

# Importance of Higher Educational Institutions in Addressing Environmental Challenges in District Kullu of Himachal Pradesh

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**Abstract-** The ever increasing population over the years and changing life styles are making the environmental problems more exaggerated and critical. Educational institutions can be the best solution to solve this situation. Education can play a crucial role in environmental conservation. Colleges and schools are the main implementing agencies in higher education system which provides environmental education through its curriculum, extra curriculum and through various clubs and societies. They can provide trained manpower and expertise to solve critical environmental problems in the societies. They can also act as good networking system and data collector. Government institutions in district Kullu are significant in achieving the goal of environmental conservation through various activities. The paper examines the efforts taken by the institutions and its students in environmental conservation in district Kullu. It also examines possibilities of creating healthy environment in view of growing tourist population and conservation of resources.

**Keywords:** Population, Environmental Problems, Conservation, Growing tourist Population

## INTRODUCTION:

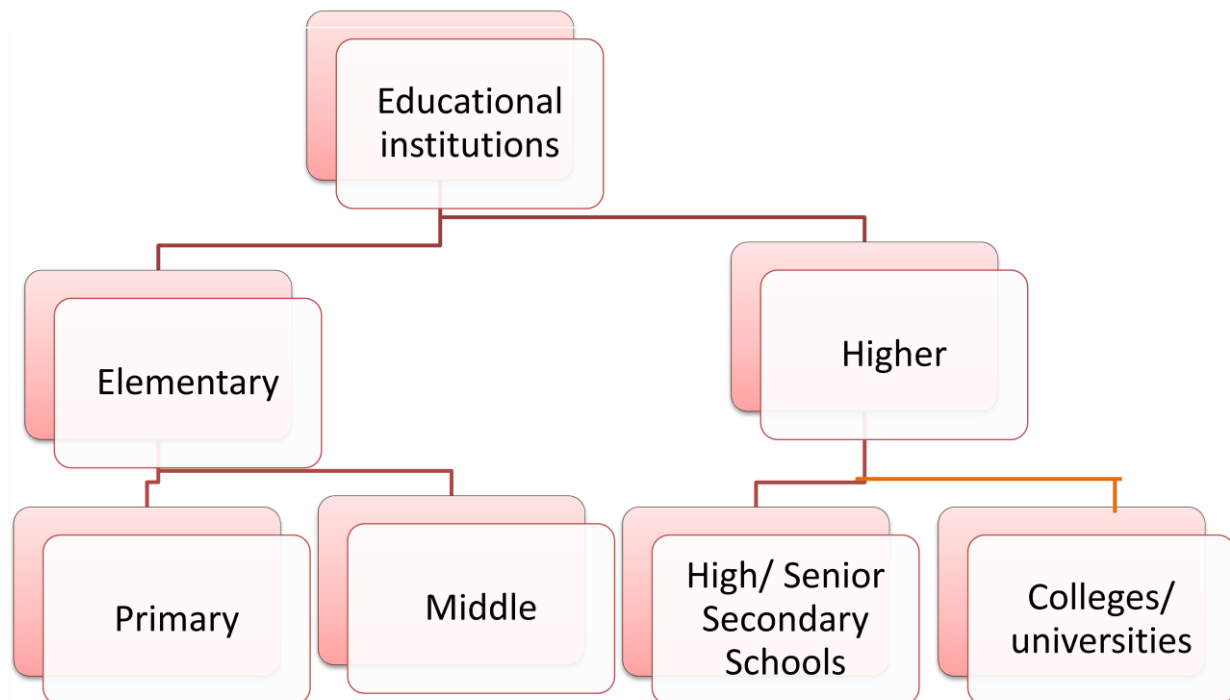
Education is an important aspect of human resource development. Education has been assigned a high priority in the development policy objectives in India. Education brings about substantial changes in the socio-economic and cultural life of the people of any region. The social benefits of education are far higher than its economic gains (Sengupta and Guha, 2002; quoted in Thakur, 2009: 66). According to Schumacher, "development does not start with goods, it starts with people and their education, organisation and discipline". Education is a gradual process of great subtlety (Biswas, 2008: 19). Education can be described as a unique process and play a vital role through which an individual learns about physical, mental and moral development in all respects. It determines psycho-physical traits of a person towards a certain desired goal of life. Education is, thus, definitely a personal work and will vary between wide extremes of effectiveness and is worth in any given society. In the words of **John Stuart Mill** "Whatever helps to shape the human being—to make the individual what he is, or hinder him from being what he is not—is part of his education."

