



DEVELOPMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVITY THROUGH THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

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ABSTRACT:

Global issues such as environment degradation, pollution, soil erosion, growing population are of concern to parents, educators, other stakeholders and governments of both developed and developing countries. Ensuring environmental sustainability requires a paradigm shift in conceptualization, research and Science education. There is an urgent need for transformative Environmental Education and active environmental participation. Teachers have a huge effect on raising students' environmental awareness and helping them develop sensitivity to environmental issues. The goal of Environmental Education is to increase individuals' ecological knowledge, awareness of associated environmental problems and motivation to evaluate and implement solutions. The schools can introduce endless subjects from Sex education to Environment Education and still remain absolutely ignorant about what really is to be done. A student is burdened by the never ending traumas of other subjects and examination pressure; where on the earth would he/she get time to read about a Tsunami, when haunted by Trigonometry. An integrated approach to this area is of vital importance. The present paper deals with the status of Environmental Education as an independent and integrated subject.

KEY WORDS:

Environmental Education, environmental awareness, environmental sensitivity, Science, Curriculum, Integration

INTRODUCTION:

In recent years, the importance of environmental sensitivity and sustainability has gained significant attention worldwide. It has become evident that addressing environmental challenges requires not only policy changes and technological advancements but also a shift in individual attitudes, behaviors, and values towards the environment. Secondary school students, being the future leaders and decision-makers, play a crucial role in shaping the trajectory of environmental sustainability.

During adolescence, individuals undergo significant cognitive and emotional development, making it an opportune time to cultivate environmental sensitivity. By targeting secondary school students, we have the potential to influence their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours towards the environment, leading to long-term positive impacts. The need for environmental sensitivity among secondary school students is paramount in today's world, as we face escalating environmental challenges and the urgent need for sustainable solutions. Secondary school students, being the next generation of leaders, policymakers, and citizens, play a crucial role in shaping the future of our planet. By instilling environmental sensitivity at a young age, we can cultivate a generation that is aware, knowledgeable, and actively engaged in addressing environmental issues.

The environment is the foundation of human life, providing us with essential resources, clean air, water, and a stable climate. However, human activities such as industrialization, deforestation, pollution, and overconsumption have put immense pressure on the environment, leading to climate change, biodiversity loss, and degradation of natural habitats. These environmental problems pose significant threats to our well-being, health, and the survival of countless species.

Secondary school students are at a critical stage of their lives, where their values, beliefs, and behaviours are being shaped. It is during this phase that they develop their identities, explore their interests, and form attitudes towards various aspects of life, including the environment. By introducing environmental sensitivity education, we can help students develop a deep understanding of the interconnectedness between human activities and the environment, fostering a sense of responsibility and empathy towards nature.

Moreover, environmental sensitivity education empowers students with the knowledge and skills necessary to make informed decisions and take sustainable actions. They learn about the causes and impacts of environmental issues, as well as the potential solutions available. By equipping students with this knowledge, we enable them to critically analyze environmental challenges, evaluate the consequences of their actions, and contribute to sustainable practices in their daily lives.

Another crucial aspect of environmental sensitivity among secondary school students is the development of a sense of environmental citizenship. Students learn about their roles and responsibilities as active participants in creating a sustainable future. They understand the importance of individual actions, such as conserving energy, reducing waste, and making environmentally conscious choices. Additionally, they recognize the power of

collective action, advocating for policy changes, engaging in community initiatives, and raising awareness among their peers and families.

Environmental sensitivity education also promotes critical thinking skills and a multidisciplinary approach to problem-solving. Students learn to analyze complex environmental issues from various perspectives, considering scientific, social, economic, and ethical dimensions. This holistic understanding enables them to engage in informed discussions, collaborate with diverse stakeholders, and propose innovative solutions to address environmental challenges.

Furthermore, cultivating environmental sensitivity among secondary school students helps create a sustainable mind-set that extends beyond the classroom. Students become ambassadors for environmental stewardship within their families, communities, and future careers. They influence the behaviours and attitudes of those around them, inspiring positive change and fostering a culture of sustainability.

The need for environmental sensitivity among secondary school students is crucial in addressing the pressing environmental challenges we face today. By integrating environmental education and promoting sustainability practices, we can shape the attitudes, knowledge, and behaviours of the next generation. This empowers them to become responsible global citizens who value and protect the environment, leading us towards a more sustainable and resilient future.

ENVIRONMENT

‘Environ’ means the surroundings and ‘ment’ means the functioning. Therefore, literally speaking environment deals with the physical, chemical and biological conditions surrounding the living organisms which influence them. In relation to man, the environment constitutes land, air, water, flora and fauna because they regulate the man’s life. From an ecological point of view, the ‘environment’ is a concept that encompasses the complete range of external conditions in which an organism lives. Hence, it can be defined as the sum of all social, biological and physical or chemical factors which constitute the surrounding of man. The environment, in essence, is the totality of man’s surrounding which influence the life of people.

