



National Education Policy 2020 and Environmental Education for a Sustainable Future

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Abstract:

Various concerns like climate change, pollution, degradation of resources, loss of biodiversity, alteration of natural cycles, etc. are deteriorating our environment. In 2015, the UN member States adopted an Agenda 2030 of 17 goals and 169 sub-goals of Sustainable Development to address the environmental concerns and tackle the degrading environment. These goals are based on three dimensions, economy, social development, and the environment. A holistic approach is needed to safeguard our environment and meet these SDGs. Education plays a pivotal role in creating awareness among citizens. Besides the academic skills, the life skills are equally important. Therefore, imparting environmental education to students will develop a sense of responsibility among them, as they are the future stakeholders. Environment Education imparts the ability to make wise decisions while dealing with environmental problems. It will make students aware of environmental problems and introduce them to a sustainable lifestyle. Considering this, the National Education Policy 2020 made Environmental Education an integral part of the school curriculum. NEP made environmental education mandatory at all educational levels. NEP stresses environmental awareness inclusion for a better understanding and efficient management of environmental problems.

The study proposed here focuses on the role of NEP 2020 and environmental education for a sustainable future.

Keywords: *Holistic, Safeguarding, Stakeholders, Curriculum, Mandatory.*

Introduction:

The environmental issues caused by human or natural activities are causing an undesirable or deleterious disturbance on the planet. Problems like ecosystem disruption, loss of biological diversity, loss of forest cover, forest fires, climatic change, mass extinction, population growth, pollution, resource depletion; global warming, war, etc. affect humans directly or indirectly when the ecosystem collapses. Global warming and climate change can cause catastrophic risks for the survival of mankind. Therefore, Agenda 2030 containing 17 Sustainable Development Goals was adopted by UN member states in 2015. This set of goals was converted into the Millennium Development Goals after its deadline of 2015. They are updated and extended to 2030.

Only sustainable living will help human society to exist in the future. Growing affluence and rising development demand, that all nations together should make the transition to a sustainable lifestyle ⁽¹⁾

The UN Environmental Program 'Making Peace with Nature' report stresses that, addressing important environmental issues is only possible if the parties work to meet the Sustainable Development Goals ⁽²⁾

Role of Environmental Education:

An ever-evolving education that changes quickly with the changing world, is Environmental Education. ⁽³⁾ UNESCO claims that ‘Environmental education puts the objectives of Environmental Conservation in practice’. Education relating to environmental protection is the major principle under the Stockholm Declaration of 1972 ⁽⁴⁾

It’s a multidisciplinary subject that teaches ecological preservation. Although India has Environmental Education mandatory for all standards, considering the deadline of 2030 SDG achievements, it’s high time to restructure the curriculum for better outputs.

Environmental Education will help develop and transfer environmental values, behavior, skills, and attitudes. Incorporating environmental education into the curriculum will help the learners check the impact of their actions on the environment. It will help prepare students for the urgent actions needed for contemporary environmental issues. Education institutions can positively achieve the action-oriented approach. They can more effectively imbibe the spirit of environmental consciousness among the youngest learners. It will help students realize the connection between the current action and future effects. Environmental Education will create a conscious attitude in them and they can drive progress toward Sustainable Development Goals. We are not just training the students, we are training the future environmental specialists, Policy makers, Legislation Formulators, etc.

Role of National Education Policy 2020:

In 1987, the Indian Government introduced its National Educational Policy, with a special focus on the environment. Now, the National Education Policy 2020, aligns with the important SDGs but, primarily SDG 4, ‘Ensure Inclusive and Equitable Education for All’, is considered in formulating NEP 2020.

Now that the NEP 2020 framework is taking care to address contemporary environmental issues, its successful and quick implementation is important, as NEP and SDGs go in synergy. NEP emphasizes, the environmentally conscious future of India. It is committed to bringing transformative reforms in the educational sector. Its framework will act as a catalyst for achieving Sustainable Development. ⁽⁵⁾

NEP 2020, Environmental Education and SDGs:

Due to the increasing population, overconsumption and exploitation of resources are also increasing. For judicious consumption and improving people's lives, 17 Goals and 169 sub-goals of Sustainable Development are important. Considering this, NEP 2020 also focuses on environmental awareness to release environmental stress. NEP 2020 encourages the integration of arts, humanities, and sciences. ⁽⁶⁾

It equips students with the skills needed for sustainable living. It emphasizes that the curriculum should promote environmental consciousness among the students. It also encourages the participation of girls in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) ⁽⁷⁾ On the primary level (Grades 3rd-5th), Environmental Studies are introduced where, the physical, biological, and social aspects of our environment are studied. The 6th to 12th class science and social science textbooks also contain chapters on environmental issues. NEP 2020, stresses conceptual understanding and not just seeking knowledge, it focuses on outcome-based performance. ⁽⁸⁾

Under the NEP, the NCERT and CBSE are organizing poster competitions, quiz competitions, exhibitions, seminars, and workshops on environmental protection. Environmental awareness days like, International Day of Forest, World Water Day, Earth Day, International Day

for Biodiversity, World Environment Day, International Ozone Depletion Day, etc. are also observed. NCERT has incorporated environmental issues like water and its conservation in existing curricula across all subjects and grades. NCERT has also prepared the Environmental Education supplementary study material

The Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment), is launched by GOI to promote sustainable lifestyles. To educate people about sustainable lifestyles, the sessions on LiFE are live telecasts on various PM e-Vidya channels. ⁽⁹⁾

Objectives:

The main purpose or objective of the study is as follows-

1. To study the role of National Education Policy 2020 for Sustainable development.
2. To study the importance of Environmental Education.

Methodology:

The study's overall approach is to seek knowledge about the role of Environmental Education in National Education Policy 2020 in Sustainable Development. For this purpose, data has been collected from secondary sources like journals, newspapers, magazines, and website articles on the Internet. Various statistics, reports, and assessments highlighting National Education Policy 2020 and environmental education are also referred to for the proposed study.

Suggestion:

1. The education institution's curriculum should be reassembled to include the environmental rights, duties, and responsibilities of the citizens.
2. The curriculum should include the current status of natural resources, endangered species, extinct species, pollution, melting of glaciers, and other contemporary environmental issues.
3. Research and innovation should be promoted from the primary level.
4. 4)) There should be mutual efforts, nationally and internationally to achieve quality environmental education.
5. There should be clear monitoring and evaluation to assess the progress of NEP 2020. The assessment should be based on the recent research.
6. The technology-driven learning solutions should be accessible to students of all levels, for monitoring their progress.
7. Teachers' training programs should be arranged in educational institutions so that they will pass on this knowledge to learners through a pedagogical approach.
8. The rising population made it important to revive and revise the definition of Sustainable Development to accommodate everyone equitably.
9. We should try to bridge the gap in our knowledge regarding global environmental risk.

Conclusion:

The successful implementation of Environment Education and NEP 2020 for a Sustainable future depends on the commitment of stakeholders, education institutions, and government. To achieve the tangible results, all should work together. To protect our biodiversity our conservation patterns should be controlled. The educational reforms through NEP are tailored to align with the SDGs goals. An intersection of NEP 2020 and the SDG offered hope to accelerate the Sustainable Development vision. The concerns related to NEP 2020 for achieving a sustainable future, can be addressed through environmental education and Green Schooling.

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