

**Manuscript ID:**  
TIJCMBLIR-2025-020104

Volume: 2

Issue: 1

Month: February

Year: 2025

E-ISSN: 3065-9191

**Submitted:** 15 Dec 2024

**Revised:** 10 Jan 2025

**Accepted:** 24 Feb 2025

**Published:** 28 Feb 2025

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**DOI:** 10.5281/zenodo.15010432

**DOI Link:**

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15010432>



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# Environmental Education and Social Awareness for Sustainable Development

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**Abstract**

*Environmental Education is a field of education that focuses on raising awareness and understanding of the environment and its various issues. Promoting environmental literacy—which includes understanding ecological principles, environmental systems, and the interactions between humans and their environment—is the primary goal of environmental education. It empowers people to make informed decisions and contribute to the development of a more resilient and sustainable future by promoting awareness, learning, and action. It typically adopts an interdisciplinary approach by fusing concepts from geography, economics, social studies, science, and ethics. Examples of topics that could be included in the curriculum include pollution, biodiversity, climate change, conservation, sustainable development, and environmental justice.*

*“Environmental education promotes values such as respect, empathy, and environmental responsibility”. It encourages collaboration, volunteerism, and support for eco-friendly policies and practices. It encourages people to adopt sustainable behaviors such as energy conservation, waste reduction, mindful consumption, and environmentally beneficial choices. It is essential to comprehend the root causes of environmental degradation; environmental education shouldn't only focus on its consequences. Effectively assisting individuals and communities in understanding the intricacy of both natural and constructed ecosystems is the main objective of grassroots environmental education.*

**Keywords:** Environmental Literacy, Bio-Diversity, Climate Change, Energy Conservation

**Introduction**

“The goal of environmental education is to increase students' knowledge and comprehension of the environment and its many problems”. It seeks to equip people with the values, attitudes, abilities, and knowledge needed to become environmentally conscious citizens.

“Promoting environmental literacy, which encompasses knowledge of ecological concepts, environmental systems, and the relationships between people and their surroundings, is the main objective of environmental education. Additionally, it aims to instill a feeling of individual and group accountability for the environment, motivating people to make wise choices and adopt sustainable practices.”

Addressing global environmental issues like pollution, deforestation, climate change, and biodiversity loss requires environmental education. People are empowered to make wise decisions and help create a more resilient and sustainable future by encouraging knowledge, awareness, and action.

Schools, Colleges, nature centers, museums, community organizations, and internet platforms are just a few of the places where environmental education can be provided. Usually, an interdisciplinary approach is used, incorporating ideas from geography, economics, social studies, science, and ethics. Topics including pollution, biodiversity, climate change, conservation, sustainable development, and environmental justice may be included in the curriculum.

**Review of Literature**

Poonam Sindhu and Suman Singh (2014) stress how crucial environmental education is to human survival. They argue that increasing awareness of the benefits and drawbacks of human activity can aid in resolving the current issues, which stem from ignorance and ongoing exploitation. The study's goal is to determine how knowledgeable students are about environmental education and how it addresses environmental issues.

**How to Cite this Article:**

Surendran, A. (2025). *Environmental Education and Social Awareness for Sustainable Development*. *The International Journal of Commerce Management and Business Law in International Research*, 2(1), 14–17. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15010432>

Naikoo (2017) has released an investigation into the attitudes of secondary school teachers in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir toward environmental education and sustainable development. For this study, a sample of 100 secondary school teachers was selected from 30 schools. The researcher slightly modified the elements of the comparable measures created by Dunlap, Van Liere, Mertig, & Jones in 2000 and Ernesto Lasso De Lavega in 2004 to create a five-point Likert-type Attitude Scale for this study. According to the report, most secondary school teachers in the Kupwara area have a favorable opinion on sustainable development and environmental education.

M. Sivamoorthy et al., (2013) focused on teaching students a variety of environmental subjects, including human health, wildlife, and animal husbandry, as well as the causes of pollution, energy conservation, soil, forest, and air conservation. Additionally, it discusses how college students use and dispose of plastics, clean toilets, cultivate seedlings with plastic, collect rainwater, and participate in environmental projects. Since environmental education is a part of their curriculum, college students were the target audience.

## **Objectives**

### **1. Increasing awareness:**

Raising awareness of environmental issues, possibilities, and difficulties is the goal of environmental education. It aids people in comprehending how ecosystems are interconnected and how human activity affects the environment.

### **2. Building knowledge and skills:**

It provides individuals with the scientific knowledge, critical thinking skills, and problem-solving abilities necessary to address environmental problems effectively.

### **3. Fostering attitudes and values:**

Values like empathy, respect, and environmental responsibility are fostered by environmental education. It seeks to foster a sense of responsibility and an appreciation for the significance of sustainable activities.

