

Environmental Education in India: An Approach to Sustainable Development

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Abstract

This article explores the relationship between environmental education and sustainable development in India. It provides an overview of various initiatives regarding the role of environmental education towards sustainable development at global level in general and national level in particular. The article also provides a brief analysis of various education projects, academic programmes and curriculum development initiatives for achieving the goal of sustainability. Environmental education tries to create awareness among the students and highlights various challenges and prospects for future progress. Sustainable development is a balanced approach evolved from social, economic and environmental dimensions. It is mutual combination of these three domains that has helped to shape the society's interaction with the biosphere. This article will help the decision makers in designing better strategies for proper implementation of environmental education in India and achieving the common goal of sustainability.

Keywords

Sustainable Development, Environmental Education, Social Development, Economic Progress.

Introduction

During the last 30 years, there has been a dramatic increase in the world population and urban-rural distribution imbalance has put more burden on the limited resources available on this planet. Rapid industrialization and modernization have boosted food production and consumption, purchasing power has increased and overall literacy rate has improved. It has obliged the people to adopt a cosmetic flavour of lifestyle that has led to increased pollution levels and has caused a threat to the life on the earth. This has diverted the attention of both the developed and developing countries towards the damage caused to the earth and its biodiversity which will be irreparable for future generations (Reid, 1995; Carley & Christie, 2000; Dalal-Clayton & Bass, 2002). Environmental education and sustainable development have become one of the top agendas on national and global level since the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992. The concept of sustainable development was first given by Brundt in the Report – 'Our Common Future' in 1987, which defined sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED, 1987). It has been the first step towards importance and usefulness of sustainability (Filho, Lozano & Peattie, 2009). The sustainable development, based on three pillars (economic development, social development and the protection of the environment), were the main areas of focus during the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg, 2002. It also emphasized the special role of our education systems in facilitating, envisioning, and working towards the goal of sustainable development. Environment can be understood as the system that provides basic support to the life on this planet in one way or the other. The deterioration of environment has now become a cause of concern, it has become imperative to make environmental education (EE) as a tool for life-long learning right from one's childhood. In light of the above discussions EE can be defined as a process of developing a community that is aware of, concerned about, the total environment and its associated paradigms and which has the knowledge, attitudes, commitments and skills to work individually and collectively towards the situation of current problems and prevention of new ones (Sonowal, 2009). Environmental concerns began to emerge in its present form due to the enormous technological and industrial growth which has resulted into a radical shift of the environmental situation.