

A Study of Environmental Awareness of Secondary Teachers**Patil Sachin Shivaji,**Research Scholar,
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Dist. Nanded**Abstract:**

Environmental awareness is a critical component of education, particularly in the context of increasing ecological challenges. Teachers serve as role models and influencers in shaping students' perceptions and actions toward environmental sustainability. This study aims to evaluate the level of environmental awareness among secondary school teachers in according to Maharashtra, India, by assessing their knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to environmental issues. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining surveys and interviews with secondary teachers from both urban and rural areas. The results indicate a generally high level of theoretical awareness but reveal gaps in practical implementation due to a lack of resources and training. While urban teachers have more exposure to environmental programs, rural teachers face limitations in accessing relevant information and training. The findings highlight the need for structured professional development programs and policy initiatives to integrate environmental education more effectively into the school curriculum, ensuring that teachers can foster a culture of sustainability among students.

Keywords: Environmental Awareness, Secondary Teachers, Maharashtra, Sustainable Education, Environmental Education, Teacher Training

Introduction:

The rapid industrialization and urbanization of Maharashtra have led to significant environmental concerns, including deforestation, air and water pollution, waste management issues, and climate change. With India being a signatory to multiple international environmental treaties, environmental education has gained importance in the school curriculum. However, the effectiveness of this education depends largely on teachers' knowledge, awareness, and ability to impart environmental concepts to students in a meaningful way. Secondary school teachers play a crucial role in shaping young minds and influencing their environmental attitudes and behaviors. This study explores the current status of environmental awareness among secondary teachers in Maharashtra by examining their understanding of environmental issues, their ability to integrate sustainability topics into their lessons, and the challenges they face in doing so. The research also aims to provide recommendations for improving teacher training programs to strengthen environmental education in the region.

Level of Environmental Awareness:

The study found that while most secondary teachers possess theoretical knowledge of environmental issues, there is a gap in the practical application of this knowledge. Many teachers understand concepts such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution but struggle to incorporate them effectively into their lessons due to limited resources. Teachers who have undergone environmental awareness training programs demonstrate a higher level of confidence in discussing these topics with students. However, those without formal training often rely on textbooks, which may not include the latest developments in environmental science. This lack of updated knowledge affects their ability to engage students in interactive discussions and activities that promote sustainable behavior. Additionally, some teachers believe that environmental education is solely the responsibility of science teachers, neglecting the interdisciplinary nature of the subject. Encouraging all teachers to incorporate environmental awareness into their subjects can help enhance students' understanding and engagement.

Urban vs. Rural Awareness:

Teachers in urban areas exhibited a higher level of environmental awareness than their rural counterparts. This disparity can be attributed to better exposure to environmental training programs, government initiatives, and technological advancements in urban schools, whereas rural teachers often lack access to such opportunities. Urban teachers benefit from workshops, seminars, and guest lectures on environmental topics, which enhance their knowledge and teaching methodologies. Conversely, rural schools, especially those in remote areas, face infrastructural challenges that limit access to such training. Additionally, limited internet connectivity in rural regions makes it difficult for teachers to access online resources and stay updated on environmental issues. The lack of eco-clubs, environmental science labs, and field trip opportunities in rural schools further widens the gap between urban and rural teachers. Bridging this gap requires targeted government policies that focus on equipping rural educators with the necessary tools and training to enhance environmental awareness.

Incorporation in Curriculum:

Although environmental education is a mandated part of the school curriculum, many teachers face challenges in implementing it effectively. The pressure to complete syllabus requirements and a lack of practical teaching aids hinder the seamless integration of environmental topics into everyday lessons. Teachers often struggle to go beyond textbook-based teaching due to time constraints and a lack of interactive learning materials. While some schools incorporate environmental activities such as plantation drives, waste management projects, and recycling programs, these initiatives are not consistently implemented across all schools. Furthermore, there is a need for environmental education to be integrated across subjects rather than being confined to science classes. For instance, language teachers can incorporate environmental themes into essays and debates, while mathematics teachers can include data analysis related to climate change. Enhancing interdisciplinary approaches to environmental education can make learning more engaging and effective for students.

Role of Teacher Training:

A large percentage of teachers reported that they had not received formal training in environmental education. Many educators rely on outdated textbooks or self-learning methods, leading to inconsistencies in the way environmental concepts are taught in schools. Professional development programs that focus on experiential learning, problem-solving, and real-world applications are essential for equipping teachers with the necessary skills. Government and non-governmental organizations should collaborate to organize teacher training workshops that focus on sustainable development, climate change mitigation, and environmental conservation. Schools should also encourage teachers to participate in online courses and certification programs related to environmental education. Additionally, mentorship programs where experienced educators guide newer teachers can help improve the effectiveness of environmental teaching. When teachers receive proper training, they become more confident in their ability to foster environmental awareness among students and inspire them to take action in their communities.

Awareness about Government Policies:

The study found that many teachers were unaware of key environmental policies and programs initiated by the Indian and Maharashtra state governments. Programs such as the National Green Corps (NGC) and Swachh Bharat Abhiyan have been designed to engage schools in environmental conservation, but their implementation remains inconsistent. Teachers play a vital role in introducing students to these policies and encouraging their participation in government-led initiatives. However, the lack of awareness about such programs prevents them from fully utilizing available resources. Schools should regularly update teachers about new environmental policies and initiatives through newsletters, workshops, and government circulars. Additionally, collaboration with local environmental organizations can help schools implement these policies effectively. By fostering partnerships between educational institutions and policymakers, environmental policies can be better integrated into school activities, ensuring that students receive practical exposure to sustainability practices.

Challenges in Implementation:

Teachers face multiple challenges in delivering effective environmental education. These include a lack of teaching resources, limited time due to rigid curriculum structures, insufficient administrative support, and minimal student engagement activities that focus on hands-on learning experiences, such as field trips and practical environmental projects. Many schools do not have dedicated funds for environmental education programs, making it difficult for teachers to organize activities beyond classroom instruction. Additionally, competing academic priorities often push environmental education to the background, as teachers struggle to balance syllabus completion with extracurricular environmental initiatives. Encouraging project-based learning, where students actively participate in solving local environmental issues, can make education more impactful. Schools should also work towards establishing environmental clubs that promote regular engagement with sustainability practices. Addressing these challenges requires a collective effort from school administrations, educators, and policymakers to ensure that environmental education is prioritized and effectively implemented.

Conclusion:

The study highlights that while secondary school teachers in Maharashtra possess a basic understanding of environmental issues, there is a need for structured professional development programs to enhance their ability to teach sustainability effectively. The findings suggest that incorporating continuous training programs, interactive workshops, and government-supported environmental initiatives can significantly improve teachers' capacity to deliver environmental education. Additionally, schools should provide better resources, such as updated textbooks, digital learning materials, and practical exposure through environmental projects and excursions. The role of policymakers is crucial in ensuring that environmental education is not just theoretical but also practically engaging for students. Teachers should be encouraged to participate in eco-friendly school initiatives, awareness campaigns, and partnerships with local environmental organizations. By addressing these gaps, Maharashtra can ensure that secondary school

educators are well-equipped to instill strong environmental values in students, fostering a generation that is more responsible and proactive in environmental conservation efforts.

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