It is widely held by social scientists that education has a significant role to play in everybody's life for it makes a person fit to realize the world around them and face the situation, whatsoever it may be, with practical and rational approach. According to **N K. Singh**, "Education helps in shaping the personality by creating conditions which sharpen the mental abilities and intelligence of an individual. At the pragmatic level education equips and trains a person to perform one's role adequately. An appropriate education system also cultivates knowledge, positive attitude, awareness and sense of responsibility towards rights and duties and imports inner strength to overcome oppression and inequality. At the time of Himachal Pradesh emergence as a separate state, it had only 4.9% literacy according to the census report of 1951. However this was far below the national average which was 16.5%. A number of causes contributed to the educational backwardness of the state were due to topographical climatology, technology and historical factors. It was also due to ignorance and poverty as the children at an early age could be engaged in agricultural work to add to the meagre family resources. But now, after 76 year of independence the literacy rate of Himachal Pradesh has grown to 82.80(Census of India.) this is due to the tremendous increase in the educational facilities in the state.

Education structure of Himachal Pradesh has been divided into three types:

- i.Primary Education
- ii.Elementary education
- iii.Higher Education

# Structure of Educational Institutions



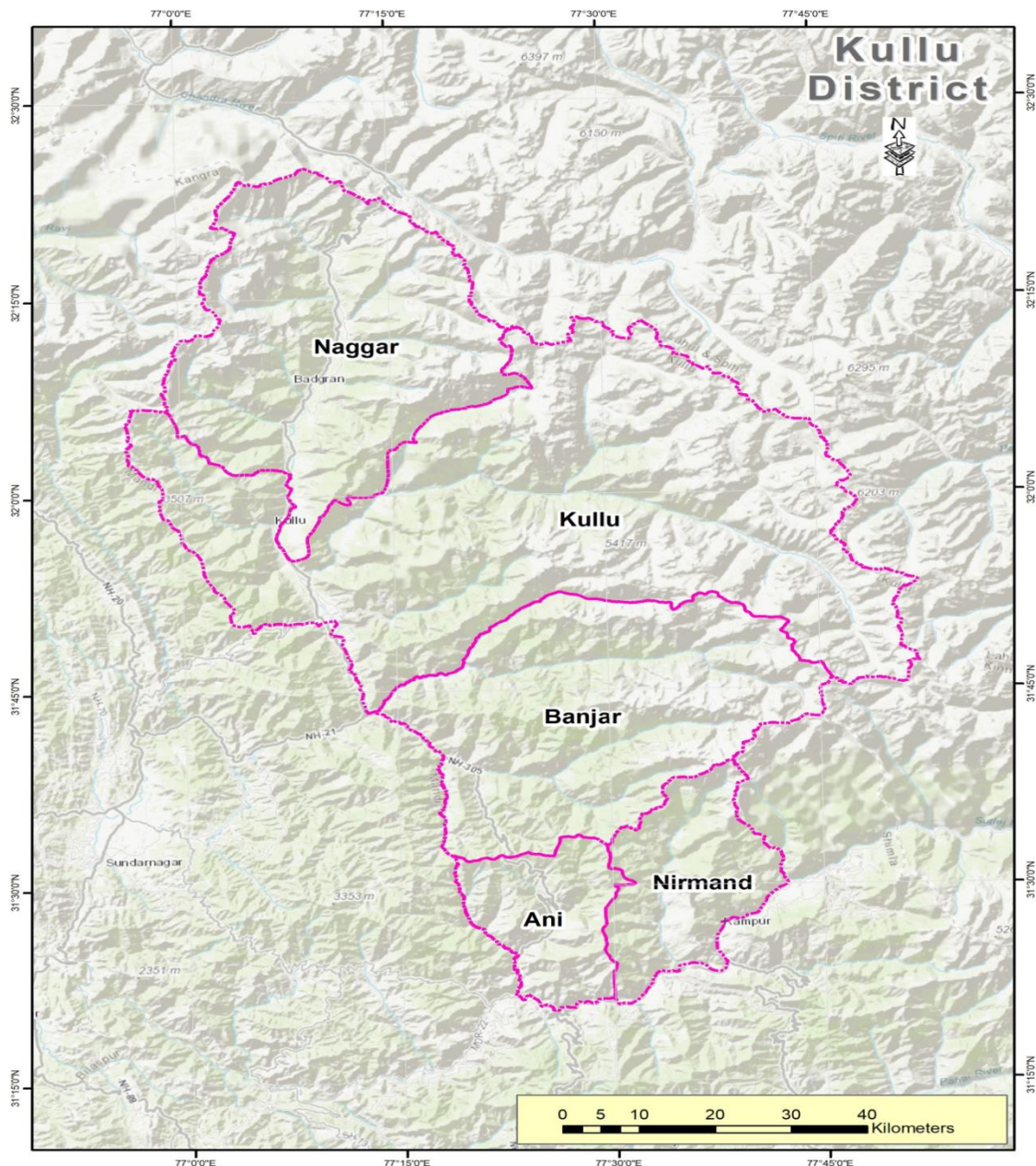
The environment has been the main topic of debate and discussion in the press as well as classrooms in each and every part of the world, and much has been discussed about the necessity to take action to protect this planet and provide awareness among people in this regard. Scientists predict that if climate changes continuously at the current trend then the temperature will increase at the rate of between 3 to 6 degrees Celsius 2050 (Perry, Low, Ellis & Reynolds, 2005). Education plays an important and essential role in increasing awareness of environmental problems and challenges by shaping the behaviour and attitudes that make a difference. To inculcate the value among students for protecting local environment educational institutions play an important role and it is also essential for sustainable development. For the development of environment consciousness in students, various curricular and co-curricular activities are included in the institution level to achieve the goal of environment protection and hence sustainable development.

