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PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION OF ENVIRONMENT : AN IMPORTANT ROLE OF EDUCATION

ABSTRACT : The environment has been the main topic of debate and discussion in the press as well as classrooms in each and every part of the world, and much has been discussed about the necessity to take action to protect this planet and provide awareness among people in this regard. Scientists predict that if climate changes continuously at the current trend then the temperature will increase at the rate of between 3 to 6 degrees Celsius by 2050 (Perry, Low, Ellis, & Reynolds, 2005). If temperature increases at this rate it would lead to a water crisis for millions of people, decrease and reduce agricultural yields, and increase death of millions of people because of malnutrition related diseases plus lead to the extinction of a large number of living species. The most common and the best-known definition of the environment in simple words is that the environment is everything that surrounds us. But as an educationist and our concern about the environment. Thus, a clear and simple definition is "the environment is the complex set of physical, geographic, biological, social, cultural, and political conditions that surround an individual or organism that ultimately determines its form and the nature of its survival" (Taras, Kirkman, & Steel, 2010).

Keywords : Education, Protection, Conservation, Degradation, Appreciation.

1. The Relationship between Education and Environment : Environment and education are dependent on each other. education provides awareness among people and teaches them techniques of environment protection and conservation as well as educates them about the importance and need of a healthy environment. On the

other hand, a healthy environment assists in the continuation through the process of teaching and learning in a peaceful manner. The environment also both physiologically and psychologically motivates both teachers and students via teaching and learning respectively. We all need to keep healthy and know the significance of a healthy environment. Education also provides awareness about the protection and conservation of the environment when is essential for the benefit of our entire society. Education may also stand as a solution to solve different types of problems that exist in society and education has a key role to save and protect the natural environment.

The pressure of civil societies and educated intellectuals of the country is an important way of compelling and pushing the ruling government towards such a binding agreement that is required to control greenhouse gases and reduce levels of emission. Global Warming Citizen Survey conducted in 2004 in the United States also pointed out in its own analysis that the higher a respondent's education level, the greater participation and environment-friendly behaviour (Lubell, Zahran, & Vedlitz, 2007). The Level of education among people has been observed as a factor in the increasing probability of purification of water in society. Even in urban areas, the probability of water purification increased by 9% when most people completed elementary education and purification increased by 22% when they had completed the level of secondary education (Somanathan, 2010).

2. Need of Education on Environment : The United Nations Organization (UNO) had declared from 2005 to 2014 the decade of education to focus on sustainable development. The goal was to use education as an instrument and a measure of integrating the principles of sustainable development with values of mankind and perspectives in order to create a society of sustainability (UNESCO, 2005). Even though, education is always seen as pure good. As a result, few empirical studies have been conducted on the costs and benefits of different types and forms of education in the field of protection and conservation of the environment. Education concerned with environmental issues deals with the need and significance of its protection and conservation because at present, global warming, pollution and such issues are ruining environment very badly. Education teaches about the importance of a healthy environment and people should take all the possible steps and measures to keep their environment healthy. The most possible and effective means to develop and maintain a healthy environment is giving proper education to both the generations new as well as old together. Education about environment supports every person even children to get information and develop values, required skills and such behaviours that help them in meeting present-day needs without compromising the welfare and interest of future generations. The roles that education plays in protection and in saving our environment are the following:

- Evidence has proven that education is not only a major strategic tool, but it is more important than policies and the process of legislation or enforcement. Only education can address the root cause of issues associated with the environment, the values that influence peoples' behaviour towards the environment.
- It is true that our choices have a direct or indirect effect on the environment. Education supports citizens make sensible decisions that contribute to solutions to environmental problems and issues.

- Degradation of the natural environment is a threat to the health of people. New research describes that disconnectedness from the natural world is also a threat to the physical, psychological, and social wellbeing of the public.

3. Role of Education in Awareness and Protection of Environment :

Awareness : One of the most significant roles of education in relation to the protection and conservation of the environment is making everyone in the society aware of environmental issues. Education can stand as an instrument to provide comprehensive and complete awareness about environmental imbalances and other issues that day to day happen. Each and every member of a society including children, adults, and aged people, if they all get proper environmental education then they can know, understand and become aware of different issues of the environment (Patchen, 2006). Education gives knowledge regarding the functions of natural environment and knowledge of dealing of human beings with behaviour and ecosystems for sustainable development. Nowadays, various organizations and institutions use to conduct environmental awareness programmes in societies and schools. It brings awareness among people about environment-related issues, challenges, and problems and taking actions according to requirement. At primary level of education, the main focus should be on the awareness about the natural environment. For this purpose the contents and texts related to environment should be included in the subjects as language, social science, and natural science. The teachers can follow such teaching methods and strategies, which give an opportunity for direct observation of nature through audio-visual aids. At the secondary level, demographic awareness, knowledge, and skills of environment conservation should hold much importance. Teaching strategies should be based on practical experience and action through the contents of the primary may remain the same at the secondary level as well. Higher education will have to play a key role in controlling and reducing environmental imbalances. Its focus should be on the knowledge of sustainable development and measures of various environmental problems and issues. Research must be sponsored and encouraged in the field of environmental education at large with extension works.

