

Chapter 9

Building Resilience to Climate Change at Local Levels: The Role of Education

Mphemelang Joseph Ketlhoilwe
University of Botswana, Gaborone

ABSTRACT

Climate change impact is calling for international attention and collaborative efforts through multilateral and bilateral agreements to reduce it. It is a complex environmental problem that is not only naturally induced but made more stressful by anthropocentric capabilities in the quest for better lifestyles. Although climate change causes and impact are known, its mitigation strategies are compounded by human wants at the expense of their own sustainable survival. This chapter explore different ways of promoting climate change awareness through environmental education. It is important to accompany all climate change awareness efforts by recognition of local ecological knowledge that promote resilience as well as engage in research to enhance sustainable development in local communities.

INTRODUCTION

Climate change is recognized by international and regional organisations such as the United Nations and its organs as a global problem transcending social, economic and environmental discourses. Its impact is calling for international attention and collaborative efforts through multilateral and bilateral agreements. It is a complex environmental problem that is not only naturally induced but made more stressful by anthropocentric capabilities in the quest for better lifestyles. Although climate change causes and impacts are known, its mitigation strategies are compounded by anthropogenic drive at the expense of sustainability and human survival. Human beings continue to explore new knowledge and technologies that has negative impact on the resources and adding substances to the atmosphere causing increased temperatures and varied climatic conditions. Although mitigation and adaptation approaches and strategies are attempted, there are far exceeded by the damages caused and human induced constraints to succeed in their implementation. Climate change awareness could be one of the vital tools through

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environmental education to enhance both adaptation and mitigation capabilities. Education is capable of fostering the creation of capabilities and appropriate knowledge to enable local communities to adapt to climate change. It can help communities re-consider their contribution to damages associated with climate change regardless of their geographical position or wealth. Education is capable of enhancing the knowledge, skills to adapt, and to establish a greater responsibility especially in more vulnerable location such as those in Africa. Climate change awareness could be promoted through action oriented policy implementation at local levels. This could be at local community, or school levels.

The focus of this chapter would be at local community level. Insights are drawn from different parts of the world where empirical evidence demonstrated the role of education to promote community resilience. The purpose of this chapter is to explore how environmental education could enhance community climate change awareness. It draws from education and climate change literature to make suggestions for local community-based environmental education programme that would promote climate change awareness. The chapter emphasizes the role of education at local community level in responding to an environmental issue such as climate change. Education provides a place for communities to gain knowledge and practical experience in conducting environmentally oriented adaptation and mitigation strategies. The chapter recommends the recognition of the role of local knowledge to enhance community's capabilities and resilience to climate change.

CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

Public education needs drastic re-orientation to mainstream climate change and variability to promote learning for sustainable development. Community environmental education programme has a role to play in understanding, mitigating and adapting to climate change. A study conducted by Ardoin and Heimlich (2013, pp 106) has indicated that

During the interviews, several of the decision makers commented on the role that education plays, particularly as a tool for awareness. One said, "The benefit to education is that it helps people develop a deeper understanding of an issue. . . . If [my organization] wants to encourage people to take a specific action around an issue, if people are already up-to-speed on it—they're knowledgeable about it, they care about it—it makes [my organization's] work easier.

Climate change is one of the key action themes of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, as was reaffirmed at the World Conferences on Education for Sustainable Development held in Bonn in April 2009 (UNESCO, 2009) and in Aichi-Nagoya in November 2014. Education is meant to encourage changes in attitudes and behaviours needed to put our world on a more sustainable development path, and build a new generation of climate change-aware citizen (UNESCO, 2010). This is in line with the objectives of environmental education and education for sustainable development, both of which are viable tools for climate change adaptation and mitigation. Community education on climate change could be based on its impact or possible impact on livelihoods so as to encourage the community to develop adaptive strategies or resilience.

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