In considering these issues, the objective of the study is to assess the role of educational institutions in inculcating the moral value and ethics towards environment among their students.

## Research Methodology:

The focus of the study is on district Kullu hence such institutions are selected, which are located in this district. The data for the study was collected from the government higher educational institutions. Annual report from various institutions were explored since 2018 and more than 200 students and teachers enquired about the curricular and extra co-curricular activities conducted in their institutions.

## Study Area



Source: Google

### Role of Educational Institutions in Environment Conservation

With the growing population and depleting environment, environmental conservation and sustainability is becoming an increasingly important issue for any nation of the world. The role of higher educational institutions in relation to environment conservation is becoming more and more prevalent. Every institution is independent in term of Geographical area, Culture and Traditions. They are familiar with their surroundings. They can use their Prevalent knowledge and trained man power to solve problems and issues related to the local level, as well as to the nation level. Educational institutions can help to protect the environment through following aspects:

- I. Teaching programmes
- II. Awareness
- III. Motivation to protect the environment
- IV. Sustainable use of local natural resources
- V. Mitigation of environmental pollution
- VI. Participation in environment conservation programmes

**I. Teaching programmes:** In the teaching programme, the framework of the curricula should cover the necessary information regarding environmental issues. The students should get acquainted with all the skills and information related to environment. The curriculum should motivate the students to participate and solve the environmental problems. According to Honorable Supreme court directives in 1991, Environmental Studies has become compulsory for all faculties at undergraduate degree level in India. These programmes can also play a crucial role in spreading the message of environmental conservation.

Government Degree Colleges situated in Himachal Pradesh offer environmental studies at first year for all the streams. It include under the category of Ability Enhancement Compulsory Course

## II Awareness:

One of the most significant roles of education institutions in relation to the protection and conservation of the environment is making everyone in the society aware of environmental issues. Education can stand as an instrument to provide comprehensive and complete awareness about environmental imbalances and other issues that day to day happen. Each and every member of a society including children, adults, and aged people, if they all get proper environmental education then they can know, understand and become aware of different issues of the environment (Patchen, 2006). Education gives knowledge regarding the functions of natural environment and knowledge of dealing of human beings with behaviour and ecosystems for sustainable development. Nowadays, various organizations and institutions use to conduct environmental awareness programmes in societies and schools. It brings awareness among people about environment-related issues, challenges, and problems and taking actions according to requirement. Higher education institutions will have to play a key role in controlling and reducing environmental imbalances. Its focus should be on the knowledge of sustainable development and measures of various environmental problems and issues.

**III Motivation to protect the environment:** the most significant role played by any institution is to motivate its students for becoming a good citizen and hence played a role for the protection of environment and their surroundings.

