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Need of Environmental Education among Politicians and Government Administrators

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Abstract

The roles of the government towards environment would be development of every government policy and programme with environmental considerations; formulation of environmental protection and conservation rules and regulations and its effective enforcement; cooperation with various stakeholders to prevent environmental degradation; to ensure its citizens to be aware of environment etc. among

others. So, roles of politicians and government administrators as the policy makers, law makers, implementing agents or influencers are crucial in the context of environmental protection and conservation. In order to make environmentally sound decisions and also to implement it effectively, politicians and government administrators should have sound environmental literacy.

Keywords: Environmental Education, Legislature, Opposition Member & Bureaucracy

Introduction

Man, the main cause of environmental degradation, is also one of its victims (Godlee and Walker, 1991) [9]. There are a lot of environmental problems and the increase is due to the inappropriate behavior of citizens and misguided policies which they have on the environment (Tavakoli *et al.*, 2019) [21]. There is now a growing consensus emphasizing that governance has a strong effect on environmental actions and outcomes (Wingqvist *et al.*, 2012) [25]. It is argued that, given present economic structure, government need to intervene in favor of the environment. The main contention is that government, and in particular ministers and agencies with a mandate for environment protection, need to formulate a strategy for sustainable development as the basis for a coherent approach across government agencies and private sector (Forrest and Morison, 1991) [8].

The principles of Rio Declaration on Environment and Development emphasize the importance of the need to protect environment for sustainable development. It is known that Agenda 21 is a non-binding action plan of the United Nations with regard to sustainable development. It is an action agenda for the UN, other multilateral organizations and individual governments around the world that can be executed at local, national, and global levels. The plan also emphasizes the role of the individual governments in achieving sustainable development. Sustainable development depends, in part, on the policy, institutional and legal framework related to environment as well as on the implementation capacity.

Importance of Environmental Education

The significance of awareness raising and education to bring about attitudinal change of human beings towards the environment emerged when the world community became aware of the fact that majority of the factors contributing to environmental degradation are caused by human activities. Thus, environmental education has been promoted as an effective tool to facilitate the process of fostering awareness and to encourage people to adopt environment friendly lifestyles in order to minimize environmental depletion. Environmental education is that component of education that enlightens people about their immediate environment.

Though its principles and guidelines are set according to international standards, they can and should be broken down and simplified in order to fit into the lifestyles, value systems, social systems and education (formal and informal) of the people at the grassroots level. Through this process, people will start to appreciate their own environment, to use it but handle it in a manner that will still enable future generations also to have their own experiences with it (Tlhagale, 2004) [22]. Environmental education is a process that allows individuals to explore environmental issues, engage in problem solving, and take action to improve the environment. As a result, individuals develop a deeper understanding of environmental issues and have the skills

to make informed and responsible decisions (Dhara, 2022) [7].

It is concerned with subjects like the way in which natural environment works, how human beings should behave to manage the ecosystem to sustain the environment. It provides the necessary skills and expertise to handle the associated challenges. The main focus of environmental education is to impart knowledge, create awareness, inculcate an attitude of concern and provide necessary skill to handle the environment and environmental challenges (Koner, 2017) [12]. The purpose and practice of environmental education involves gaining appropriate knowledge as well as developing skills in decision making and strategies for implementing change rather than taking action (Spiropoulou *et al.*, 2005) [20]. Environmental education prepares the individual to become able to balance between his vital needs and the natural environment that provides spiritual, aesthetical and ethical sources for many communities. Environmental education has an effective role in creating healthy awareness and spreading suitable environment for the development and maintenance of human minds (Mohammed, *et al.*, 2006) [15].

Roles of Politicians and Government Administrators

As noted by Anderson, 1979, the official policymakers are those who possess legal authority to engage in the formulation of public policy. Those involved in this category are the legislatures, the executives, the administrators and the judiciary. They are governmental actors who occupy formal public positions and political offices and serve as the actual policy makers. Legislatures are members of parliament or state legislative assemblies. The executives comprise the President, Prime Minister and council of ministers in case of central government and Governor, Chief Minister and his council of ministers in case of state government. Administrators are those persons that need authority from others to act. This category includes IAS Officers, IPS Officers, State Public Service Commission Officers and other high profile government officers which either take role in making of government policies or have an important role in implementing policies, programmes and rules and regulation of the government in general.

Politicians are persons involved in the process of public policymaking in their role as members of governments, parliaments, political parties, and other political bodies at the (sub) national level (e.g., local government, state legislature, national parliament, etc.) as well as within the supranational political arena (e.g., United Nations Security Council, European Union institutions, and so on). Many politicians get into office through a democratic election, while others are selected or appointed to a public office (Benny and Mause, 2018) [5]. They became MPs or MLAs after elected by people in the central level or state level respectively and became a part of parliament or state legislatures. The legislature is that organ of the government which passes the laws of a country or state. The term legislature is a generic term meaning a body which legislates. The term 'Legg' means law and 'Lature', the place and etymologically legislature means a place for law making. It is the agency which has responsibility to formulate the will of the state and vest it with legal authority and force. In simple words, the legislature is that organ of the government which formulates laws. Another term, which

is used as a synonym of legislature, is parliament. Combining the two views, we can say legislature or parliament is that branch of government which performs the function of lawmaking through deliberations (Aladia, 2017) [3]. The power of parliament to amend the constitution and procedure is provided under Article 368 of the Constitution of India. According to Article 368 (1), the parliament has constituent power to amend by the way of addition, modification or repeal any provision of the constitution (Sood, 2017) [19]. "Although our Constitution has imposed some limitations... [It] has left our Parliament and the state legislature supreme in their respective fields. In the main, subject to limitations... our Constitution has preferred the supremacy of the legislature to that of the Judiciary... and the Court has no authority to question the wisdom or policy of the law duly made by the appropriate Legislature... and this is a basic fact which the Court must not overlook" (Singh & Vijay, 2013) [18].

