

## ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM: A STUDY ON COX'S BAZAR, BANGLADESH

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***Abstract:** Several studies on the factors that promote environmental behaviour have found the importance of environmental education. In line with that, this article discusses the changes that may be brought on by developing new change maker models relating to the Environmental Education (EE). This study has been conducted by using some qualitative research methods such as FGD ( Focus Group Discussion), interview and observation. In addition, some secondary data sources have been used as a foundation to develop the new models of providing environmental education to the stakeholders. The models are representing various way to spread the knowledge of EE which can act as a plot of pursuit for future research on environmental education and management. Eventually, the tourism sector in natural areas, for instance, Cox's Bazar will be sustainable enough to serve generations after generations. The purity and beauty of tourism attractions will be ameliorated to a greater extent if all the stakeholders are aware of the environmental protection which is to be implemented through the supports of policy makers of both government and non- government levels.*

***Keywords:** Environmental Education, Change Maker Models, Sustainable Tourism, Stakeholders, Behaviour.*

### Introduction

Environmental education enhances critical-thinking, problem-solving, and effective decision making skills. Individuals are taught to weigh various sides of an environmental issue to make informed and responsible decisions. Environmental education does not advocate a particular course of action (Knapp, 1998). Education is important because it helps to ensure environmental sustainability. Education helps people to make decisions that will satisfy the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations (Selvi, 2004). Sustainable environment and growth can only be achieved through the integration of policies that connect the environment, the economy and the society (Attah, 2010).

Cox's Bazar is a town, a fishing port and district headquarters in Bangladesh. It is known for its wide sandy beach which is the world's longest natural sandy sea beach. It is an unbroken 125 km sandy sea beach with a gentle slope. Coastal eco-systems are complex, sensitive and subject to influences of nature as well as human interference. The Cox's Bazar coastal zone of Bangladesh has had great importance since long for the richness of its natural resources. However, in terms of recent development efforts<sup>1</sup>, the coastal zone has been unkempt. It is indispensable to diagnose the coastal issues and appraise the

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needs of the coastal communities through the bottom-up approach for more rough research and facilitate the construction of the sustainable management plan with proper environmental education. However, people now a days are prone to enjoy the Inani beach leaving some of Cox's Bazar places. There are a number of shops near the beaches. People are collecting snails and other resources from there and the areas are being less enjoyable. However, by providing environmental education, negative features of tourism can be curtailed in Cox's Bazar.

### **Literature review**

Environmental education cannot be regarded as an area of study. It is a lifelong process that infuses in various other fields of study. Environmental education should be seen from a multidisciplinary perspective. It can be thought of having three linked constituents: firstly, education about the environment which deals with the enhancement of knowledge. The environment is an issue of investigation. Secondly, education for the environment which emphasizes the need to instill values so as to create a proenvironmental concern. This develops attitudes which generate responsibility towards sustainable living. Finally, it emphasizes on education through the environment (Department of Education and Science, 1981; Gayford, 1987).

According to the United States Environmental Agency (EPA) (n.d), EE is the procedure that allows individuals to sight-see environmental issues, engage in problem-solving, and take action to progress the environment. As a result, individuals develop a deeper understanding of environmental issues as well as the skills to make well-versed and responsible decisions. EE does not advocate a particular viewpoint or course of action. Rather, EE teaches individuals how to weigh various sides of an issue through critical thinking and it enhances their own problem-solving and decision-making skills (Agbor, 2016). Along with general doctrines of education (scientific character, fundamentality, evolutionary nature, historicity, integrity, systematic approach, interdisciplinary character, humanism, practical orientation, etc.) the content and approaches of environmental education and education for sustainable development are based on the following key principles: sustainability, prevention, environmental, economic, social (Kasimov, Malkhazova, & Romanova, 2002).

