



Values and Assumptions in Environmental Education in India and the United States

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Background:

In attempting to parse out the meaning behind the highly mystified term "environment", one must necessarily look at the encounters of environmental education. Be it the lesson on the economy, ethical obligations to non-humans or subsistence farming, the ways in which actors such as the United States and India frame the environment reveal insights into the values and assumptions made by those who write excellence standards of environmental education and those who teach environmental education.

Discussion:

In an attempt to see how each country manages these concerns, my thesis employs a dual methodology that systematically analyzes the environmental education of each nation, state and school. My data was most robust when comparing schools and the state standards they work within. The biggest differences in values and/or assumptions are between India and the United States as a whole.

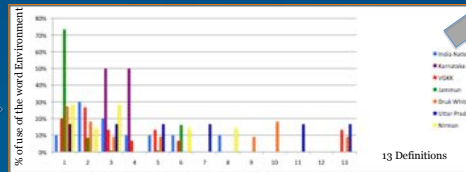
Oxford English Dictionary | environment, n.
 a) The area surrounding a place or thing, the environs, surroundings, or physical context.
 b) The physical surroundings or conditions in which a person or other organism lives, develops, etc., or in which a thing exists; the external conditions in general affecting the life, existence, or propagation of an organism or object.
 c) With modifying words: a particular set of surroundings or conditions which, in general, either as a whole or within a particular or geographical area, are affected by human activity.
 d) Free, with the: The natural world or physical surroundings in which a person lives, esp. with respect to their effect on behaviour, attitudes, etc.; (with modifying word) a particular set of such circumstances.
 e) The social, political, or cultural circumstances in which a person lives, esp. with respect to their effect on behaviour, attitudes, etc.; (with modifying word) a particular set of such circumstances.

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|---|--|
| 13 Uses of the Word Environment | 7) Self sufficiency (food, water, energy) |
| 1) Resource consciousness and perpetuating | 8) Subsistence (small is beautiful, mom and pop) |
| 2) Ecosystem functionality /Outdoors focus (plants streams animals air) | 9) Ethical obligations to non-humans |
| 3) Human impact /Degradation | 10) Social concerns/Need for economic development |
| 4) Anti-industrial | 11) Environmental Justice/ Human Equity |
| 5) Bioregionalism /Indigeneity | 12) Built environment as part of the environment |
| 6) Hyper localism | 13) Technological innovation to solve environmental problems |

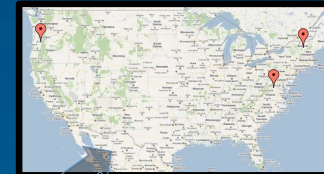
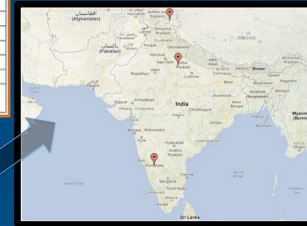
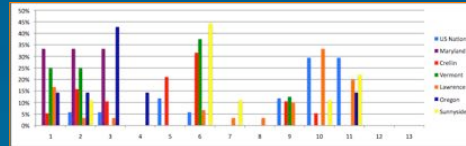
Frequency of Use of Different Definitions

	Total Usage	A)	B)	C)	D)	E)
US National	29		6.9%		93.1%	
Maryland	14	21.4%	57.1%	7.1%	14.28%	
Cecilia	16				100%	
Vermont	13		30.76%	7.69%	61.5%	
Lawrence	12				91.6%	8.4%
Oregon	3				100%	
India National	9	16.6%	16.67%	16.67%	51.94%	
Karnatak	10		10%		40%	50%
VGKK	13		7.7%	7.7%	76.3%	7.7%
Jammun	8				100%	
DWLS	15	6.7%	6.7%	13.4%	66%	13.4%
UttarPrad	15				93.3%	6.6%
Nirman	7				100%	

India's National, State, and Local % Use of the Word Environment



US's National, State, and Local % Use of the Word Environment



Results: Compared to India, the US holds more importance in teaching topics 10) and 11) which are social concerns, need for economic development and human equity. India doesn't mention the need for economic development or environmental justice. India's main national interests are spread out relatively equally across 1) resource consciousness, 2)ecosystem functionality and health, and 3) human impact and degradation.

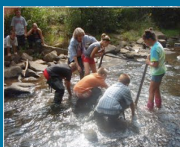
Compared to the environmentally focused schools, national US standards are not too different. The meaningful differences occur between the schools and the state level standards they are held to. The schools are much more diverse in their topics than the states which each only focus on about 3 of the 13 environmental categories per state.

Compared to the schools in India, the nation reflects a similarly diverse range of topics including 5) hyper localism and 10) social concerns. The states use less diversity and a high interest in 2)ecosystem function and 3) human impact and anti-industrialism.

6 Case-Study Schools:



Nirman:
A holistic, not-for profit school located in Varanasi in Northern India.



Crellin:
A magnet school within a public school system located in Oakland, Maryland in Northeast of the US.



VGKK :
A tribal school within a tribal community located in the Southeast in Karnataka, India.



Sunnyside:
A public school with approval to write their own environmentally themed curriculum in the Pacific Northwest in Portland, Oregon, in the US.



Lawrence Barnes:
A magnet school within the public school system with a sustainability theme, located in Burlington Vermont, US.



Druk White Lotus:
Exists under the patronage of his holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, located far north in the region of Jammun & Kashmir, India.



Implications: Save for a few examples in India, the built environment, or where people live, is not considered part of the environment across both countries at all levels. This has implications that humans are not considered part of the environment. Another interesting result is how the US as a whole projects rhetoric of the ethical obligations towards non-humans on all levels and only one school, VGKK school in India, mentions it. Ethical considerations for animals tends indicate the exclusion of humans as part of natural. At the national level, America focuses on social justice and the importance of economic growth and social science issues relating to the environment. This reflects a belief that the environment is a social science. No state level standards from either country save for Uttar Pradesh consider the environment a social science and treat the environment as a science when teaching it, like ecosystems, air, water and pollution. "Science has achieved success by dividing problems into parts and addressing them one at a time, but such a strategy is not possible when trying to understand the effect of environmental change on human societies: the problems affect, in multiple ways and at every stage of their perception, the subjects who are suppose to stay outside and solve them". Haila, Yrjo, and Lassi Heininen, "A New Discipline for Disciplining?" *JSTOR*. N.p, n.d. Web.