In the context of environmental education, UNESCO (1978) identified four components of environment. This includes:

1. The natural environment which includes mountains, rivers, living things, wind, sunlight, etc.
2. The built-environment which includes human-altered landscapes.
3. The social/cultural environment which involves cultural values, etc.
4. The spatial environment which includes location, distance, regional variations, etc

MEANING AND DEFINITION OF ENVIRONMENT:

The dictionary meaning of the word ‘environment’ is a surrounding; external living condition influencing the growth of living creatures and their way of life in diverse ways. The Oxford Dictionary & Thesaurus-3 gives

the meaning of the word environment as circumstances, conditions, context, ecosystem, environs, habitat, location, milieu, setting, situation, surroundings and territory. It includes physical or a biotic components like soil, water, temperature, air and space. Its biotic components consist of various living creatures like human beings and animals including plants. These living and non-living components of nature interact with each other and follow a principle to maintain a balance. Environment also includes social custom, culture, habits, religion, occupation, surroundings and the interactions among physical, biological and social surroundings. ‘Environment: An overview’, an article published in the Special Feature of the journal Competition Refresher (June, 2006) mentions: “Environment is a broad term. The physical and biological world where we live is called our environment. It includes all that is above, below and around us”. Thus it is a complex whole which includes all the biological, physical and socio-cultural components which are interrelated and which interact with one another.

Environment can be defined as the physical surrounding of man/woman of which he/she is a part and on which he/she is dependent for his/her activities like physiological functioning, production and consumption. His physical environment stretches from air, water and land to natural resources like energy carriers, soil and plants, animals and ecosystems. The relationship between physical environment and the well-being of individuals and societies is multi-fold and multi-faceted with a qualitative as well as a quantitative aspect to it. The availability and use of natural resources have a bearing on the outcome and the pace of development process. For an urbanized society, a large part of environment is man-made. But, even then the artificial environments (building, roads) and implements (clothes, automobiles) are based on an input of both

Labour and natural resources. The term ‘Environment’ is commonly restricted to ambient environment. In that view, the indoor environment (home, work place) is regarded as isolated piece of environment to be treated on its own terms. The indoor environment usually is under the jurisdiction of the Public Health authorities. Health risks are mainly linked to space heating, cooking and lighting: low grade fuels, insufficient ventilation are often the main problems. Additionally, there may be problems connected with moisture, light, incidence, hazardous substances from building materials, lacquers and paints. Problems with drinking water, sewage and waste are not linked to the dwelling as such but rather to lack of appropriate infrastructure. Statistics on indoor environment may be regarded as a subset of statistics on human settlements and the urban Environment (COES, 2013).

Environment literally means surrounding and everything that affect an organism during its lifetime is collectively known as its environment. In another words “Environment is sum total of water, air and land interrelationships among themselves and also with the human being, other living organisms and property”. It includes all the physical and biological surrounding and their interactions. Environmental studies provide an approach towards understanding the environment of our planet and the impact of human life upon the environment. Thus environment is actually global in nature, it is a multidisciplinary subject including physics, geology, geography, history, economics, physiology, biotechnology, remote sensing, geophysics, soil science and hydrology etc.

The term environment is derived from the French word “environs” meaning around, encircling or encompassing. And hence the term environment in short can be used for surrounding. Environment can also be referred to as the totality of all the externalities that affect human life. In a broader perspective, the environment consists of human, social, political, economic and physical environments.

Webster's ninth new college dictionary defines environment as the "circumstances, objects or conditions by which one is surrounded".

The Encyclopedia Britannica defines environment as the entire range of external influence acting on an organism both physical and biological".

It can also be defined as the "surrounding in which organization operates including air, water, land and natural resources, flora and fauna, humans and their inter relations". In nutshell environment comprises of all the biotic, a biotic, natural and human components defining the form and survival of each in a given system at a given time or over a period of time.

The epic itself has given the meaning of the word Mbh. as: 'mahattvadbharavatvacca mahdbhdratamucyate'(Trans: It is called Mahabhdrata for the extent of its volume and superiority and gravity of its import.) The word 'bhara' has its own significance. It implies that the Mbh. is great not because of its antiquity, volume and extent, but its greatness lies in the fact that its content reflects the way of life of the Indians, wisdom of India based on philosophy and spiritualism, which is the essence of Indian culture. It is great because it helps to establish a balance between material and spiritual values, which play a vital role in making our lives positive, constructive and progressive in nature.