The development of private (paid) education, alongside Bangladesh's public (free) governmentally supported education is remarkable. Therefore, within this comparatively new system of multi-level higher education in Bangladesh, education for sustainable development has many opportunities for developing and this has already begun (Kasimov, Malkhazova, Romanova and Chalkley, 2002). Environmental education at university level in recent times may generate four principal roles or spheres which are intersected and of identical importance. The preparation of elementary and secondary teachers, university-level faculty and wider staff in the field of environmental education is also significant (Kasimov et al., 2002).

Moreover, the natural environment is an important resource for tourism. Several rural areas, in both industrialised and developing countries are becoming increasingly popular sites of tourism destinations. One source of the problem has surely been the absence of a comprehensive measure of tourism's socio-economic and environmental impact (Zappino, 2005).

Tourism industry is straightly connected to the environment. The quality of the environment, both natural and man-made, is essential to tourism. However, the correlation of tourism with the environment is complex. It involves many activities that can have adverse environmental effects (Ghulamrabbany, 2013). Tourism expansion creates both positive and negative impacts on the destination area, Cox's Bazar and the host country, Bangladesh. It is a good source of revenue for Bangladesh and vital to its economy (Ahammed, 2010).

In other words, environmental protection may enhance business performance if voluntary practices could differentiate mass-market holiday packages and allow companies to compete on more than price alone. Environmental practices may lead to commercial advantage if adopted proactively rather than in response to market demand for ethical or green products. However, change may accelerated by labeling 'green' or 'sustainable' tourism as 'quality' tourism and by acknowledging that populist market demand may lead to stereotypical approaches to ecotourism not helpful to equitable development (Stabler, 1997).

However, tourism destinations in Bangladesh are enticing thousands of tourists every year from all around the globe. There are many popular tourist destinations. Among them, Cox's Bazar is considered as one of the most extensively visited tourist destinations in Bangladesh but there is not been enough research, planning, advertisement and execution for ensuring environmental education to the stakeholders for the development of this area. If it continues this way, it is not possible to save this beautiful region from man-made destruction and nature-made obliteration in future. Therefore, the practices of sustainability should be started there as soon as possible.

### **Objective**

The objective of this study is to ensure the engagement of target groups in environment-friendly action by formulating some models and thereby inculcation of proper attitudes towards the environment and its conservation through community interactions which might come into reality of sustainable development of tourism sector in Cox's Bazar. Therefore, this study is for the purpose of:

- \* Participating and promoting environmentally sustainable practices through the utilization of proper models.
- \* Creating environmental awareness among masses by spreading the ideas and implementing the models of providing EE to all the related parties.

### **Methodology**

This study is qualitative in nature. To fulfill the research motto a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) comprising of 15 members was held with the leading tourism experts and environmentalists. In addition, interviews were conducted with local tourists, local people, local government and service providers to find the ins and outs and the sample size was 30 for individual segment of respondents respectively. Secondary data is collected from online sources, books, journals, magazines and so on. One of the prominent research methods was observation which fulfills the intention of witnessing behaviors in case of environmental preservation and representation as a whole. Four

learning outcomes from identified stakeholders are taken into consideration to develop EE models which can be applicable for any tourism destination.

### **Outcome and Implications**

The models are inferring to the different method to spread the information of EE which can go about as a plot of interest for future research on environmental instruction and administration inevitably the tourism division will be sufficiently maintainable to serve generations.

1. It would come up as a distinct contribution to the environmental education research by illuminating out the leash between environmental education and overall sustainable tourism development by amalgamation of models efficiently.
2. The development of policies through this research must be regarded as theoretical achievement which can be used in other tourism areas in Bangladesh.
3. The policy makers of the country can utilize the outcome of this research in the policy and planning of sustainable tourism advancement with predominant leaps.
4. This plot of pursuit can act as a foundation also for the posterior research of EE as well as tourism destinations in Bangladesh.

Thus, the immaculateness and excellence of tourism attractions will be enhanced to a more prominent degree if every one of the partner knows about the natural preservation which is to be actualized through the backings of policy makers of both government and non-government levels.

