

## In Search of Sustainability through Environmental Education

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### Abstract:

*In the past two decades environment have gained unparalleled focus from scholars, policy makers and public concern. The term Environment has witnessed unending modification from its simplest form of being a combination of living and non-living organized system to a complex interdependent whole. Here in the paper, we will try to understand the changing dynamics of environment along with the alteration of the term with ecology. While the term environment tends to be more anthropocentric keeping mankind in the centre of all complex set of living and nonliving objects. In contrast to environment ecology is a much broader term that encompasses in its ambit all natural relationships. With the beginning of the concept of Sustainable Development in the late 1980's, an integration of environmental conservation with economic development became the need of the hour. The three fold connection between the environment, human society and the economy is important and how the social-psychological behavior is essential to maintain the harmony between the three elements will be the central theme of this paper.*

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### I. INTRODUCTION

“Environment” in its simplest definition could be said as a universe of biotic and other physical materials organized into dynamic systems. This system is said to be the eco-system or the ecological system which represents the integration of the living (biotic) and the non-living environment as a whole. Schnaiberg, A (1980) The capabilities achieved by human beings are to large extent determined by the physical environment people live in. It is no longer clear that the term environment have an unambiguous meaning. The seriousness of environmental hazards gained prominence in the early 19th century in the post war years where natural environment was massively endangered which led to the present trend of ecological devastation which needs to be controlled. Munshi, I (2000) A wide range of analysis from individual psyche to the externalities created by the activities of man and nature. The interconnection of the environment with the behavioral aspect began during the end of 19th century which are intertwined with three influences of- (a) intrapersonal such as values, motivations (b) interpersonal such as social norms and comparisons (c) external such as rewards and punishments. Giffort, R., Kormos, C., & McIntyre, A. (2011)

#### a) Growth of Environmentalism and Sustainability:

The concept of environmentalism and sustainable development gained prominence in the mid-19th century. The present form of environmentalism could be traced with the contemporary form of environmental degradation in its most complex and catastrophic dilemmas of modernity Goldblatt, D (1996) The concept of sustainability emerged in the mid-20th century as a notion to manage the renewable resources. The term sustainability gained a defining moment which got unparalleled focus from scholars, policy makers and public concerns. Much of these concerns have emerged since

the late 1980's when the term began to get its usage in broader context with the promotion of the concept of “Sustainable Development.” Brundtland Report (1987) The term gained its prominence when ‘The International Union for the Conservation and Natural Resources IUCN’ presented the World Conservation Strategy (WCS) with the overall aim of achieving Sustainable Development through the conservation of living resources throughout.

In common parlance it is not always clear that sustainability is a desired goal or attribute. Hence when one is talking of sustainability what exactly need to be sustain explicitly and implicitly. Drawing from the ecological perspective Schnaiberg, A (1980) it should be noted that the concept of sustainability is fundamentally connected with the social connotation which might be called as maintain the social basis of human well-being.

### II. OBJECTIVES

As regard to the objective of this article the authors' attempt-

- 1) To comprehend the necessity of equitable environmental sustainability in the context of the present scenario where resource management is equally important like that of resource allocation.
- 2) To understand the interdependent relationship between man and nature in relation with the creation of the external environment this meanwhile can be a part of individual psyche.
- 3) To evaluate the penetration of environmental education to understand the actual essence of ecological sustainability.
- 4) To explain the impact of changing climatic hazards and the requirement of mainstream education for dealing with the forthcoming issues of environmental depletion.

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### III. METHODOLOGY

With the ambit of this write-up, the authors' has made a study on the concept of environment which was broadly discussed in the post war years with the origin of the term Sustainable Development (SD) and how with the changing circumstances have felt the necessity of the inclusion of the environmentalism in the present day context of education for an effective future implementation. The methodology followed is primarily qualitative research based on secondary sources of data; the study uses available books, articles and policies with regard to the management of environment and the changing educational curriculum.

### IV. ASSESSMENT OF LITERACY FOR GAINING SUSTAINABILITY

The development of the country can be marked by two key indicators first the literacy rate and second is the level of educational attainment of the people. These two aspects assist an individual to understand the socio- cultural environment in which s/he exists and to improve their quality of life both in social and personal context. Underlying the required environmental concerns the central argument here is that of weak sustainability of the resources or even irreversibility of resources. The critical need of the hour is to create awareness about the multiple forms of conserving the environment and educating the youth about inextricable interconnection between the environmental system and human system. Compulsory Environmental education should be there from the elementary level to higher level of education to enlighten the literate population about the atrocities of conserving and preserving the environment along with the consequences of environmental determinism Haque, A.K.E (2011)

#### a) Meaning

Environmental Education (EE) is defined as education that help individuals to become more knowledgeable about their environment and to develop a responsible environmental behavior and skills so that they can improve the quality of the environment Wike, R.J. Peyton, R.B. Hungerford, H.R. (1987) Education is a major powerful tool to mould the character of an individual. A nation can develop only if it is capable of producing conscious educated population who is well-aware of all the distortions that are occurring in and around. Education, in its general sense is an assembled form of learning with the amalgamation of the knowledge, skills and habits of a group of people. Environment is required to be seen as the total equitable factor where the eco-centric as well as the anthropo-centric view along with the interdependent imaginary parallel chain is maintained. The concept of ecology more prominently discusses about the equitable balance where one element does not have supremacy over the other. Murphy, R (1995)

#### b) Perception of Environment:

The concept of the environment can be perceived in different ways in accordance to the context of the whole ecological system. Tani (2013) identified three different ways of how individuals view the environment, which includes:

- i) Environment as an entity
- ii) As an experienced phenomenon

- iii) As a socially/culturally produced phenomenon

Shepardson, D.P (2007) have argued that the way students conceives the environment, it shapes the ways in which they understands the environmental issues and also shapes their behavior.