TYPES OF ENVIRONMENT:

On the basis of basic structure, the environment may be divided into

- Physical/abiotic environment
- Biotic environment
- Cultural environment

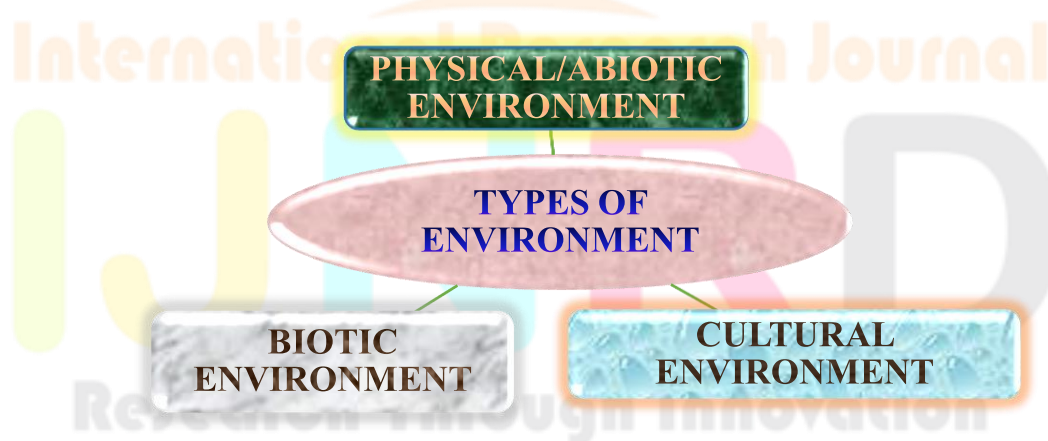


Fig 1: Types of Environment

1. PHYSICAL/ABIOTIC ENVIRONMENT: -

On the basis of physical characteristics and state, abiotic or physical environment is subdivided into:

- i. Solid i.e., lithosphere (solid earth)
- ii. Liquid i.e., hydrosphere (water component)
- iii. Gas i.e., atmosphere (gaseous component)

These environments can be termed as lithospheric, hydrospheric, atmospheric environment which can be further broken into smaller units based on different spatial scales like mountain environment, plateau, plain, lake, river maritime, glacier, desert environment etc. The physical environment may also be viewed in terms of climatic conditions providing certain suits of habitat for biological communities like tropical, temperate and polar environment etc.

2. BIOTIC ENVIRONMENT:

Biotic environment consists of flora and fauna including man as an important factor. Thus, the biotic environment may be divided into:

- i. Floral environment
- ii. Faunal environment

Further all the organisms work to form their social groups and organizations at several levels and thus is formed social environment, where in, the organisms work to derive matter from the physical environment for their sustenance and development. This process generates economic environment. It may be pointed out that of all the organism's man is the most skilled and civilized and hence his social organization is most systematic. It is significant to note that three aspects of man, physical, social and economic have different characteristics and functions in the biotic environment. As 'physical man' is one of the organismic populations or biological community and thus requires basic elements of physical environment (habitat, air, water, food etc.) like other biological populations and releases wastes into the ecosystem; 'social man' establishes social institutions forms social organizations, formulates laws and policies to safeguard his existence, interest and social welfare and 'economic man' derives and utilizes resource from the physical and biotic environments with his skills and technologies. These may be termed as physical, social and economic functions of man. It is the third function which makes the man and environmental process because he transports matter and energy from one component of the ecosystem to the other.

3. CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

Cultural environments are a remarkable cultural, social and economic resource. They are important for the identities and well-being of people. Cultural environments and the features particular to them provide a unique edge to regions and places, serve as the foundation of the development of local communities and create business opportunities.

Cultural environments are environments shaped by human activities, such as cultural landscapes in the countryside, forests, urban areas and cities, fixed archaeological structures on land or water, constructions and built environments from different ages, along with bridges, roads, power lines and industrial and harbor areas.

On the one hand, cultural environments are a non-renewable resource, on the other hand, they are in a constant state of renewal and development. When changing and developing valuable cultural environments or creating new cultural environments or parts thereof, the values of the existing environment are a good starting point. What is lost once in a cultural environment, will remain lost forever.

COMPONENTS OF ENVIRONMENT:

The basic components of the environment are atmosphere or the air, lithosphere or the rocks and soil, hydrosphere or the water, and the living component of the environment or the biosphere.

➤ ATMOSPHERE:

- The thick gaseous layer surrounding the earth.
- It spreads up to 300 km. above the earth's surface.
- Apart from gases there are water vapor, industrial gases, dust and smoke particles in suspended state, microorganism etc.