### **Results and Discussions**

Education is one of the prime issues for sustainable tourism. Without knowing the proper use of environmental resources it is impossible to maintain proper sustainable use of those resources. In our country, Cox's Bazar is one of the important places for tourism. But abuse of resources turn the place into its maturity stage but is a matter of surprise that the tourism history of Cox's Bazar is nothing very old. The main reason is the lack of proper education.

The service providers are not concern about tourism. They see tourism as a profit generating sector that is why only use it in wrong ways. The local is another part of tourism component. Most of them saw tourism as an engine of growth while another group viewed it as a vulture destroying cultures. So, it is a contradictory part of tourism development. Only proper environmental education can make them aware of tourism as well as sustainable tourism.

Tourist is the most important component of environmental education. Most of the times the tourist are not aware of the culture of the local community as well as how they use resources or in which manner. So that it is necessary to educate all the component of tourism parties. In every tourist destination, there are four parties who are directly related to the tourism business. They are: Tourist, Service Provider, Local Community and Govt.

& Other Organizations.

It is necessary for those parties to have proper knowledge about the environment. This can be done through the process of environmental education. Education is a continuing process that means all people can learn anything from the situation of life. Hence, there is no hesitation in learning anything new. It is to build such kind of mentality at first among the people. Then, it is imperative to ensure separate forms of education for all those parties because it is tough to accumulate all the parties at the same time and in same places with the same methods. On the other hand, they need a distinct type of education in a different way. There are some processes of learning which imply the core intentions to conduct the study. The research has been carried out to develop four models for providing EE to all the stakeholders of Cox's Bazar.

**a. Model for Providing Environmental Education to Locals**

The local people can be provided with EE if they are shown their benefits. Obviously, they have to be provided with another market place for their business if we want to make them leave the beach area. The government especially the local government can arrange social awareness programs to foster environmental preservation. When locals will be more financially benefitted then they will go for implementing Environmental conservation rules.

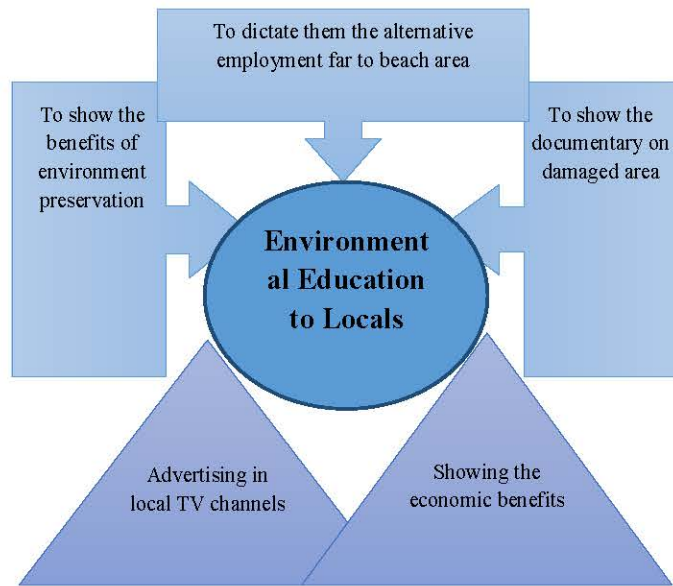


Figure 1: Model for Providing EE to Locals  
Source: Authors' Compilation



**b. Model for Providing Environmental Education to Tourists: domestic and International**

International tourists can be made knowledgeable during their flight to Bangladesh. The domestic tourists are to be made conscious through orientation programs, seminars, award giving and so on. The summary of Providing Environmental Education to Tourists is represented in the following model:

