



EVOLUTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION TO EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL POLICIES

Meenal Arora*

Research Scholar, Department of Teacher Training and Non-Formal Education (IASE), Faculty of Education, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. *Corresponding Author

Prof. (Dr.) Jasim Ahmad

Professor, Department of Teacher Training and Non-Formal Education (IASE), Faculty of Education, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi.

ABSTRACT

Though, the journey presented in the paper has resulted in Environmental Education becoming an integral component of every school and college programme. However, the challenge still remains. Although, a number of Environmental Education initiatives have been taken up by the central and state governments, non-governmental organisations, academic institutions and business community, the rate of deterioration of the environment, from the loss of biodiversity to climate change, continues at unacceptable levels. Despite of increased awareness levels in the masses, the human footprint continues to be far greater than what the Earth can bear. Thus, what is required is a transformative education, which can bridge this knowledge-action gap and can make people behave environmentally responsibly in their day to day activities.

KEYWORDS : Environmental Education, Education for Sustainable Development, Policy Interventions

INTRODUCTION:

At the notable Stockholm Conference of 1972, the then Prime Minister of India, Mrs. Indira Gandhi was the first person to emphasize the close link between the deteriorating environment and poverty and argued that one problem could not be solved without addressing the other. Thereby sowing the seeds of sustainable development concept. The declaration from the Stockholm Conference also recognized the need for "responsible conduct by individuals, enterprises and communities in protecting and improving the environment in its full human dimension." (Stockholm, 1972) The Conference recognized education in environmental matters as an essential way to achieve these objectives. Further, the formation of UNEP, the launch of the International Environmental Education Programme (IEEP), and the United Nations Workshop at Belgrade in 1975 developed the idea further that Environmental Education was an essential requirement for addressing environmental problems. By 1977, the first Inter-governmental Conference on Environmental Education at Tbilisi, Georgia, defined Environmental Education and set guidelines for its development. The story from the Stockholm Conference to the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development, is a fascinating journey of how Environmental Education has evolved over the years.

a fall out of the rapid strides in development was the deterioration of the environment. It was reflected in the writing of several scientists and thinkers in the 1960s. However, at this time environment was not high on the agenda of national and international policies.

At that time, the shortcomings of the UN system to deal with new developments were also becoming evident, following which the General Assembly called for 'The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment' held at Stockholm in 1972. It stated that necessary steps be taken to "establish an international programme in environmental education, interdisciplinary in approach, in school and out of school, encompassing all levels of education and directed towards the general public, in particular, the ordinary citizen living in rural and urban areas, youth and adult alike, with a view to educating him as to simple steps lie might take, within his means, to manage and control his environment." (Stockholm, 1972) This historic conference led to the establishment of World Environment Day, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the International Environmental Education Programme (IEEP) to stimulate the action towards sound environmental education and training.

Further, The Belgrade charter of 1975 came out with comprehensive goals, objectives and guiding principles of EE, stating the goal "To develop a world population that is aware of, and concerned about, the environment and its associated problems, and which has the knowledge, skills, attitudes, motivations, and commitment to work individually and collectively toward solutions of current problems and the prevention of new ones." (Belgrade Charter, 1975)

In the same year in India, National Council for Educational Research and Training introduced EE at the primary level school curriculum. At the secondary and higher secondary level, a few chapters on environmental aspects were included in geography and biology.

UNESCO, in cooperation with UNEP, organized a milestone event by bringing together government representatives from different countries to translate Belgrade recommendations into Policy from integrating EE at National Levels. The idea of Sustainable Development was then first used in an international forum in the World Conservation Strategy 1980. The key message of the Strategy was that conservation and development need each other. It recommended the

JOURNEY OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION TO EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:

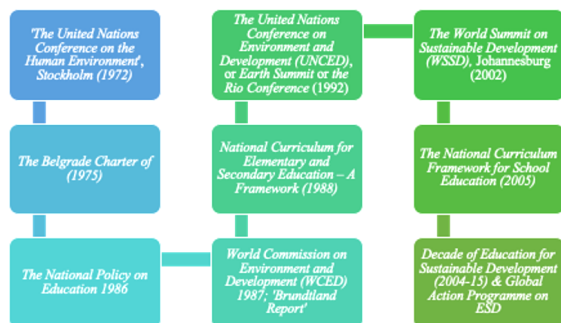


Figure 1 : Important National and International Policies over time

Source : Authors

The world had seen unprecedented scientific and technological advances after the Second World War. However,

integration of conservation principles and objectives with social and economic development. Gro Harlem Brundtland chaired the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) and produced the momentous report 'Our Common Future' in 1987 also known as Brundtland Report, which gave the best known and often-quoted definition of sustainable development – "Development that meets the need of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs."

The urgency and importance of EE were well reflected in The National Policy on Education 1986 of India, which states, "There is a paramount need to create a society, beginning with the child. Environmental consciousness should inform the educational process".(NPE, 1986) Subsequently, in the National Curriculum for Elementary and Secondary Education – A Framework (1988), the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) marked the first concerted and systematic effort to bring EE into the school curriculum to inculcate right kind of values towards environment. It took the form of 'an infusion' of environmental concerns into NCERT model textbooks published between 1987-89.