➤ LITHOSPHERE:

- The Core which is around 7000 kilometers in diameter (3500 kilometers in radius) and is situated at the Earth's center.
- The Mantle which environs the core and has a thickness of 2900 kilometers.
- The Crust floats on top of the mantle and is composed of basalt rich oceanic crust and granitic rich continental crust.

➤ HYDROSPHERE:

- The hydrosphere includes all water on or near earth surface and includes oceans, lakes, rivers, wetlands, icecaps, clouds, soils, rock layers beneath surface etc.
- water exist in all three states: solid (ice), liquid (water), and gas (water vapor) • 71%of planet surface is covered with water
- Freshwater- 2.53%
- Freshwater in glaciers-1.74%
- Water as water vapour in atmosphere-12,900 km³
- living organism contain- 1100 km³

Since the environment includes both physical and biological concept, it embraces both the abiotic (non-living) and biotic (living) components of planet earth.

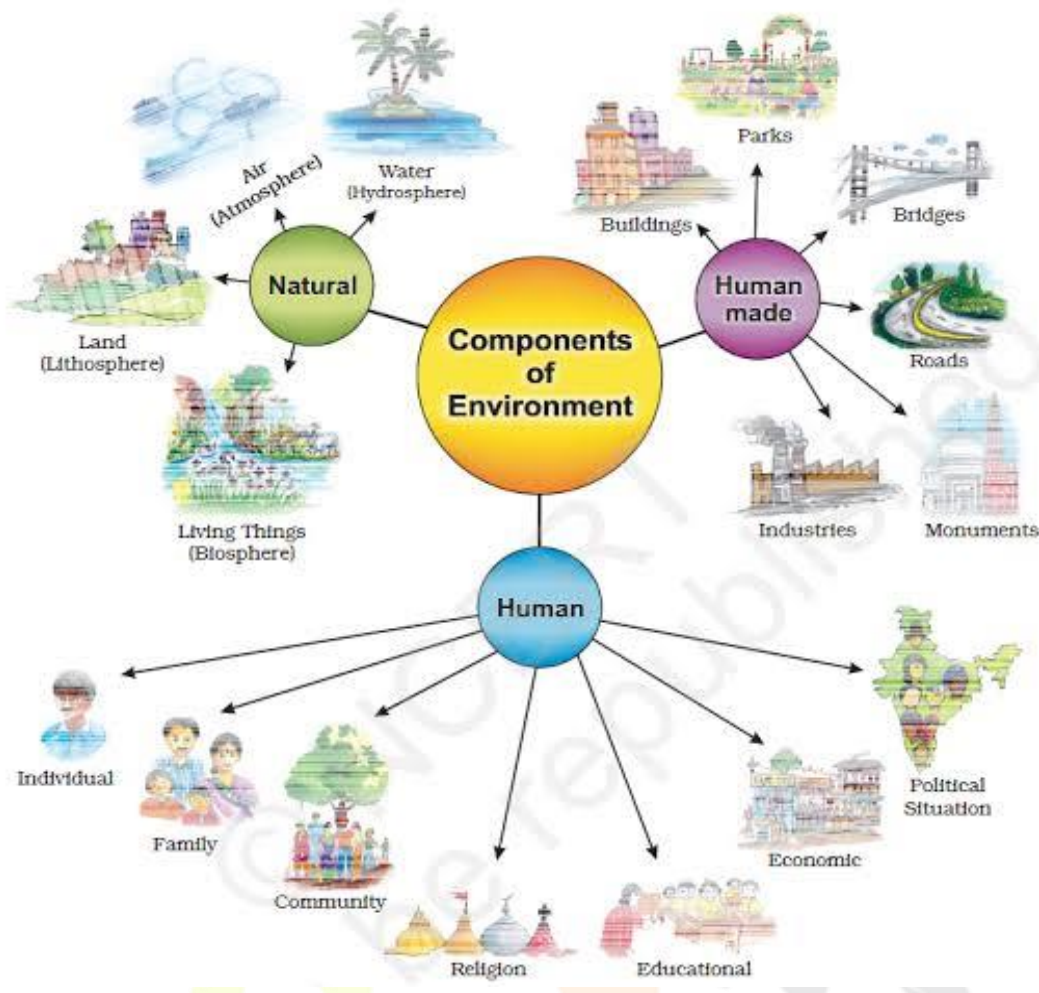


Fig 2: Components of Environment

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION:

There is no exaggeration in saying that the revolution which is needed to change the thinking of mankind towards environmental protection through sustainable development takes shape in class rooms. The education is still considered to be panacea as the Chinese proverb goes - 'If you are thinking of one year ahead plant rice, if you are thinking ten years ahead plant trees, and if you are thinking hundred years ahead, educate the people.' All other steps to control environmental degradation will be redundant if environmental education does not teach the whole generation.