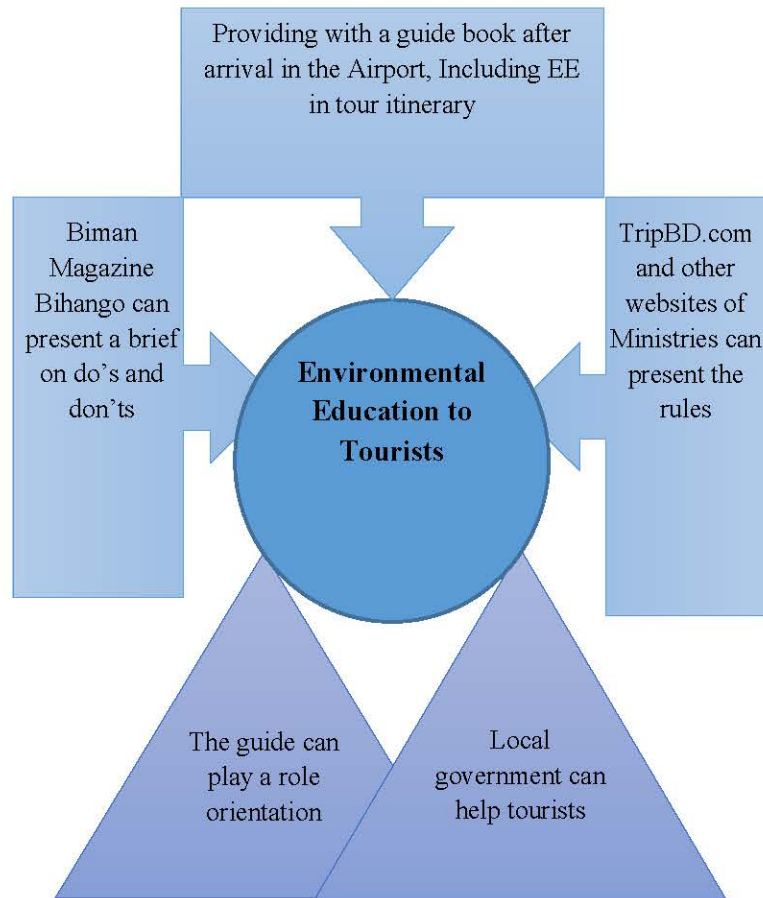


Figure 2: Model for Providing EE to Tourists  
Source: Authors' Compilation

**c. Model for Providing Environmental Education To Service Providers**

The service providers are destination managers, tour operators, travel agency, hotel, resort managers and others. They can be made aware by making them understand the importance of environmental preservation for their long-term business. BBS (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics), National Tourism Organizations, NGO's all should come forward to sustain the development efforts.

