

# Integrate climate change studies into curricula

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Seventeen-year-old activist Greta Thunberg started a movement when she began advocating for climate change awareness, encouraging students to take it upon themselves to incite change. NET PHOTO

## In Summary

The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005-2014, emphasizing that climate change is one of the key action themes of this decade.

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By Geoffrey Kasumba

While appearing before the standing committee on climate change in Parliament last year, officials from Ministry of Education and the National Curriculum Development

Centre (NDC) told the committee that the ministry has finished drawing out plans to have climate change studies incorporated into primary, secondary and tertiary institutions curricula.

On September 10, 2019, climate change was studied across all primary schools in Ghana. In collaboration with Ghana Environmental Protection Agency, Ghana Education Service and National Council for Curriculum Assessment teaching and learning materials were made and developed to support effective teaching and learning. Ghana became the first African state to integrate climate change into its education curricula.

Sustainable Development Goal No. 13 calls upon all countries to integrate mitigation and adaptation, impact reduction and early warning into school curricula.

There has been a lot of debate surrounding climate change education in schools, stemming from the recent student-led strikes.

Seventeen-year-old activist Greta Thunberg started a movement when she began advocating for climate change awareness, encouraging students to take it upon themselves to incite change because the youth are not given adequate climate change education in schools.

Schools in several countries have started educating students on climate change, but as it is a relatively new addition to the curriculum, not all are doing so effectively and climate change is passively taught.

Young learners need academic reasoning and structure in order to contextualise climate change and have an outlet to ask questions that will help put their fears at ease.

Teaching youth about climate change is not solely to spur them on to take action and do their part for their environment, although that is, of course, one aspect of it. It's also to

prepare them for the future as youth will be growing up in an era where they will likely be responsible for developing climate change solutions.

Schools can also start projects with the students to provide them with a more practical way of learning about climate change.

Schools that want to impart climate change education to the youth must also be sure that they are leading by example in terms of sustainability and being environmentally-friendly.

The fragile nature of the earth today as a result of a changing climate is a danger to humanity as well as to our natural environment and thus requires urgent attention.

Education is a most powerful weapon for such needed change and direction.

By integrating climate change studies into the curricula, this will help in raising awareness and promoting knowledge and skills-development. Education is an essential component and a catalyst for responding to global climate change. Its importance has been increasingly highlighted at the international level. In particular, Article six of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change encourages parties to promote, develop and implement educational, training and public awareness programmes on climate change and its effects.

To ensure effective learning and deep understanding of the subject matter, climate change education should be integrated across school curricula at all levels. The complexities of climate change require it to be addressed using a holistic approach that draws upon a range of disciplines and areas of expertise, including climate science, policy, law, ethic, sociology, economics and culture, with the aim of an effective and inclusive knowledge sharing approach. In addition, knowledge of climate change, its science, impacts and coping measures has to be adapted to address and relate to specific

target groups. Therefore, specific activities have to be developed and tailored according to age, school type and level as well as contexts and particular needs.

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### **Strategies**

The 2013-2022 Uganda National Climate Change Learning Strategy which is aimed at among others; reviewing the higher education curricula to link it to national socio-economic development needs and those of the labour market, enhancing environment awareness in delivery of education and sports services, integrating environmental concerns in educational and sports programmes, mainstreaming environmental issues in various curricula at all levels of the education system which is expected to enhance environmental management in schools and institutions and also formulate sector-specific policies and implementation guidelines on environmental management.

The strategy is in its seventh year of implementation only left with 3 years and yet much hasn't been achieved.