

# Population Growth and Challenges for Environmental Education

## Abstract

Environmental Education, as a specific branch of knowledge, has been involved as a result to deal with environmental issues and plans and programmes for eradication of environment of awareness. Pressure of population on natural resources is considered as the most prominent rootcause of environmental degradation. Therefore challenges for environmental education incorporates orientation towards, numerous related issues and concepts, theories, facts and development of positive attitude in local people and leaders to make dedicated efforts and to eradicate the environmental problems.

**Keywords:** Pressure of Population, Environmental Education.

## Introduction

Environmental education, as a specific branch of knowledge, has been evolved as a result to deal with environmental issues and plans and programmes for eradication of environmental degradation as well as for development of awareness. Several causes have been identified as responsible for high rate of environmental degradation like ever-increasing pressure of population on available and existing natural and other resources, advancement in the technologies harmful to the biosphere, expansion of infrastructural base to cause agricultural, industrial and commercial revolution, unplanned ways of deforestation and commercial revolution, unplanned ways unprecedented growth in pollution generating units and systems, imbalances in biosphere and ecological systems.

Pressure of population on natural resources is considered as the most prominent rootcause of environmental degradation. These include pressure on land, soil degradation, forests, Inhabited destruction and loss of biodiversity, changing consumption pattern, rising demand for energy, air pollution, global warming and climate change and water scarcity and water pollution.

## Aim of the Study

Environmental education incorporates orientation towards numerous related issues and concepts theories and facts, development of positive attitude towards them. More emphasis should be laid on compulsory environmental education at the school level in order to make people aware of the environmental protection and to control population, conserve and protect the environment.

## Population

The growth of population depends upon fertility, mortality and migration. The process of accelerated population growth in India till 1970s were observed to witness a marginal deceleration during 1980s, as the decadal population growth was 23.9 percent compared to 24.9 percent in 1970s. Further declines in fertility have been witnessed during 1990s and 2000s. Population growth enhances the rate of consumption of all essential commodities and resources to cause constant depletion. Mitra (1993) considered population as a prime factor in this regard and as a demographer, observed that a mere 250 million of population grew up to 685 million within a period of 60 years. Since 1921 with absolute growth rate about more than two and half times than before. The population pattern of distribution in India indicates that only 2.5 percent of world land area is inhabited by the 16 percent of its population, causing very high density. The growth rate was 2.22 percent during the decade of 1971-81 in comparison to that of 2.11 percent during 1981-91. It indicates a nominal downfall of 0.11 percent only. But at the same time, an unexpected hike in the average density of population beyond 250, which was 81 in 1921 raised up to 216 in 1981 in per square km. caused much more devastating impact on environment. Leaving out all the waste and uninhabited land deserts, forests, mountains, river beds, marshes etc. the average incidence per unit of human settlements of all kinds has already



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exceeded 400 persons per square km. such a densely settled and growing population may require about 20 crore tonnes of food grains in India by the year 2000, to feed the added part. It seems to be the very difficult task under the declining resource status of the nation. International migration during pre and post 1947 in India, also caused variation and disturbances in many a regions with limited resources by uprooting the age old livelihood patterns and consequently the ecological balance. At present, carbon-di-oxide, nitrogen and all other gaseous cycles have been disturbed.

Due to pressure of population on land, unplanned deforestation, shifting of agricultural lands towards interiors, animal and game hunting, destruction of plants, shrubs and grass cover on top soil, unplanned disposal of wastages and pollution of water bodies, and air mass create problems. Lack of educational and training facilities also caused by population flood.

Premi (1991) established a correlation between the rate of literacy and population growth in India and clarified that the 36.11 crores of population was having 16.67 percent of literacy in 1951 but during 1991, 84.39 crores of people were enjoying mere 42.49 percent of it. This indicates that due to simultaneous growth of population, the resources mobilised to the system of education remain unable to enhance the rate of literacy up to mark and present population growth through education.

Singh (1994) also viewed positively and praised the National Population Policy of 1976, designed and planned to interrelate population education with general education. It is inevitable to faster value oriented attitude among future generation towards population issues since it is essential to control the growth of population and the size of Indian families.

India Today published a report regarding U.N. population meet was presented to formulate the new population policy of India, aims to :

1. Enhance the age of marriage beyond 18 years for girls and 21 for boys.
2. Facilitate adoption of uncared children.
3. Propagate and motivate men and women for equality.
4. Debar those from the govt. jobs who used to get their children married before the prescribed age limits.
5. Establish population and social development commission.
6. Pay more attention to educate and aware the people regarding their rights of having information and choice of birth control devices.

Through implementation of such worthwhile policies in real sense, population pressure on environment could certainly be controlled. From the various effects of human beings on environmental degradation appears that if human beings want to exist on earth, there is now high time to give to priority to protect natural resources and environment.

The group of environmentalists and educationists suggested that we are in need of a sound balanced programme to be operated at national level to overcome the effect of the pressure of population on natural resources to –

1. Raise the environmental sensitivity and awareness through systematic environmental education from the very beginning.
2. Protect and conserve non-renewable as well as recycling of renewable resources with optimum consumption level fixation.
3. Develop and promote environmental protection and eco-friendly products through developmental and applied researches of higher order and for which proper motivational measures should be undertaken.
4. Ensure environmental protection not only by law put through raising a sense of responsibility, fellow feeling and cooperation as well as cultivation of social attitude to share and shoulder environmental management among future citizens.
5. Conserve rare species and sustain biodiversity through promotion of conservation technologies, human resource development, stem the decay of forest and soil cover on the hill slopes, searching for cheaper and better sources of fuel and energy in rural areas.

#### **Environmental Education**

The meaning of environmental education as stated above accepts the pressure of population on natural resource regarding which efforts are being made to impart knowledge base to the learners.

Saxena (1986) mentioned that environmental education is a process to promote the awareness and understanding of the environment, its relationship with man and his activities. It is also aimed to developing responsible actions necessary for preservation, conservation and improvement of the environment and its components.

Education 'about' the environment is acquiring an understanding of the total environment, concepts, knowledge and skills related... is learning 'from' the environment and; development of attitude, skills and evaluation abilities for the proper use and the development of the environment is education 'for' the environment.

Therefore, environmental education incorporates orientation towards numerous related issues and concepts, theories and facts, development of positive attitude towards them. More emphasis should be laid on compulsory environment education at the school level in order to make people aware of the environment protection. The environment protection should not be a responsibility of government alone but local people and leaders should be encouraged to make dedicated efforts to eradicate the environmental problems.

#### **Conclusion**

The outcomes of high population growth rates are increasing number of people below poverty line, an increasing population density, and pressure on natural resources. The study reveals that the country's population growth is imposing an increasing burden on the country's limited and continually degrading natural resource base, there is an urgent need to control population, conserve and protect natural resources and the environment.

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