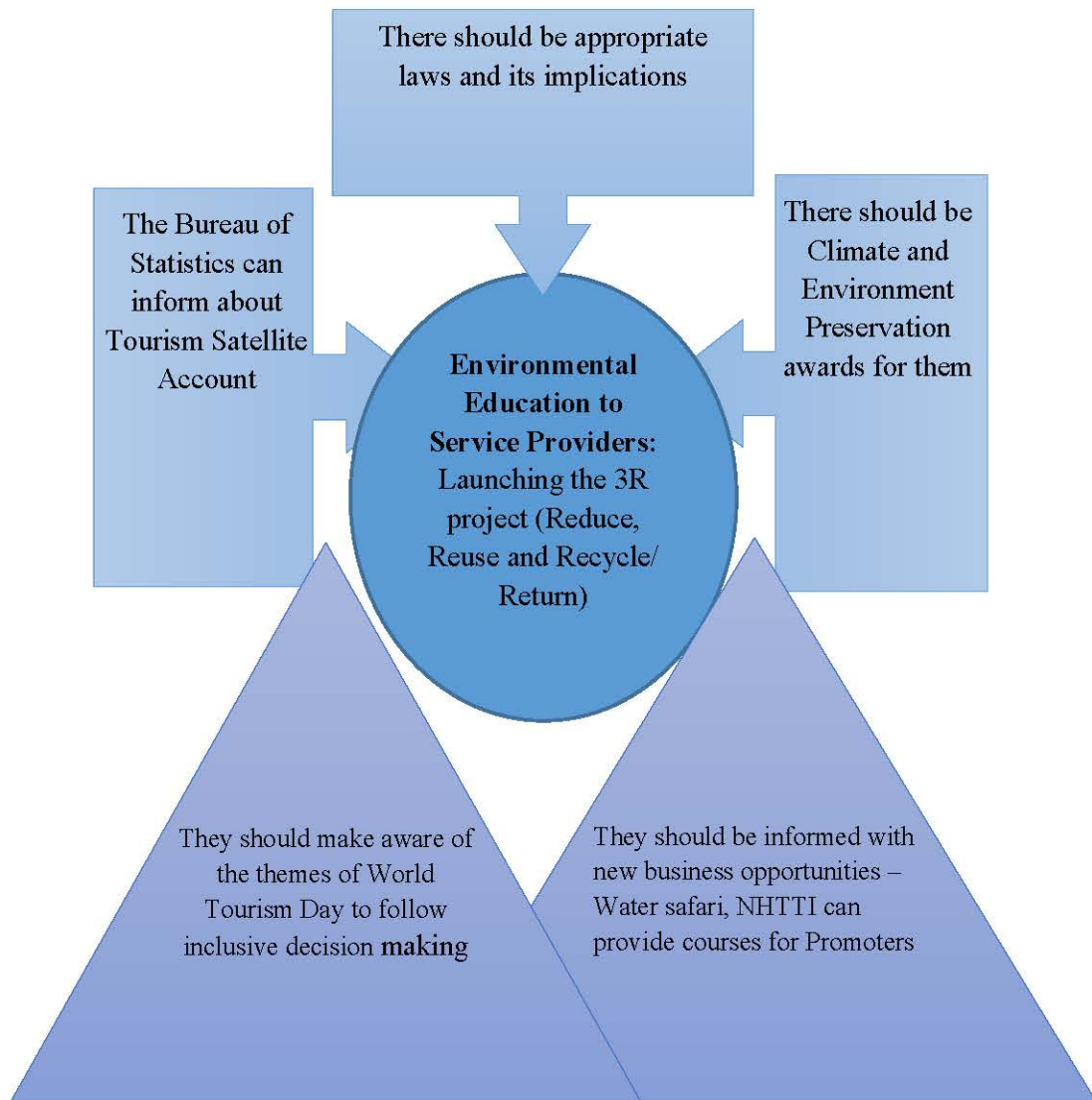


Figure 3: Model for Providing EE to Service Providers  
Source: Authors' Compilation

**d. Model for providing Environmental Education to Local Government**

Government plays a vital role in the awareness of the environment and to make it sustainable. They can apply and create some laws and regulations so that we can get a better environment to live. In this research, a model is prepared to educate them properly. Through following the model, local and central government people and authorities as well as leading personnel can be well aware of environmental protection.