In a parliamentary democracy system like India, the function of ministers is to act as the head of various departments, or ministries, of the executive part of the government. The ministers are in charge of carrying out government policy in its particular area. The minister typically helps to form government policy in his or her area and then tries to manage the ministry in such a way that these policies are carried out effectively. Ministers are also responsible for the carriage of any new legislation in Parliament relating to their area of responsibility. As rightly pointed out by Popoola, (2016) [17] that the main responsibility of the executive is to implement public policies and to supervise, coordinate and manage ministries, departments and agencies that are involved in the implementation of policies. The functions of council of ministers are to exercise legislative and budgetary functions. The council also formulates the policies and also implements them.

According to Adebayo, 2004, it is true fact to state that, with the emergence of modern states and the development of the presidential and parliamentary systems, the civil service evolved as the bed-rock of the executive arm of government. Its main task is simply implementation and execution of the policies decided by the legislature or those appointed to carry out the executive work of government. In accomplishing this task, the civil service has found itself involved in the formation of policy and advising generally on policy matters.

Bureaucracy is an integral part of executive in theory as well as practice. In the theoretical perspective, bureaucracy plays important role for making the future framework of policies and programs of the government (Kumar, 2017) [13]. Bureaucracy can be defined as a governmental system where government officials are responsible for developing vital decisions. India is a democratic country and regarding this, "elected representatives" are regarded as being responsible for maintaining legal procedures including the formation of laws and policies (Kumari and Bonganciso, 2022) [14]. The IAS is the topmost layer of the government bureaucracy in India, consisting of fewer than 5,000 officers in 2005. IAS bureaucrats' staff, the most important positions in district administration, state and central government secretariats, and state-owned enterprises. A particular important position is that of a district officer, who is responsible for ensuring law and order, providing certain judicial functions, organizing relief and rehabilitation in cases of natural disasters, implementing development

policies, and overseeing all aspects of administration in a specific district (Iyer & Mani, 2012) ^[10]. Political leaders are not experts but they are only the representative of the people, while permanent executives are experts and know every nook and corner of the government; in many cases the political leaders lack the required expertise and professional skills for developmental planning. Under these circumstances the role of senior administrator in the policy formulation for development becomes all the more important. The functions of senior administrators as conventionally recognized encompass the formulation of policy, co-ordination of administrative machinery. They are assisting in the preparation of legislative measures and to ensure the government decisions are properly implemented. They also advise on the financial and administrative implications of different policy alternatives (Warsi, 2012) ^[24]. The civil services guide the political executive, helping them in policy making by keeping in view the national interest and the welfare of the people (Agrawal, 2013) ^[2].

For a healthy democracy it is always considered essential that there should be a strong opposition. Opposition members are free to express their views on the programs, policies and conduct of the government. The role of opposition party in India is as important as that of the ruling party. They ensure that the acts of the ruling party are not detrimental to the interest of general public or nation at large. The opposition ensures that the ruling political parties have a definite programme and policy to offer to the people and who can show a progressive path by action and not just by propaganda (Bhat, 2018) ^[6]. The most important role of the opposition parties in India is that of a 'watchdog'. In fact, it holds the government accountable through close oversight of its functioning and making all shortcomings to public. It is for the opposition to expose misuse of powers and all acts of omission and commission must be highlighted. Criticism must always be well-informed and all the allegations duly substantiated. An active and constructive opposition is the best guarantee of a functional and healthy democracy (Murthy, 2022) ^[16]. In competitive multi-party politics, the party that is elected to form government seeks to enact into law a number of policies and programs (often times consistent with their election manifesto). Opposition parties are free to criticize the ruling party's policies, ideas and programs and offer alternatives (Kiiza, 2005) ^[11]. Their presence in the House provided a meaningful restraint on the policies of the ruling party and a healthy influence in the House. The ruling party was obliged to explain and justify its policies before putting them to practice or to explain the implications and results of those already approved of by the House. The opposition parties took upon themselves the task of bringing to light the 'misdeeds' of the ruling party and thereby endeavoured to erode its public image to build their own. They communicated public demands and aspirations to Government and advocated their own policies in preference to those of the ruling party to educate the electorate. They rendered, in this way, an invaluable service in deepening the roots of parliamentary democracy in India (Usmani, 1970) ^[23]. Thus, there is a strong role of the opposition in the parliament or legislative assemblies in strengthening and moulding the policies propounded by the government.

Conclusion

A safe, clean and healthy environment is needed for well-being and survival of human race. We should take care to keep our environment safe, clean and healthy. In this regard, one of the most effective ways to promote this will be through proper environmental education to all so that we can decide and act considering sound environmental principles. Politicians and government administrators have greater role in functioning a government and they have a key role in making government policies, framing rules and laws and its implementations. The roles of politicians and government administrators as the policy makers, law makers or implementing agents are crucial in the context of environmental protection and conservation. In order to make environmentally sound decisions and also to implement it effectively, politicians and government administrators should develop strong eco-spiritual and environmental ethical principles in them through environmental education. So, it is the need of the hour that politicians and government administrators should develop a pro-environment attitude in them through environmental education and take environmentally sound decisions for the protection of nature and environment.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of this paper.

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