Now time has come, unless some deliberate attempts are made to enhance the environmental sensitivity among young generation, there will be serious problems in future. The environmental issues are no more confined to specialists in environmental sciences; rather, these issues are now everyone's concern. Every individual can contribute to the protection of the environment. But this requires the more emphasis on environmental education.

Defining the Environmental Education is difficult for most educators. Many times the environmental education is seen as synonymous with outdoor education. Hence, most the EE programmes focus on wildlife and wilderness areas. However, more than 50 percent of the world's people live in cities, and sub-urban areas are also on the way of urbanization. Therefore, the task at hand is to broaden the understanding of environmental education

to include the urban areas where most people live. In spite of that it may be pertinent to quote some definitions of Environmental Education formulated by some agencies or organization.

The United State Environmental Education Act (1970) states Environmental Education as follows:

“For the purposes of this Act, the term Environmental Education means the educational process dealing with man's relationship with his natural and man-made surroundings, and includes the relation of population, pollution, resource allocation and depletion, conservation, transportation, technology, and urban and rural planning encompassing the total human environment.”

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND SCHOOL CURRICULUM:

The world's most highly regarded and eminent environmental educator William B. Stapp, who died in 2001, is considered the founder of the International Environmental Movement. It is his educating vision of the social and environmental justice for all people that influence the today's curriculum.

Environmental education is not so new to the field of education. The idea of environmental education was firstly broadened and elaborated at the UNESCO conference held in 1972. Now-a-days, environmental education is not confined into a single subject. The ‘Environmental Protection’ is become a core-element in the school curriculum. Now it is recognized that environmental education is a part of the curriculum of all courses.

There are different curricular trends and approaches in environmental education such as single-subject approach, interdisciplinary approach, multi-disciplinary approach, holistic approach.

However, in today's context, environmental education has not remained the matter of single-subject approach. Now, environmental education is inter-disciplinary, multi-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary in both formal as well as in non-formal education which involves the subject matters from the natural sciences and social sciences also. Environmental awareness is a kind of ‘value’.

Development of environmental sensitivity is of utmost importance due to the environmental stress the world over. This increasing environmental stress is the source of conflicts. The conflict is also a cause for unsustainable development. In such a scenario, wise decisions and appropriate actions towards environment are needful and these can be developed through school co-curricular activities related to environment in order to enhance the environmental sensitivity.

CONCEPT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVITY:

Environmental sensitivity is a term that refers to an individual's awareness, understanding, and responsiveness to the environment and its associated issues. It encompasses a range of attitudes, knowledge, and behaviours that reflect an individual's concern for the well-being of the natural world and their commitment to sustainable practices.

Concept of Environmental Sensitivity:

➤ **Awareness:** Environmental sensitivity begins with an awareness of the interconnectedness between human actions and the environment. It involves recognizing the impact of individual and collective behaviours on

ecosystems, natural resources, and the overall health of the planet. Awareness includes understanding the consequences of environmental degradation, such as climate change, habitat destruction, pollution, and loss of biodiversity.

- **Understanding:** Environmental sensitivity also entails a deep understanding of environmental issues and their underlying causes. This understanding involves knowledge of scientific concepts, ecological principles, and the dynamics of natural systems. It includes recognizing the complex relationships between social, economic, and environmental factors that contribute to environmental challenges.
- **Empathy and Concern:** An essential aspect of environmental sensitivity is empathy and concern for the well-being of the environment. It involves recognizing the intrinsic value of nature and the need to protect and preserve it for future generations. Individuals with environmental sensitivity feel a sense of responsibility towards the environment and strive to minimize their ecological footprint.
- **Sustainable Behaviours:** Environmental sensitivity is reflected in the adoption of sustainable behaviours and practices. It encompasses actions such as reducing waste, conserving energy and water, choosing environmentally friendly products, and promoting recycling and responsible consumption. Sustainable behaviors are guided by the principles of environmental conservation, resource efficiency, and ecological balance.
- **Advocacy and Activism:** Environmental sensitivity often leads individuals to become advocates for environmental protection and sustainable practices. It involves actively promoting awareness, participating in environmental campaigns, supporting conservation initiatives, and advocating for policy changes. Advocacy and activism are essential in raising public awareness, influencing decision-makers, and driving collective action for environmental sustainability.
- **Systems Thinking:** Environmental sensitivity is rooted in systems thinking, which recognizes the interconnectedness and interdependence of various components of the environment. It involves considering the social, economic, and ecological dimensions of environmental issues and understanding the long-term consequences of actions. Systems thinking enables individuals to identify and address the underlying causes of environmental problems rather than focusing solely on symptoms.
- **Collaboration and Engagement:** Environmental sensitivity encourages collaboration and engagement with others who share similar values and goals. It involves working collectively with communities, organizations, and policymakers to address environmental challenges and find sustainable solutions. Collaboration facilitates knowledge sharing, innovative problem-solving, and the amplification of collective efforts towards environmental conservation.

