

## BOOK REVIEW

### Teaching Environmental Education: Trends and Practices in India

Tannu Malik\*

**Title:** *Teaching Environmental Education: Trends and Practices in India*  
**Author:** Chong Shimray  
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provides fundamental understanding in environmental education and suggests a course of action in school curriculum. There are total of 10 chapters and an 'Afterword' in the book, which provide a comprehensive idea about environmental education, particularly, in the context of India. Each chapter begins with 'Worth a Thought', which makes a reader ponder over various misconceptions and queries related to environmental education and the chapter unfolds the answers.

The relationship between humans and environment is dynamic. Since the beginning, environment has influenced the life of human beings and the latter too have modified their environment. In the last two centuries, the environment has been gravely affected. Thus, in today's times, 'environmental education' has become an important component of education throughout the world.

The book, *Teaching Environmental Education: Trends and Practices in India* authored by Chong Shimray,

The first chapter of the book titled, 'Introduction to Environmental Education', explains how development in science and technology has benefited human beings and also affected the environment. It gives a detail of the growing concerns about environmental issues across the world and environmental education in the modern age. The paradox, emergence, roots, evolution, goals and guiding principles of environmental education have been dealt with in the chapter. Selected definitions and chronology

\* Associate Professor, Department of Education in Social Sciences, NCERT, New Delhi – 110 016

of important events in environmental education have also been given. However, the chapter has references of the work done in the West in this field but lacks India's contribution. Though the ideology of Mahatma Gandhi has been reflected, the various references of environmental education in *Veda*, *Upanishada* and *Purana* do not find a mention.

Chapter 2 titled, 'Why Environmental Education', makes readers ponder over the idea of inclusion of environmental education as an integral component in the school curriculum. The nature of environmental education and other disciplinary areas have been discussed, which give an insight into how it is different from other disciplinary subjects. The possibilities and limitations of converging environmental education with science have been covered but not with other disciplines. The relationship that exists between environmental education, environmental science and environmental studies has been given in a tabular form, which makes it easier for the readers to understand and analyse.

Chapter 3 'Environmental Education in the School Curriculum' is an extension of the second chapter. It focuses on various ways through which environmental education is done and can be done through school curriculum. The two common approaches of implementing environmental education, namely separate subject

(interdisciplinary) approach and infusion (multidisciplinary) approach, along with their pros and cons, have been discussed. It gives ample food for thought to the readers on how environmental education can be incorporated in the teaching-learning of different disciplines.

The fourth chapter, 'Tracing Environmental Education in India', gives an account of environmental education since the beginning of 1930s in various education policy documents, such as Education Commission reports, National Policy on Education, curriculum frameworks and other nationally important educational reports. The chapter also presents a detailed account of how environment education has been dealt with in the school curriculum developed by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) over the years. The title of the chapter provides scope for adding more about environmental education, which was always taught in India, but was inadequate.

'Global Trends in Environmental Education and Implementation in India' is the title of Chapter 5, where the major initiatives taken at the global level regarding environmental education and their implementation in India have been covered. This chapter highlights how a public interest litigation (PIL) filed in the Supreme Court of India in 1991 had an impact on the course of implementation of environmental education. The chapter

includes information about a pilot study on project-based environmental education with a note to teachers. It will help the teachers to come up with creative ideas. A comparative study of India and the USA regarding the implementation of environmental education in schools explains how in India a uniform curriculum is followed but in the USA every State develops its own curriculum.

The focus of the sixth chapter, 'Responsible Environmental Behaviour — Ultimate Goals of Environmental Education', is about the importance of responsible behaviour towards the environment by 'doing'. Such behaviour is not inherited but learned, and is reflected through actions. The purpose of environmental education will not be meaningful unless humans display some kind of responsible behaviour towards protecting the environment. Several views on behavioural change have been discussed in the chapter and emphasis has been laid on a model of responsible environmental behaviour.

'Multi-perspectives of Environmental Education' is the seventh chapter and explores three different perspectives on environmental education — as all inclusive, moderately eco-centric and purely eco-centric. The perspective in which environmental education is viewed would definitely impact its implementation. The perspectives in the Indian context probe the trends and practices, which can be considered acceptable or practical in India. It is

important to define boundaries to give an 'identity' to the discipline or it will remain a misconceived discipline.

In the eighth chapter, 'Teacher Empowerment in Environmental Education — A Concern', the spotlight is on various aspects of teacher empowerment and how the implementation of environmental education depends on teachers. Issues related to both pre-service and in-service courses in the country have been discussed in the chapter. A comparative study of selected Bachelor of Education courses is given in a tabular form, which compares the nature and scope, goals and objectives, theory and pedagogy of courses on environmental education. It further examines their alignment with the National Curriculum Framework (NCF)–2005, and their participation in the actual resolution of environmental issues through these courses. The chapter concludes with suggestions for pre-service and in-service courses, and training of teacher–educators with an aim to improve and empower future teachers in the area of environmental education.

The ninth chapter, 'Education for Sustainable Development — A Departure from Environmental Education', elucidates the concept, its origin, characteristics, thrust areas and dimensions of education for sustainable development along with milestones given in a box. It refers to one of the initiatives of the United Nations, titled 'Decade of Education

for Sustainable Development' and the Global Action Program, a follow-up activity to the Decade of ESD (2005–14), and moves on to discuss different types of sustainable education. The similarities and differences between education for sustainable development and environmental education brought out by the author are an interesting read. The author poses a question, "Don't you think too much emphasis is given to the names, such as environmental education and Education for Sustainable Development, when in reality we have not been able to implement either of the two in our classrooms?"(p.238).

After reading the nine chapters and getting clarity about environmental education via balanced approach adopted by the author, the tenth chapter, 'Way Forward', provides a strategy for the implementation of environmental education in India. The initiatives of government bodies like the Ministry of Human Resource Development and Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, and some non-governmental organisations have been highlighted. The lack of coordination, collaboration and networking between various stakeholders has been considered as one of the reasons why environmental education in India has not made a headway. A roadmap given in the chapter may help policy makers and implementers to come up with an

appropriate plan of action for the implementation of environmental education in India. The chapter also draws attention to lack of research studies in the country, which could have provided a base on which strategic measures could be taken up for the implementation of environmental education. The chapter has identified the different areas where research can be conducted and it will surely stimulate researchers to take up need-based research.

In the concluding 'Afterword', the author emphasises that a change in attitude towards environment is essential to prevent further degradation of the environment. The role of educators in addressing this issue has been highlighted. Ultimately, the readers are left with a heightened sense of awareness about the environment.

Each chapter helps understand environment education and strikes a chord with the readers. The book covers all guidelines needed to prepare school curriculum, research projects, roadmaps, key global and national initiatives, and perspectives of national education policies. Each chapter makes the readers ponder through its section by 'just a moment'. Written in a comprehensive style, this book is a must read for practising teachers, researchers, teacher-educators, student-teachers or those who want to know about environmental education.