**IV Sustainable use of local natural resources:** Natural resources are central to human wellbeing. We cannot live without the clean air we breathe, the plants we eat, or the water we drink. We need natural resources to put roofs over our heads and heat our homes. We need them to survive and to thrive. The concept of natural resources refers to naturally occurring living and non-living elements of the Earth system, including plants, fish, and fungi, but also water, soil, and minerals. It is a well known fact that these resources are depleting and decreasing day by day hence education can play a prominent role for the sustainable use of local resources by inculcating the value in students about these natural resources. At the institution level following activities was observed:

- NCC, NSS and ECO Club spread the message of clean air, clean water, and clean environment.
- Institutions organized competitions and seminars to encourage students in the great green deeds.
- Students help institution to clean the campus.
- Institution has written slogans on the wall for the protection of natural resources
- A book bank for old books has created in the intuition for the students so that they can learn the optimum use of resources.
- Use of biodegradable plastic bags.

**V. Mitigation of environmental pollution:** with the environmental challenges popping up faster than expected organisation like united nations(UN) are calling for communities to build on their environmental awareness, and get more involved in the conservation efforts. Curricula of higher education improve the knowledge of students about environment and thus help them to understand various ways for mitigation of environmental pollution. At the institution level students use different dustbins for different type of waste. Students of botany grow plants in used plastic bottles while the students of chemistry have their own waste management system. Recycle and reuse of waste material by making some ornamental things.

## VI. Participation in environment conservation programmes:

At the institution level NCC, NSS, Eco-Club, Green Energy Club, Rovers and Rangers and Red Ribbon Club actively participate in the environment conservation programme started by the government. All these clubs actively participated in 'Van- Mahotsav' celebrated every year in the monsoons. They also participated in the schemes started by centre government and state government also. One of such scheme is "Vidyarthi Van Mittar Yojana."which was implemented through the students of educational institutions.

## Conclusion:

The higher education institution has the great potential to deal with different environmental issues. They are the prestigious institution of the state government which helps to achieve the goal of sustainable development. These institutions with their teachers and staff members are continuously engaging their students in environment protection and conservation.

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## Appendix

### COURSE: ENVS2AECC2 ENVIRONMENT SCIENCE (THEORY)

**Year end Examination: 100 marks**

Note: The Examiner will set a total of nine (9) questions covering all topics/units of the prescribed course by setting at least two questions from each unit. Out of the nine questions, one question containing ten (10) short-answer type questions of two marks each that will cover entire course will compulsory. The candidate will attempt a total of five questions (one from each unit) including the compulsory question. All questions will carry equal marks.

#### Unit 1

Introduction to environmental studies & Ecosystems: Multidisciplinary nature of environmental studies: Scope and importance; what is an ecosystem? :Structure and function of ecosystem, Energy flow in an ecosystem, food chains, food webs and ecological succession, Forest ecosystem, Grassland ecosystem, Desert ecosystem, Aquatic ecosystems; Levels of biological diversity: genetic, species and ecosystem diversity, Biogeographic zones of India, Biodiversity patterns and global biodiversity hot spots, India as a mega-biodiversity nation, Endangered and endemic species of India, Threats to biodiversity, Habitat loss, poaching of wildlife, man-wildlife conflicts, biological invasions, Conservation of biodiversity, *In-situ* and *Ex-situ* conservation of biodiversity, Concept of sustainability and sustainable development.

**(20 Periods)**

#### Unit 2

Natural Resources & its management and conservation: Land resources and land use change: Land degradation, soil erosion and desertification; Deforestation: Causes and impacts due to mining, dam building on environment, forests, biodiversity and tribal populations; Water: Use and over-exploitation of surface and ground water, floods, droughts, conflicts over water (international & inter-state); Energy resources : Renewable and non renewable energy sources, use of alternate energy sources, growing energy needs, case studies.

**(15 Periods)**

#### Unit 3

Environmental Pollution & Management: Environmental pollution: types, causes, effects and controls; Air, water, soil and noise pollution, Solid waste management: Control measures of urban and industrial waste. Climate change, global warming, ozone layer depletion, acid rain and impacts on human communities and agriculture. Environment Laws: Environment Protection Act, Air (Prevention & Control of Pollution) Act, Water (Prevention and control of Pollution) Act, Wildlife Protection Act, Forest Conservation Act; International agreements: Montreal and Kyoto protocols and Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); Nature reserves, tribal populations and rights, and human wildlife conflicts in Indian context.

**(15 Periods)**

#### Unit 4

Environment & Social Issues: Human population growth: Impacts on environment, human health and welfare; Resettlement and rehabilitation of project affected persons; case studies; Disaster management: floods, earthquake, cyclones and landslides; Environmental movements: Chipko, Silent valley, Bishnois of Rajasthan; Environmental ethics: Role of Indian and other religions and cultures in environmental conservation; Environmental communication and public awareness, case studies

**(10 Periods)**

#### Suggested Readings:

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