By cultivating environmental sensitivity, individuals develop a holistic perspective that integrates environmental considerations into their decision-making processes and daily lives. Environmental sensitivity is crucial for fostering a sustainable and resilient future, as it empowers individuals to contribute towards a healthier planet and a more harmonious relationship between humans and the environment.

COMPONENTS OF ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVITY:

The 'Environmental Sensitivity' includes following different components:



Fig 3: Components of Environmental Sensitivity

1. Problem Identification:

It is the capacity of student (individual) to identify the problem relating to environment as and when it occurs. It needs the development of observational skills. The main outcome of the problem identification stage is that –

- a. One can clearly identify what aspect of environment needs to be addressed.
- b. One can set the objectives of that particular aspect.
- c. One can identify what information needs to be collected and analyzed.

2. Environmental Deliberations:

These are thoughtful considerations of students before using the environmental resources judiciously. It leads to improved decision about environmental quality and its relationship with human life.

In this holistic approach it is considered that everything is linked to everything else either directly or indirectly. It is future oriented, alert and anticipatory view which asks “And what then?”

In environmental deliberations probabilistic thinking, reflective consciousness is supposed to be very important as compared to conventional thinking towards the environment.

3. Positive Environmental Attitude:

Environmental attitude is a learned predisposition to respond toward a consistently given object either negatively or positively. Students become negative in attitude because of conditioned responses.

Positive attitude is the thoughtful response rather than a habitual reaction. This requires the objective observations. This positive attitude can be a powerful force working in our favour.

4. Assimilation & Migration of Knowledge:

Student acquires the knowledge related to problem identified. This assimilated knowledge of one problem can be migrated towards another environmental problem.

This dynamics of complex processes of knowledge migration are strongly influenced by different factors like - motivation, admiration, despise, derogation, etc.

5. Evaluating Ability:

Student acquires ability to evaluate the environment measure in the context of ecological, economic, social, educational, etc. factors.

6. Decision Making:

It is the cognitive process dealing with the selection of a course of action among alternatives. Every decision-making process produces a final choice, which can be an action or an opinion.

Decision making is said to be a psychological construct. It means though we can never 'see' a decision; we can just infer that psychological event that we call 'decision making' has occurred. Hence, decision making is a reasoning process which can be rational or irrational and can be based on explicit assumptions or tacit assumptions.

From above discussion it is clear that the term 'Environmental Sensitivity' is more comprehensive than that of environmental awareness. Environmental Sensitivity comprises environmental awareness in addition with some other aspects also as mentioned as above.

Thus, the development of environmental sensitivity among secondary level school students is very important than mere environmental awareness.

IMPORTANCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVITY:

Environmental sensitivity plays a crucial role in addressing the pressing environmental challenges and promoting sustainable practices. Here are some key reasons why environmental sensitivity is important:

- **Conservation of Natural Resources:** Environmental sensitivity helps individuals recognize the finite nature of natural resources and the need for their responsible use. By understanding the importance of conserving resources such as water, energy, and forests, individuals can make informed decisions that minimize waste and promote resource efficiency.
- **Protection of Biodiversity:** Environmental sensitivity emphasizes the value of biodiversity and the importance of preserving diverse ecosystems. It raises awareness about the threats to biodiversity, such as

habitat destruction and climate change, and encourages actions that protect and restore natural habitats, safeguard endangered species, and promote ecological balance.

- **Mitigation of Climate Change:** Environmental sensitivity recognizes the urgent need to address climate change. It involves understanding the causes and impacts of climate change, such as rising temperatures, extreme weather events, and sea-level rise. By promoting sustainable behaviours, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and supporting climate action initiatives, environmental sensitivity contributes to mitigating climate change.
- **Sustainable Development:** Environmental sensitivity promotes the integration of environmental considerations into decision-making processes, including economic and social development. It emphasizes the importance of balancing human needs with the preservation of ecosystems and natural resources. By adopting sustainable practices, environmental sensitivity ensures that development is carried out in a way that respects ecological limits and supports long-term well-being.
- **Health and Well-being:** Environmental sensitivity recognizes the direct link between environmental quality and human health. It highlights the impacts of environmental pollution and degradation on air quality, water quality, and overall well-being. By promoting clean environments, reducing exposure to harmful pollutants, and supporting sustainable practices, environmental sensitivity contributes to improved health outcomes.
- **Empowerment and Engagement:** Environmental sensitivity empowers individuals to take action and contribute to positive environmental change. It encourages active engagement in environmental initiatives, advocacy for environmental protection, and participation in community efforts. By fostering a sense of agency and responsibility, environmental sensitivity mobilizes individuals to become agents of change in their communities and beyond.
- **Interconnectedness and Systems Thinking:** Environmental sensitivity recognizes the intricate interdependencies between human activities and the environment. It promotes systems thinking, understanding that environmental issues are complex and interconnected with social, economic, and political factors. By considering these interconnections, environmental sensitivity encourages holistic approaches to problem-solving and decision-making.