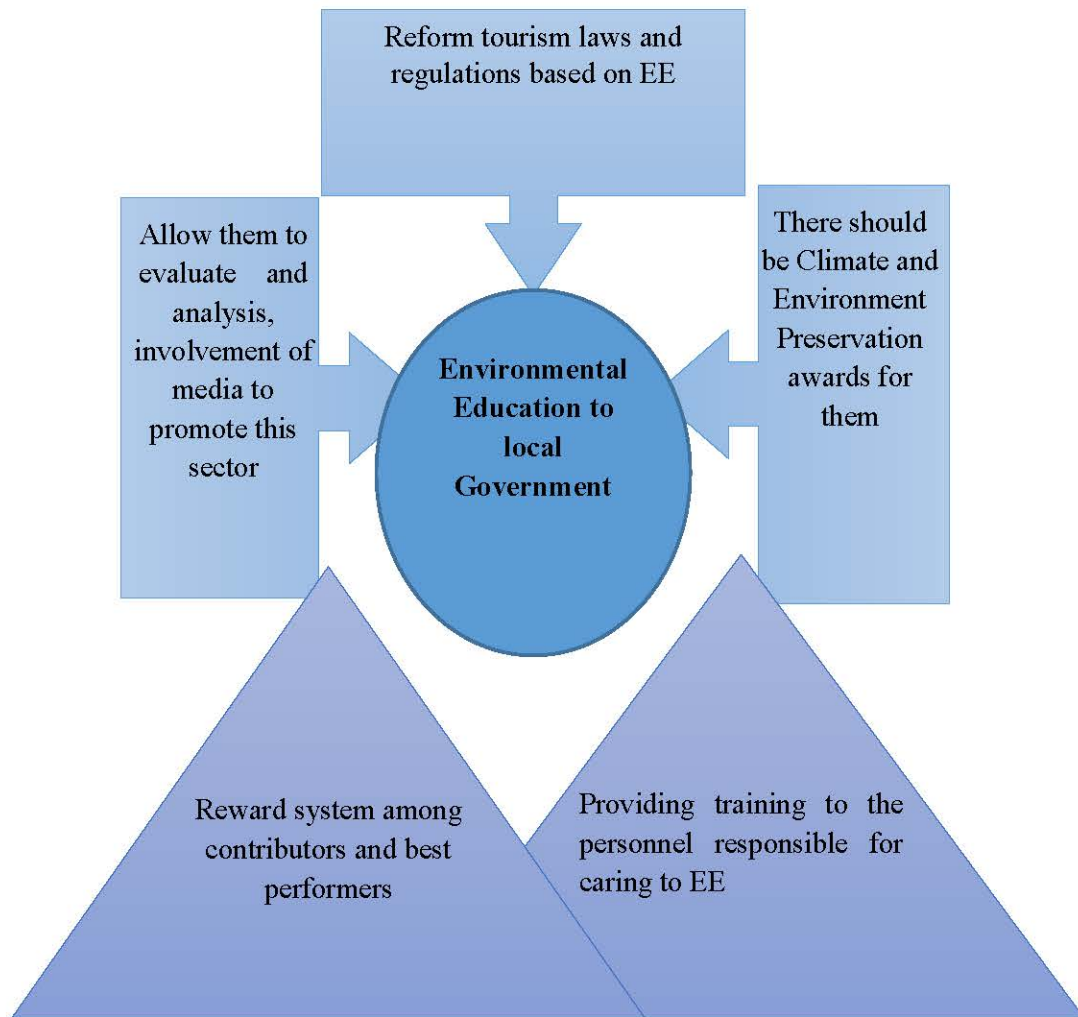


Figure 4: Model for Providing EE to Local Government  
Source: Authors' Compilation

**e. Integrated Model of providing EE to all the stakeholders**

To ensure environmentally educated community, people of all spheres of life should be provided with at least basic knowledge of environmental preservation and beautification. In case of tourism advancement, special efforts are to be vested. The policy makers and leading personnel might require a clear integrated model for providing EE to the four parties who are associated directly with tourism functions. This integrated model could be of a great value to spread the knowledge and to notify some tools to deliver EE to all at the same time. In a nutshell, the integrated model is presented hereby as a form of conceptual framework:



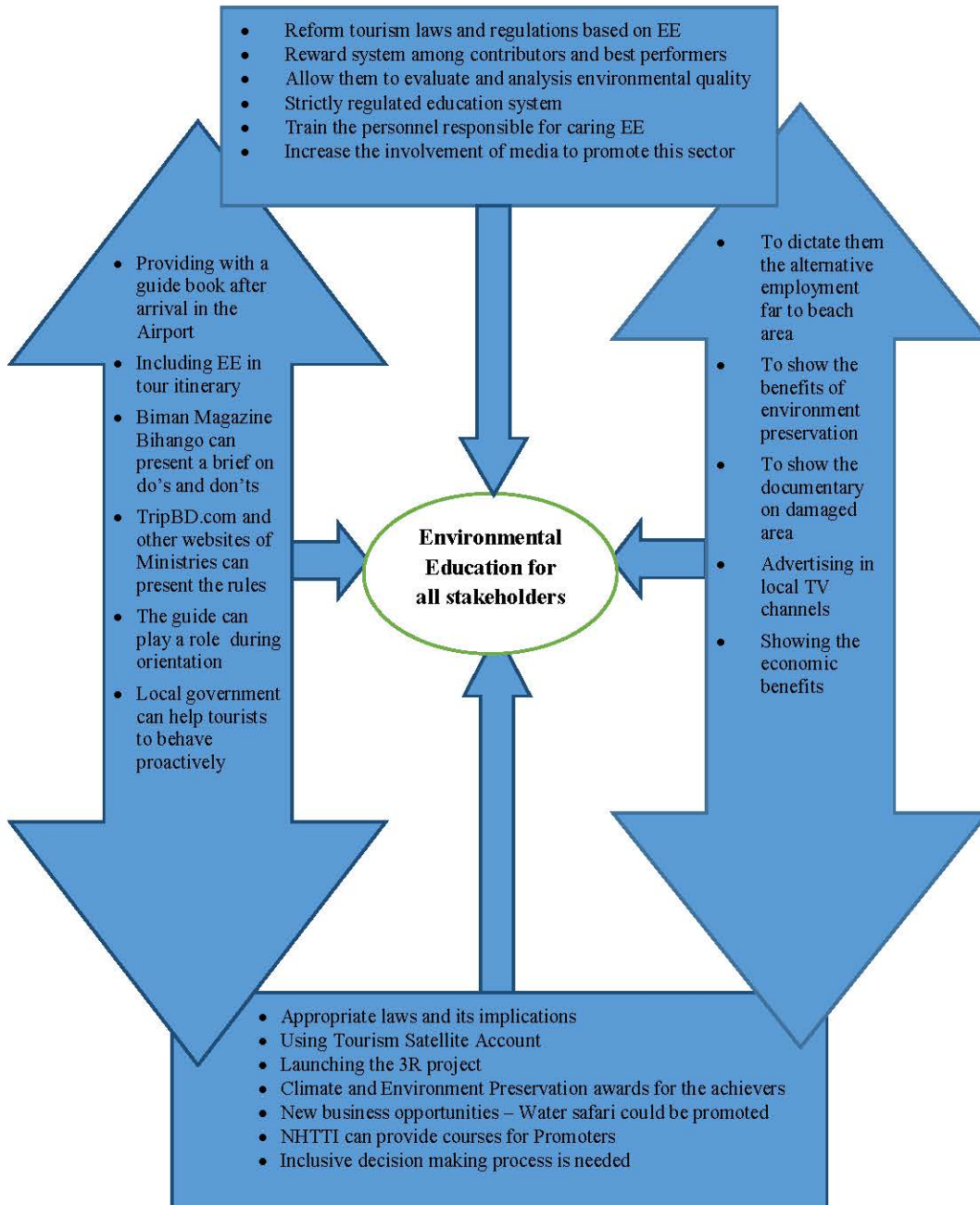


Figure 5: Integrated Model of providing EE to the stakeholders  
Source: Author's Compilation

### Recommendation

A program can be launched named “Zero Environmental Damage” with the following objectives:

- To raise awareness among people through arranging seminars in different schools, institutions.
- To mitigate unsustainable behavior.
- Therefore, with some following points, it will be easier to implement the proposed models.
- The country should build schools providing environmental education.
- At every level of education inclusion of EE subjects are to be ensured.
- Local community should become concern to make tourism sustainable.
- Service provider, government and tourist should be knowledgeable and trained.
- We have to gather and analyze all the current information which has impact on environment.
- We have to build a good communication circle.
- Parents have to make their children involved in environment protection from their childhood by participating program based on environment and tourism.
- Everyone should practice from now on to prevent pollution and make tourism sustainable.

### Conclusion

On one side, since environmental education is a process, it cannot in itself improve the environment, such as by enhancing local air or water quality. Instead, environmental education provides the capability and skills over time to analyze environmental issues, engage in problem-solving, and take action to sustain and improve the environment. As a result, individuals are more capable of weighing various side of an environmental issue to make informed and responsible decisions. On the other side, the stakeholders can organize camping through tours annually. Holistic approach and dedicated involvement of all the stakeholders to make the longest sea beach are the key to confirm the sustainable development of tourism in this area. Thus, it is possible to implement think global, act local concept and for going a long way of providing Environmental Education to the concerned bodies on a regular basis.

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