

Reinventing Nature to Develop Ecoglogical Virtues

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Abstract

The Ecological unrest of modern times is simply because of an aggravation of the earnest desire to conquer over nature and presence of extreme of logical positivist approach. The paper underlined the causes that plagued our understanding of nature. It argues that promotion of environment virtues cannot be just attained by transmitting the broad spectrum of scientific knowledge or 'indoctrination' rather students must be provided genuine opportunity to reinvent nature.

Introduction

Underpinning the global crisis of environment, poverty, hunger and deprivation of basic needs, which is tragically reflected in the third world among marginalised, are the system, policies, institution and values of structural violence. With both external faces (e.g. debt, unequal trade, hegemony of greedy investors and elitist aid agencies) and internal dimensions (e.g. gross inequalities, oppressions and repression by local elites, inappropriate modernisation policies), structural violence is sustained by the powerlessness of the poor and marginalised, from local and community to national and international levels. The

empowerment of the powerless through education in general and environmental education in particular is therefore vital for creating a eco-friendly, more compassionate and just world in which the basic needs of all can be adequately and humanely met. Throughout the third world, where the greed of local elites and governments collaborate with rapacious transnationals and growth- export-oriented "aid and development" agencies in environmental plunder, earth-caring intellectuals have teamed up with peasants and labourers, and with tribal peoples to defend the inalienable rights of human being to harmoniously live with and survive from their land, air, water and other species (Sweet- Hin, 1988). In

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India, for example, the famous Chipko Movement, which began with tribals hugging their trees to protect them from loggers and bulldozers has inspired the active commitment of ecologists and other intellectuals to extent environmentalist ideas and practices throughout the sub-continent (Bahuguna 1988).

Greatest Challenge Facing Humanity

It is true that under 'the environment' is the *sine qua non* of all that we do, these matters are fraught with a potential for evasion and sentimentality and for confusion and misunderstanding. Specifically, the language in which it is communicated the ethical issues that are raised. Today, humanity is facing its greatest challenge that they are on the threshold of disaster, and nothing short of a fundamental change in consciousness and society can prevent them from carrying towards ecocide (Marshall, 1995, P.448). The human actions are affecting the environment, both unprecedented and unsustainable ways and there is a growing possibility of self-extinction of human race. The complexity of the forces influencing the human conditions seems impossible to comprehend in any systematic manner. Rather we are like a small boat in a hurricane seemingly in the hands of providence when the wind rises. We are buffered by environmental pollution that poisons our air, lakes, beaches, soil and drinking water. The weather changes and threatens our crops and water supply, melting the icecap and raising the level of the world's seas. In the face of such a daunting scenario, there is an impulse to take refuge in the familiar

harbors of tradition. Creative responses that address the global complexity seem to elude us when we are charged with responsibility for providing direction for tomorrow. We flounder under the overload of information and insufficient resources. Slogans, narrow nationalism and parochialism in religion, politics, ethnic identification, and regional competition bid to organise our perspectives to exclusion of concern for the other who so intimately influences our degrees of maneuverability. A new version is difficult to realise because we are still learning how to move from primary to secondary allegiances without abandoning our sense of personal identity (Overly, 1988).

There is a growing need that the curriculum should develop among children awareness and understanding of and respect for, the environment in which they live, and secure their commitment to sustainable development at a personal, local, national and global level, in a variety of educational programmes, particularly in science, social science, geography and moral development programme. The majority of the environmental policies and the programmes undertaken in educational institutions are still appeared to be modest enough when compared with the problems they attempt to address. The very notion of environmental imperatives poses a serious challenge to the basic principles of liberal democracy where individual decides good life. There is a global sign of grasping the consequences of the fact that the Earth as, effectively, a closed system cannot sustain unlimited economic growth and that the exuberant

high-consumption life styles to which people today are accustomed.

A concern for the environment is evident in educational policy and practice at all levels and in a variety of ways. Because of the repeated failure of the various school programmes developed for environmental education that restrict itself to mere a few 'scientific facts' rather than addressing controversial moral and ethical issues it becomes imperative in order to formulate policies and programmes of environmental education, instead of an authoritarian technocracy ecological democracy to be prevailed, at all levels, dissolving the power hierarchies, and promoting open forum on public debate to prove the efficacy of the proposals. The 'Iron Cage' of technology is to be replaced by spiritually conscious citizen expressing their concern for environment, the technological education is 'for each school leaver' to have formulated a responsible attitude towards the sustainable development of planet earth, an appreciation of its beauty and an assumption of an environmental ethic (Palmer and Neal, 1994, p29).