Keeping in view the need of the hour to protect the environment and to spread general awareness and develop positive attitudes towards the environment, on 22 November 1991, the honourable Supreme Court of India gave directions to Union and State governments to make Environmental Education a compulsory subject at school and college level.

The UN General Assembly decided to convene a conference to take stock of the global environment 20 years after Stockholm, in 1992. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), also known as the Earth Summit or the Rio Conference produced The Rio Declaration (a statement of principles) also called the Earth Charter, defining the rights and responsibilities of nations as they pursue human development and well-being and the Agenda 21. Chapter 36 of Agenda 21 was dedicated to education, training, and awareness of public and re-emphasized the role and importance of education for placing Environmental Education in the light of sustainable development.

REORIENTING ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:

Keeping the focus on the thrust of Chapter 36 of Agenda 21 to enlist the International Environmental Education Program (IIEP) in the service of sustainable development, the UN Commission for Sustainable Development affirmed reorientation of Environmental Education to Education for Sustainable Development through the publication, Education for Sustainable Development: A Priority for the World Community, published by UNESCO. However, the challenge was to integrate the concepts of human, social, and economic development with environmental conservation in a holistic and interdisciplinary manner.

India's National Curriculum Framework 2000 states, "School curriculum has, therefore, to help to generate and promote among the learners, understanding of the environment in its totality both natural and social and its interactive processes, the environmental problems and the ways and means to preserve the environment." (NCF, 2000)

The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) was held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2002. The conference theme was People, Planet, and Prosperity, and the goal was to hold a ten-year review of the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and to reinvigorate the global commitment to sustainable development. Subsequently, Japan's proposal of "United Nations Decade of

Education for Sustainable Development (DESD)" was included in the Plan of Implementation of the WSSD.

The Supreme Court in 2004 realized the intensity of the situation and directed NCERT, AICTE, and UGC to frame the model syllabus for environmental education at school, college, and university levels, respectively. After more than a decade of the historical direction of Supreme Court directed to all the states and educational agencies in the country to introduce environment as a compulsory subject in all classes in schools up to higher secondary level, however, it is only after public interest litigation, schools introduced Environmental Education for the Academic Session 2004-2005.

The National Curriculum Framework for School Education 2005 also highlighted the importance of preserving environment through science education stating, "Environmental validity requires that science be placed in the wider context of learner's environment, local and global, enabling him/her to equip him/her to envisage that Environmental Education to be imparted in an infusion model in the Upper Primary and Secondary stages of school education to bring about sensitivity towards the environment." (NCF, 2005) Since 1968, the policy documents had been emphasizing on the subject and has resulted in highly aware generation. However, the action towards it was still limited. Therefore, NCF-2005 focuses on developing a generation that is sensitive and ready to act for it.

National Focus Groups-Position Paper on Habitat and Learning, which forms the basis of Environmental Education as discussed in NCF-2005, emphasizes that EE with its holistic approach will form the new paradigm and promote multi-disciplinary thinking. It also states that the fundamental nature of Environmental Education will stimulate critical thinking and problem solving abilities and discourage rote memorization.

The primary vision of the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2004-15) is a world where everyone gets an equal chance to benefit from education and learn the required values, behaviour, and lifestyles necessary for a sustainable future and societal transformation for the betterment. To further the achievements and create new momentum after the UN Decade closed in 2014, UNESCO being the lead agency of the decade, developed a Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development, which is a detailed implementation Roadmap that elaborates on the goal, objectives, and priority action areas of the programme, so as to enable strategic focus and stakeholder commitment, for the effective implementation and monitoring strategies.

CONCLUSION:

The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1972 brought environment into the global development agenda. When the United Nations invited all nations to express their interest in the conference, there was considerable interest from the industrially advanced nations. As more and more countries adopt unsustainable models of development, the crisis deepens further. The world needs to rethink and change its development paradigm. This scale of change cannot be made through policy alone, nor will technology or financial mechanisms be adequate. It is people, their behaviour, their attitudes, and their sense of responsibility, that are at the core of the solution to a more sustainable future.

REFERENCES:

- [1] Agenda 21, Rio Declaration, Forest Principles (1992). New York: United Nations.
- [2] Government of India (1986). National Policy on Education.
- [3] National Curriculum for Elementary and Secondary Education: A Framework, 1988, NCERT, New Delhi.

- [4] National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education: Towards Preparing Professional and Humane Teacher, 2009, National Council for Teacher Education, New Delhi.
- [5] Position Paper National Focus Group on Habitat and Learning, NCERT, New Delhi.
- [6] Report of the Secondary Education Commission, 1953, Ministry of Education, Government of India, New Delhi.
- [7] Report of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, Stockholm, 1972.
- [8] The Curriculum for the Ten Year School: A Framework, 1975, NCERT, New Delhi.
- [9] UNESCO-UNEP (1975) The Belgrade charter. Connect: UNESCO-UNEP Environmental Education Newsletter, 1(1): 1-2
- [10] UNESCO. (2006). Education for Sustainable Development Toolkit. Education for Sustainable Development in Action: Learning and Training Tools No. 1. Paris: UNESCO.
- [11] UNESCO. (2006). United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005- 2014): Education for Sustainable Development Toolkit. Paris.
- [12] World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), Our Common Future. 1987, Oxford: Oxford University Press.