Similarly, teachers' understanding of environmental education shapes their teaching practices.

**Environment as an entity:** When the environment is perceived as an entity, the environment is taken to be something which is not linked to human, but treated as an external factor where people are separated from the former, like all the other inanimate objects. This way of perceiving the environment can be referred to as the objective view, where man senses the environment peripheral to their existence.

**Environment as an experienced phenomenon:** In this view, environment is seen as a space which surrounds an individual, and the individual finds himself/herself at the centre stage. This means, it is an important setting for man's life. This is the subjective view of the environment where the relationship of human and nature could be analyzed in terms of one having the control over the other at certain point of time from decades.

**Environment as a socially/ culturally produced phenomenon:** According to this view, human are an integral part of the environment who he shapes themselves through their social and cultural behaviors. This could also be referred to as the subjective perception of the individual's conscious mind. From the written facts, it could be stated hereby that the perception of the environment is partially dependent on the factors of anthropocentric ideology. The observed environment is treated as objective as well as subjective depending on the nature of human interpretation. Here in this paper we will try to explore the forms of environment perceived by human, resting on their behavioral patterns. An explanatory test would be attempted to be done through this paper of how socio-analytical perspective shapes the conception of environment and its essentiality in the educational forum.

### V. ENVIRONMENT IN TOTALITY

When environment is considered in its totality of the things that surrounds an individual and the entire humanity, it can be categorized into the biophysical, social, economic and political aspects too.

#### a) Education for sustainable development

Education for sustainable development is the concept which came into being when the viability of the environment became one of the major agendas for various development forums. Sustainable development was initiated as the result of conflicts between the social development, economic growth and environment conservation. Education for Sustainable Development is defined by Council for Environment Education for National Curriculum for England and Wales as the curriculum that enables people to develop their knowledge, values and skills in decision-making about the way they do things individually and collectively, both at local and global levels that will improve the quality of life without damaging the planet for future.

#### b) Relationship between Environmental Education and Education of Sustainable Development:

- A closer look at the relationship between environmental education and sustainable development reveals that both the environmental education and education for sustainable development have the same vision, which is 'the creation of a better world with balance among economy, ecology and society.
- Environmental education is thus an inseparable aspect from sustainable development. Being a component of sustainable development, it has to deal with social, political, economic and ecological aspects of the human environment as a whole.

### VI. DIMENSIONS OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Prominent scholars of the environmental education, Fien, J, Maclean, R. (2000) have suggested that, if environmental education is to be accepted as meaningful it need to accept three dimensions, which are-

- EE as education about the environment.
- EE as education in or through the environment.
- EE as education for the environment.

This implies that environmental education has to assume the role of helping the individual to develop the knowledge about their environment which they can acquire by interacting with the environment and will finally be able to use the knowledge and skills to conserve or protect our environment. Gough, N (1999) Palmer, J.A. (1998)

### VII. IMPORTANCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

The importance of Environmental Science and Environmental Studies cannot be disputed. The need for sustainable development is a key to the future of mankind. Continuing problems of pollution, solid waste disposal, degradation of environmental issues like economic productivity and national security, global warming, depletion of ozone layer and loss of biodiversity have made mankind aware of the necessities of the environment. The Rio Summit of 1992 have drawn the attention of people around the globe regarding the deteriorating condition of our environment. At the present context, it can be said that no citizen can afford to be ignorant of the environmental issues. Environmental management has captured the realm of healthcare as well.

According to UNESCO, the guiding principles of environmental education is to make the approach interdisciplinary by including socio-cultural aspect of the environment to built in the gap that exists between the concrete idea of physical environment which neglects the anthropogenic aspect.

### VIII. CONCLUSION

Finally the concept of sustainability does not by itself tell us as to what notion of human well-being one is trying to sustain. The concept of ecological sustainability has a deep subjective notion. While there is a wide range of debate both on the

material as well as non-material grounds regarding the perception of the environment. Lele, S. (2006) Yet from the socio-psychological analysis it could be made clear that the environment in which humans exists have a close proximity with the natural settings in which they sustain. The ever changing natural externality is deeply impacted by the everyday activities of the humans which marks the altering natural environment Giffort, R., Kormos, C., & McIntyre, A. (2011) The practical implication of the environmental education is to be ensured to bring the notion of sustainability in working reality. To attain a win-win situation both the concepts of sustainability and educating the population must go parallel to avoid the muddled thinking's or disingenuous argumentation which are often demonstrated to prove the less connectivity between the anthropogenic and ecological elements. To tackle the environmental battle the powerful tool of education is of utmost importance specifically in a Third World country like Indian where resource allocation and management are often guided by the power relations. Bryant, R.L (1998)

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