### **4. Encouraging participation:**

It seeks to engage individuals in active participation and decision-making processes related to environmental issues. It encourages collaboration, community involvement, and advocacy for sustainable practices and policies.

### **5. Promoting sustainable lifestyles:**

The importance of individual actions in minimizing environmental damage is emphasized by

environmental education. It motivates people to embrace sustainable practices like waste minimization, energy conservation, conscientious consumption, and eco-friendly decisions.

## **Scope of Environmental Education**

All areas of environmental science are covered by environmental education and awareness programs and environmental extension services. This includes how man has impacted the environment, destroying it, and polluting it, but more significantly, how man may protect himself from the issues he has brought about by abusing, misusing, and using resources excessively.

Understanding the underlying causes of environmental degradation is crucial, and environmental education should not merely concentrate on its effects. Examining the social and economic elements that contribute to environmental deterioration should also be part of these.

Studying our surroundings to understand their composition, operation, and utility is a key component of environmental education. Environmental education teaches us how to protect the environment so that we can reap the greatest benefits for both the current and future generations. This is the part of environmental education that deals with conservation.

## **A. Components of Environmental Education: -**

Environmental education's obvious goal is to demonstrate the modern world's economic, social, political, and ecological interdependence, where decisions and actions taken by one nation can have an impact on other nations. Given that environmental education is a foundational element of a new international order that will ensure environmental conservation and improvement, it should contribute to the development of a sense of responsibility and solidarity among nations and regions. The primary goal of grassroots environmental education is to successfully help people and communities comprehend the complexity of both the natural and constructed surroundings.

## **B. Target Population for Environmental Education: -**

The three categories of audience that have been identified for environmental education and awareness are as following:

### **(a) General Public:**

Every age group and level of formal education for students and teachers, as well as informal education for adults and children with disabilities, should offer environmental education to the general public. It is necessary to implement

environmental education programs that raise public understanding of environmental hazards and their effects. The general public, particularly non-governmental organizations, should be involved in general public education.

**(b) Specific Occupational or Social Groups:**

These are the people whose actions and impact on the environment are significant. Engineers, architects, planners, administrators, businessmen, trade unionists, legislators, and farmers are among them.

**(c) Certain Professional and Scientists:**

These group includes those working on specific problems of the environment e.g. biologists, ecologists, hydrologists, taxonomists, sanitary engineers etc.

**Need and Significance of Environmental Education**

The rationale for environmental education can be described as the following:

- An understanding of how the land, water, weather, vegetation, social, cultural, and political environments have changed is a fundamental part of environmental education. As a result, the general public should be prepared with all of these in order to address environmental issues.
- The rural economy is dominated by the use of land, water, forests, and other mineral resources, with agriculture serving as its main engine. Human suffering, malnutrition, displacement, and disruption of living standards are all consequences of unchecked and inappropriate exploitation of natural resources. Therefore, environmental education is required to raise awareness of the causes and consequences of these issues, including the lack of food and water, pollution, epidemics, natural disasters like floods, erosion, and desert expansion, as well as how to prevent them.
- Environmental education is needed to foster international co-operation and understanding.
- Both the government and the local population should benefit from public education about how government policies affect the environment.
- Awareness of such global environmental issues is an essential component of environmental education which ordinary citizen should be aware of.
- Environmental education for women's and children's overall social and economic liberation. They make up a significant portion of the use of natural resources, particularly in rural areas.
- Because of its absence, environmental education is crucial. In this region of the world,

environmental education is essentially a novel concept.

- Education on the environment is also crucial to our continued existence. Not just for this generation but also for future generations, the natural resources and cultural heritage must be preserved.
- To promote a clear understanding of and concern for the interrelationship of the economy, society, politics, and ecology in both urban and rural areas.
- To establish new norms for how people, communities, and society at large behave toward the environment.

**Constraints to Implementing Environmental Education: -**

1. Rigid Specialization.
2. Complexity of inter-disciplinary value of Environmental education.
3. High pupil - teacher ratio for organising pupil participation programs.
4. Paucity of qualified trained environmental educator.
5. Lack of proper resources in terms of equipment, supplementary materials and reference materials.
6. Tendency to resist changes.

**Conclusion**

The process of teaching about the environment is dynamic. The main goal of this kind of education is to make people more aware of their surroundings. Its primary goal is to provide the necessary education and training to methodically address the different environmental issues. Preventing detrimental effects on human health or environmental damage from noise, vibration, offensive odors, and pollution of the air, water, and soil is essential to allowing people to enjoy excellent health and a high quality of life. It is the study of how human and natural systems interact and relate to one another. A comprehensive, lifelong education that adapts to a world that is changing quickly should include environmental education. It should help the person grasp the major and prepare them for life.

**Acknowledgments**

Nil.

**Financial support and sponsorship**

Nil.

**Conflicts of interest**

There are no conflicts of interest.

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