

# Concept of Environmental Education

## Meaning:

Environmental Education (EE) is defined as education that helps individuals to become more knowledgeable about their environment and to develop responsible environmental behaviour and skills so that they can improve the quality of the environment. (UNESCO,1978)

## How people perceive Environment

Tani (2006) identified three different ways of how individuals view the environment, which include

- environment as an entity,
- as an experienced phenomenon,
- as a socially/culturally produced phenomenon

Shepardson et al. (2007) have argued that the way students conceive the environment shapes the ways in which they understand environmental issues and also shapes their behaviour.

Teachers' understanding of environmental education shapes their teaching practices.

### 1) Environment as an entity

When the environment is perceived as an entity, the environment is taken to be something which is not linked to man, but separate from man. Like the sun, the moon. This way of perceiving the environment can be referred to as the objective view of the environment.

### 2) Environment as an experienced phenomenon

In this view, environment is seen as a space which surrounds an individual, and the individual is at the centre of that space. This means it is a setting for man's life. This is a subjective view of the environment because it gives the notion that man has control over the environment.

### 3) Environment as a socially/culturally produced phenomenon

According to this view, man is an integral part of the environment and he shapes it through his/her social and cultural behaviour. This implies that knowledge about the environment depends on the understanding of man and his/her social and cultural aspects and not from the environment itself only.

#### DIMENSIONS OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Scholars of the environment like Fien (1993), Gough (1992), Tilbury (1995), Palmer (1998) and Palmer and Neal (1994) have suggested that, if environmental education is to be accepted as meaningful education, it needs to include three dimensions, which are

- Environmental Education as education about the environment
- Environmental Education as education in or through the environment
- Environmental Education as education for the environment

This implies that environmental education has to assume the role of helping the individual develop knowledge about his/her environment, which he/she can get through interacting with the environment, and finally he/she can use the knowledge and skills to conserve or take care of the environment.