CHALLENGES IN CULTIVATING ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVITY:

While environmental sensitivity is crucial for addressing environmental issues and promoting sustainability, there are several challenges that can hinder its development and implementation. Some of the key challenges in cultivating environmental sensitivity include:

- **Lack of Awareness:** Many individuals may have limited knowledge or understanding of environmental issues, including the impacts of human activities on ecosystems and natural resources. A lack of awareness can hinder the development of environmental sensitivity and prevent individuals from taking action.
- **Disconnect from Nature:** In today's urbanized and technology-driven world, people are becoming increasingly disconnected from nature. Limited exposure to natural environments and experiences can result

in a reduced sense of connection and empathy towards the environment, making it challenging to foster environmental sensitivity.

- **Complexity of Environmental Issues:** Environmental issues are often complex and multifaceted, involving scientific, social, economic, and political dimensions. Understanding these complexities and their interrelationships can be challenging for individuals, making it difficult to develop a comprehensive understanding of environmental sensitivity.
- **Overwhelm and Desensitization:** The scale and urgency of global environmental challenges such as climate change can be overwhelming. Continuous exposure to negative environmental news and images can lead to desensitization and a sense of helplessness, potentially diminishing individuals' motivation to engage in environmental sensitivity.
- **Conflicting Priorities:** Individuals may have competing priorities in their daily lives, such as work, family, and personal commitments, which can divert attention away from environmental concerns. Balancing these priorities and integrating environmental sensitivity into daily routines can be a challenge.
- **Societal Norms and Consumerism:** Societal norms and consumerist culture often prioritize materialistic values and immediate gratification over environmental considerations. This can create barriers to the adoption of sustainable behaviours and lifestyles, making it challenging to develop and sustain environmental sensitivity.
- **Limited Access to Environmental Education:** Access to comprehensive environmental education and resources may be limited, particularly in certain regions or socio-economic contexts. Without access to relevant information and educational opportunities, individuals may struggle to develop the knowledge and skills necessary for environmental sensitivity.
- **Resistance to Change:** Embracing sustainable behaviours often requires individuals to change established habits and adopt new practices. Resistance to change, fear of the unknown, and the perception of inconvenience or sacrifice can be barriers to developing environmental sensitivity.

FACTORS AFFECTING ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVITY:

Several factors can influence the development and expression of environmental sensitivity. These factors can vary across individuals and contexts, shaping attitudes, behaviors, and levels of engagement. Some key factors affecting environmental sensitivity include:

- **Education and Awareness:** The level of environmental education and awareness individuals receive plays a significant role in shaping their environmental sensitivity. Formal education, access to information, and exposure to environmental issues can enhance knowledge, understanding, and concern for the environment.
- **Personal Values and Beliefs:** Personal values and beliefs about the environment and nature influence environmental sensitivity. Individuals who prioritize environmental protection, conservation, and sustainable living are more likely to develop and demonstrate higher levels of environmental sensitivity.

- **Cultural and Social Factors:** Cultural and social norms, traditions, and values can shape environmental sensitivity. Some cultures have strong connections to nature and a deep respect for the environment, which can foster higher levels of environmental sensitivity within those societies.
- **Role Models and Influencers:** The presence of environmental role models, such as environmental activists, scientists, or community leaders, can significantly impact environmental sensitivity. Positive role models who demonstrate environmental stewardship and advocate for sustainable practices can inspire and motivate individuals to develop their own environmental sensitivity.
- **Personal Experiences and Connections with Nature:** Direct experiences in nature, such as outdoor activities, environmental volunteering, or living in close proximity to natural environments, can foster a sense of connection and attachment to the environment. Positive experiences in nature often lead to increased environmental sensitivity.
- **Socio-economic Factors:** Socio-economic factors, such as income, access to resources, and living conditions, can influence environmental sensitivity. Individuals facing economic hardships or living in disadvantaged communities may have limited capacity or resources to prioritize environmental concerns.
- **Media and Communication:** Mass media, including television, internet, and social media, plays a significant role in shaping environmental sensitivity. Media coverage of environmental issues, campaigns, and educational programs can raise awareness and influence attitudes and behaviours towards the environment.
- **Government Policies and Regulations:** Government policies and regulations related to environmental protection, conservation, and sustainable development can have a significant impact on environmental sensitivity. Strong environmental policies and enforcement can create a supportive environment for individuals to develop and express their environmental sensitivity.
- **Peer Influence:** Peer groups and social networks can influence environmental sensitivity. Positive peer influence, such as friends or colleagues who demonstrate environmental concern or engage in sustainable practices, can encourage individuals to develop their own environmental sensitivity.
- **Access to Resources and Infrastructure:** Access to resources and infrastructure that support sustainable practices, such as recycling facilities, public transportation, and renewable energy options, can facilitate the development and expression of environmental sensitivity.