Knowledge of Environment Protection : Education can play an important role in keeping a balanced natural environment by providing knowledge and guiding to protect and save the environment for all living organism. Protecting the environment is a process and activity of caring and watching out the natural environment individually and collectively for the benefits of humankind (Lane, 1966). Education regarding the environment helps to solve the various environmental issues like ozone depletion, climate changes, acid rain, global warming, etc. Giving the education to protect and save the natural environment must begin from elementary school. Education concerned with environmental issues can be offered and provided by starting courses, introducing subjects, and by seminars, workshops, symposiums, training programmes, and the campaign of awareness about environmental issues, etc.

Encouragement to Protect the Environment : The pressure of civil societies and educated intellectuals of the country is an important way of compelling and pushing the ruling government towards such a binding agreement that is required to control greenhouse gases and reduce levels of emission. Global Warming Citizen Survey conducted in 2004 in the United States also pointed out in its own analysis that the higher a respondent's education level, the greater participation, and environment-friendly behaviour (Lubell et al., 2007).

Conscious and Knowledgeable Society towards the Environment : There are countless challenges, problems, and issues regarding environment exist in the world. There are many

countries in the world which face challenges of water pollution when contaminants are introduced into the natural environment, air pollution when harmful, and excessive quantities of substances are introduced into earth atmosphere, garbage pollution, and pollution of the natural environment (Vörösmarty et al., 2010). Education always helps people to resolve and solve simple as well as complex issues that exist in a society. It is obvious for each one that polluted and contaminated environment is one of the main reasons and factors of many hazardous diseases, health problems in our country. Therefore, including education of environment (environment education) in lower and upper primary schools and organizing environmental awareness campaign in each part of the country can bring whole citizens together to talk and discourse about problems and issues of environment, participate in different sorts of activities to save, make practical judgments for various environmental issues. Education helps people to think about problems and challenges of environmental seriously and deeply.

Promotion of a Holistic Approach to the Environment : Environment education and effective programmes about environment protection and conservation always promote a holistic approach among people. It teaches people to use resources fairly and with sustainability and strategies to balance the damaged environment. Programmes organized in schools or any other parts of society inspire children as well as their guardians to provide environmental education into their home too (Chang & Guetl, 2007). Education creates interest among people to establish a strong connection with nature. Education and programmes which create environmental awareness and appreciation promote an ecologically sustainable future.

Enhancement in Appreciation of the Environment : This is an undeniable reality that education promotes awareness and appreciation of the environment among people. Promoting appreciation and admiration of the environment among people raises positive environmental behavioural change. Therefore, at present time education on environmental issues holds a significant and key role to play because it helps people to build up skills, creates an interest to take steps collectively and individually when required to keep and promote the natural environment. Education is an instrument of self-empowerment for people because it makes people capable to take effective and serious action. Environmental education makes people leaders protect and save the environment and creates an interest to take steps and actions collectively and individually whenever required to solve environmental issues.

Education encourages the Efficient use of Natural Resources and Recycling : This has been clear that education creates and increase awareness about the environment and associated issues. Educated households also purify water using different methods such as filtering and boiling, etc. In urban areas of our country, the probability of purification of water is increased by 9% when citizens had completed primary level of education and increased by 22% when they had completed secondary education. Such type of behaviour is important as people in highly developed countries are appealed to modify their consumptions and usage of goods and services that limit environmental harm. In the Netherlands, it is seen that the more educated use less energy in their home, even taking account of household income. A study in 10 OECD countries found that more educated households are more conscious to save water and similar findings were reported in Spain as well (Consumption, 2008).

Conclusion : Education is a more important factor and a strong agent of change for individuals than policy and legislation, which externally motivate to do something and prohibit. Only education can address the root cause of issues associated with the environment, the values

that influence peoples' behaviour towards the environment. Education helps citizens make responsible decisions that contribute to solving environmental issues. Environment education and effective programmes about environment protection and conservation always promote a holistic approach among people. It teaches and encourages people to use resources fairly and as less as possible through reducing needs and opting alternatives for the purpose of saving and protection of the environment. Indeed education promotes awareness and appreciation of the environment among people. Promoting appreciation and admiration of the environment among people raises positive environmental behavioural change. In short, Environment is the most influential and supportive tool for human survival and for the process of education as well. Education teaches about the importance of a healthy environment and people should take all the possible steps and measures to keep their environment healthy. The most possible and effective means to develop and maintain a healthy environment is giving proper education to both the generations new as well as old together. Education has potential and power to change and modify the existing society and give beneficial and necessary knowledge to its people and citizens. Education can be a suitable solution to resolve each and every of problem or challenge exists in the society and that is why education has a great role to play to protect and conserve the environment and solve environment associated issues.

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