects

By incorporating EE 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.

Biophobia and nature deficit disorder decline

By exposing students to nature and allowing them to learn and play outside, EE fosters sensitivity, appreciation, and respect for the environment. It combats “nature deficit disorder” ... and it’s FUN!

Healthy lifestyles are encouraged

EE 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 EE and stress is reduced due to increased time spent in nature.

Communities are strengthened

EE 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 neighborhood.

Responsible action is taken to better the environment

EE 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. Service-learning programs offered by PLT and other EE organizations provide students and teachers with support through grants and other resources for action projects.

Students and teachers are empowered

EE 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. EE helps teachers build their own environmental knowledge and teaching skills. I hope these “top ten” benefits will give you the confidence and commitment to incorporate EE into your curriculum!