Understanding these factors is essential for designing effective interventions, education programs, and policies that promote environmental sensitivity and empower individuals to take positive environmental action

MEASURES TO CULTIVATE ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVITY:

To cultivate environmental sensitivity, various measures can be implemented at individual, educational, and societal levels. These measures aim to raise awareness, provide education, and encourage sustainable behaviours. Here are some key measures to cultivate environmental sensitivity:

- **Environmental Education:** Integrate environmental education into formal school curricula at all levels. Teach students about environmental issues, conservation, sustainable practices, and the interconnectedness of ecosystems. Provide hands-on learning experiences and field trips to foster a deeper connection with nature.
- **Promote Experiential Learning:** Encourage outdoor activities, nature exploration, and environmental volunteering. Provide opportunities for students to engage directly with the environment, participate in conservation projects, and witness the importance of preserving natural resources.
- **Raise Awareness:** Conduct awareness campaigns through various mediums such as media, social media, public events, and community initiatives. Highlight environmental issues, their impacts, and the role individuals can play in making a positive difference.
- **Foster Connection with Nature:** Encourage spending time in nature and developing a personal connection with the environment. Promote activities like hiking, gardening, bird watching, or simply spending time in parks or green spaces.
- **Sustainable Practices:** Teach sustainable practices at home, school, and the community. Emphasize concepts such as energy conservation, waste reduction, water conservation, recycling, and responsible consumption. Provide practical guidance on implementing these practices in daily life.
- **Model Sustainable Behaviours:** Institutions, organizations, and individuals in influential positions should lead by example. Model sustainable behaviours and practices, such as using renewable energy sources, reducing carbon footprints, and promoting eco-friendly policies.
- **Collaboration and Partnerships:** Foster collaborations between schools, government agencies, NGOs, and community organizations. Work together to develop and implement environmental programs, initiatives, and projects that promote environmental sensitivity.
- **Encourage Critical Thinking:** Foster critical thinking skills to analyze environmental issues and develop informed opinions. Teach students to evaluate the credibility of information and make decisions based on scientific evidence and ethical considerations.
- **Engage in Policy Advocacy:** Encourage students and the community to engage in advocacy efforts to influence environmental policies and regulations. Provide platforms for expressing concerns, engaging in public consultations, and participating in environmental decision-making processes.
- **Support Research and Innovation:** Encourage research and innovation in environmental sciences and sustainable technologies. Support initiatives that address environmental challenges, promote eco-friendly solutions, and contribute to a more sustainable future.
- **Community Engagement:** Engage with the local community through environmental awareness campaigns, clean-up drives, tree planting initiatives, and other community-based projects. Foster a sense of responsibility and collective action towards environmental preservation.
- **Continuous Learning:** Promote lifelong learning about the environment and sustainability. Encourage individuals to stay updated on current environmental issues, emerging research, and innovative practices.

By implementing these measures, individuals can develop a deeper understanding of the environment, foster a sense of responsibility, and cultivate environmental sensitivity. This, in turn, can lead to more sustainable attitudes, behaviors, and actions that contribute to the preservation and protection of our planet.

CONCLUSION:

The present study on environmental sensitivity among secondary school students provided valuable insights into the influence of various factors on students' environmental awareness. The findings revealed significant differences based on gender, type of school management, and medium of instruction. Boys exhibited higher levels of environmental sensitivity compared to girls, highlighting the importance of tailored interventions for each gender. Private unaided schools demonstrated the highest environmental sensitivity, followed by government schools, while private aided schools showed the lowest levels. These results emphasize the need to adopt effective environmental education practices from successful schools and allocate resources to bridge the gap between different types of schools. Furthermore, students studying in English medium schools displayed greater environmental sensitivity compared to those in Kannada medium schools, indicating the potential influence of language of instruction. It is crucial to provide equal opportunities and enhance environmental education initiatives in both language mediums. Overall, these findings underscore the significance of environmental education in secondary schools and its role in promoting sustainable development and environmental conservation. The study contributes to the understanding of factors influencing environmental sensitivity among secondary school students and provides implications for educators and policymakers to enhance environmental education practices.

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