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June 2010

# Environmental science, its importance and integration

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## Recommended Citation

Alam, S. (2010, June 10). Environmental science, its importance and integration. Pamir Times. Gilgit-Baltistan.



## **[Opinion] Environmental science, its importance and integration**

**June 10, 2010. Pamir Times, Pakistan.**

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**by Sultan Alam for Pamir Times**

A bird's eye view on various syllabi in school curriculum shows that the term environmental science has been described one way or the other in different books. This area covers science subjects as well as other linguistic and geographical subjects. The various connections of these subjects make it difficult to understand what an environmental science is all about and how it plays its roles for the mankind. Sometimes its ambiguous temperament to differentiate between a science and art subject make it further doubts to understand it as its real meanings. My experiences as a science teacher, head of the schools and teacher educator also suggests that the confusion prevails among the teachers about this subjects which ultimately affects students learning.

If we consider the meaning of environment, it originates from “environ” which means to surround. So environmental sciences encompasses all the things which surround human beings either live or dead. In Biological perspectives these surrounding materials have been categorized as Biotic and Abiotic components. These all components are further grouped into chemistry, physics, medical science, life science, agriculture, public health, sanitary engineering and so on. To make the human life smooth and more meaningful, Environmental Sciences focus on the integration of all these subjects by signifying the interdependent roles with each other. If all these components are managed properly just like natural processes, there is sustainability everywhere while making human-made interruptions causes some ill aspect to life, generally termed as Pollution. This results if we could not wisely utilize the natural resources. For example, as the human population increases

day by day, human need shelter and other necessities to make life comfortable and remain safe by external tribulations. For that they deplete natural resources. The cutting of trees in our society is very common where people chop down many trees and convert the lands into barren areas. The less number of trees put a negative effect on natural processes as it obstructs the process of provision of oxygen naturally. On the other hand the Carbon Dioxide which was supposed to be converted by the plants remains in the air acting as a blanket over the earth surface; eventually increasing the temperature at down side earth. This phenomenon is generally termed as “Global Warming”. The whole world is facing serious consequences due to this issue. This international problem can be addressed within very few in-hand measures. The re-plantation of trees as alternate to used one is quite an effective way of overcoming such problem.

In our part, another problem which is linked to pollution is the inappropriate handling of rubbish material. It is a common practice that we just throw out the garbage after use. This garbage sometimes contains toxic materials and this ultimately goes into water courses and mixed with the running water. This makes the water unhealthier for drinking and those who come across such contaminated water become victims of many forms of water- borne diseases.

Based on the above shared examples it can understood that why environmental education is important and how can we spread the message of environmental education through integration of these subjects. This possesses certain questions to teachers, environmental organizations and other communities who are directly or indirectly concerned with environmental related areas. In this connection, there is strong need to convey the message to grass root levels. I propose that these are the schools who can serve as tools to convey real message of importance of environmental sciences and its management. This possesses another question for the teachers to integrate different subject wise knowledge to incorporate with the environmental education. For example, if a teacher teaches about wild animals, there is a need to explain the linkages of wild animals with the human beings; their beneficial and ill aspects. Such activities can help to think beyond the boxes and each step invites the students to understand the meaning in its real senses.

To conclude, environmental education is not a subject in isolation. This subject is strongly bonded with the other science and non-science based subjects which strongly emphasizes on the integration of all these disciplinary subjects to make a sustainable life. So now it is the need of the time to enhance such education and prepare certain measures to overcome the future consequences occurring due to improper environmental management practices.

*The contributor works as an instructor at Professional Development Center North (PDCN) of the Aga Khan University.*