The profound issue at the Kernel of any approach to environmental education is what nature is. Can it have intrinsic value or is it only to be valued instrumentally in terms of its potential to serve human needs (including aesthetic and spiritually). Given the complexity and diversity of views, the need is to articulate the metaphors and the conceptual schemes of our understanding of the concept of nature as often explained in the school textbooks as the physical world or does nature could have other, even more

fundamental aspects and significances. The clarification is required the connotations of 'part of nature' or 'natural' as we are living in a post natural world where nature is at an end where nature no longer exists, becomes socialised. The nature is being disrupted not only physically but metaphysically as an idea and thus as an area of experience fragmenting its sense of organic holism. Some of the main issues for environmental education as identified by Michael Bonnett (2003):

- What understanding of nature and our relationship with nature and the environmental should we invite pupils to participate?
- What (environmental) ethic should inform our approach?
- What kind of knowledge and understanding best illuminate our relationship with nature of the environment and the environmental consequences of our actions, including their ideological content?
- What kinds of knowledge and pedagogy are appropriate in an area where many of the issues are considered controversial and yet where we are seeking to influence pupil's actions?
- How might any of the above require a redefinition of roles and ethos within the school as institution and in its dealings with the community outside itself?
- By what standard should schools judge their success: What qualities of learning should they promote?

The distinction between 'ecologism' and 'environmentalism' is often used in

political theory and environmental ethics to make several related distinctions, most notably, between an ecocentric radicalism 'ecologism' and anthropocentric reformism 'environmentalism'. However, accounts of environmental education tend to be ambiguous between 'environmentalism' and 'ecologism' - although the underline idea may be closer to environmentalism (Barry, 1999, pp.21-35). For environmentally appropriate thought and action requires a clear and already understanding of what is to be valued or respected and in what senses. Our ideas of nature are fundamental in conditioning our outlook and clarifying our concept about environmental issues and our stand for 'environmentalism' or ecologism will finally help proper characterisation of environmental education.

Our Understanding 'Nature'

Humanistic utilitarian approach, the anthropocentrism is such a motive that has raised our desire for mastery of nature. Throughout the modernist epoch of Western civilisation runs a fundamental desire to subjugate and exploit nature. The feminised concept of nature legitimises exploitation, penetration and bringing to order by 'masculine' culture. In aggressive science, nature gendered as feminine the technology thus turn the whole of nature into resources, the emphasis on consumption to an ever-increasing degree with the world around us. The drive in modern rationalism to explain, predict and control nature, in particular the logical and calculative over the

emotional and empathetic corroborate this characterisation. According to eco-feminists under the rationalistic impulse, human nature is defined against nature. The qualities such as freedom, rationality and the transcendence of nature that we take to differentiate ourselves from the rest of nature have become definitive human virtues. This explicitly subscribe that all science in fact all rationality is aggressive towards nature in the same way and to same degree as individual is towards a prostitute. The respectful to prostitute has a profound sensitivity for human suffering and a keen social awareness of cruelty, discrimination and authoritarianism. Individual has to rise above an attitude of seeking momentary pleasure and trivial enjoyments, should become capable of transcending the brute elements, develops a profound love and warmth that enable individuals to confer privileges or inspire respect to nature.

Thus, environmental concern alerts us to the possibility of certain aggressive motives holding away within traditional subject knowledge. Nietzsche (1924, 00.37-38, 75) turned his wrath towards the most general form of culture, which would be levelised to a point of actual barbarism. Aurel Kolnai (1938) while describing Heidegger's doctrine aptly remarked: a radically barbarian outlook on life, the diametrical opposite of what the French call the cult of *le Vrai, le Beau, et le Bien*, sullen devotion to the "earnestness of life (p.208)". Philosophy does not begin only in wonder it begins also in dread. As Nietzsche (1924, p.24) warns. "He who feels no dread at this point must be asked not to meddle with

pedagogical questions. It thereby raises fundamental philosophical question not only about what kind of knowledge will best illuminate environmental problem, but also about the nature of educational knowledge itself.

Knowing Nature through Science

Our children through science largely know nature. This does not mean that nature is not revealed through other curriculum areas in schools. However, the preference for science, which is preoccupied with causal explanations and measurement, and whose basic experimental interventionist character, arising from its history and the cultural milieu in which it was born, which viewed nature is largely something to be overcome, tamed and made servant to human purposes. These remain implicit in much school science as a set of inherent unexamined prejudices. It must be emphasised here that I am not arguing that science has nothing of importance to offer. On the contrary, it has become more important than ever in order to monitor the effects of human activity on the biosphere in ways and at levels that lie beyond what may be apparent to other kinds of knowing. And of course, our everyday as well as our more 'elevated' understanding of nature throughout is infused with scientific views. Rather, it is that learners need to be made aware of science's prejudices and its partiality in revealing nature when nature is presented from within a scientific perspective.

Besides this, it is undoubtedly true that scientific knowledge frequently has evoked and enhanced our respect, even

reverance for nature. As we learn of the sheer magnitude, and the infinite deversity, complexity, integrity and subtlety of the cosmos and encounter the beauty of its forms and processes through the ongoing revelations of many areas of science. The gravest danger, which faces science, is its specialisation. As Nietzsche (1924) prophesied specialist in science gets to resemble nothing but a factory workman who spends his whole life in turning one particular screw or handle on a certain instrument or machine. Liberalising studies must complement specialisation in any field; for it is the man who counts and not the profession (p.39). Apart from super specialisation the science is taught impersonally, as if the world of nature were cold and indifferant. Existentialists argue that student will never fully understand the environmental problems unless they are actually become one, or at least plays the role. Simple experience or experimenting on location is not enough. One must appropriate the situation. In order to know, one must be. Existentialists teach that values do not exist apart from the freely chosen act of human being. Ideas of the good, the true, and the beautiful are primarily abstractions from empirical evidence or intellectual speculation. Even a 'purely scientific' analysis of environmental problems can be made to reveal the presence of a personal obligation an involvement; the only satisfactory way of handling an environmental problem is to become one with it. One has to identify oneself with nature, to understand the real problems of nature. In the existentialist way within the individual subjective processes

science is a tool; not a determinant. Experimentalism is a method; not a goal. Experience is an adverb; not a verb, or a noun. Nevertheless, to develop a new morality consonant with a complete affirmation of individual freedom the much needed is to reinvent nature. In order to develop ecologically virtuous human being the stance should be individual rather than group. Environmental education, should provide the opportunities to expose students to; the woods, the rocks, the winds, the vulture, the flowers, the butterfly, the meads, the mountain slopes, must all speak to him countless reflections and images, in a variegated round of change of visions; and in this way he will unconsciously and gradually feel the metaphysical unity of all things in the great image of nature, and at the same time tranquilise his soul in the contemplation of her eternal endurance and necessity (Nietzsche 1024, pp.95-96).

Similarly, the key concept of nature is the 18th century what all thinkers urge to "follow nature" all would be well. Rousseau's claim that everything is good as it comes from nature led to an education that was concerned not just to follow the child's inner nature, but was also physically close to a mentally engaged with the natural world. Nature became the touchstone of belief in religion and politics (Marshall, 1995, p.222). The truth, knowledge, morality and person hood that underpin our understanding of nature in our cultural consciousness in the context of environmental concern is determining what counts as harmony or discord, reciprocity or exploitation, truth or untruth, perhaps beauty of ugliness.

An intimate acquaintanceship with natural space is significant, as what had to be learned could not be expressed easily, if at all, in words; each person had to immerse in the enterprise and develop one's own skill. In whole-hearted engagement the real and intimate get revealed awareness is self-arising. Such an account reasserts the value of both direct intuitive engagement and understanding and learning that is continuous and organic rather than modular and essentially atomistic – the latter being the dominant trend in the curricula of schools, further education and universities.

On the radical account, environmental learning should be active rather than passive – it should involve critical reflection on an active engagement with the current economic, social and political system, the environmental ideals and 'knowledge' in society and the learner's lived experience (Bell, 2004). Further Bell opined that the environmental education should be universal and compulsory to ensure that every one becomes environmentally conscious through proper environmental education.

Thus, Education 'about the environment (that is, basic knowledge and understanding of the environment)' is no less important than 'education for the environment (concerned with values, attitudes and positive action for the environment)' (UNESCO, 1997).

In a secular, democratic society political liberal ideologies often create subtle differences due to technico-economic-utilitarian view of the world. In the educational context this could surely be an occasion, a good starting

point for addressing many of the environmental problems that we presently confront, encouraging students to ask not simply what is good for an individual or local community but what is good for the planet and to begin to appreciate the relationship between the two. The appreciation of the global requires an affiliation to the local (Bonnett, 2003).

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