

Education as an Actor in Environmental Governance

Parnika Gupta
Master's student
Háskóli Íslands
Reykjavik, Iceland

Abstract: Evolution of humans cannot be complete without thinking about education as a variable in that process. When the world is currently dealing with the issues of sustainable development, the term environmental governance is often heard quite a few times and it cannot be discussed without the mention of its link with education. This short paper takes the reader on an introspective journey about the meaning and significance of education in the field of environmental governance whilst making arguments on the relation between collaboration for global environment governance efforts and education that guides and feed the willpower and drives human actions. Through this paper, the author is seeking to increase the dialogues and global discussion about education as an active actor for the achievement of long-term goals in the sphere of environmental governance.

Keywords: education, environmental governance, global collaboration, willpower, environmental action

1. INTRODUCTION

Humans have been evolving long before the documentation of evidence began. Even if it is not said enough but education plays a key role in that evolution. Since there cannot be physiological evolution if the information fed to brain doesn't evolve simultaneously, how can one imagine evolution without education. Same is the case when the discussions about environment governance occur from individual to international levels. When the term education is mentioned, it is often confused with literacy which in fact is merely a milestone towards educated society. Education can come from anywhere. It is not bound by the boundaries of institutions, but it is the foundation for the success of these institutions in the long run. Whenever the statements like 'lack of will' or 'lack of motivation' are thrown around while discussing environmental issues, one always forgets how will or motivation only develop whilst one is informed and educated properly. It's easy to shift the blame to the unwillingness of the uninformed and uneducated humans from the privileged informed ones and keep echoing the similar thoughts in an echo chamber. The unequitable distribution of knowledge is often ignored which in itself shows the unaware minds of the literates at decision making positions. Education not only accelerates the evolution of human intelligence, but also attacks the problems at the root cause instead of trying to fix them after they have happened. But one may wonder while studying environmental governance, how does education come into frame for global governance for environmental issues? This paper is an attempt in that direction. Through this paper, the author is attempting to seek answers to the following questions:

- What is the meaning and importance of education in the context of environmental governance?

- How education guides the willpower and drives action to achieve collaboration required for global environmental efforts?

These questions may sound a bit long to be compiled in a short paper, but it is worth trying. Let's try and understand together the role of education as an invisible actor for environmental governance.

2. WHAT IS 'EDUCATION' FOR ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE? WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

While discussing environmental governance, it is inevitable to leave the structural elements like actors, and institutions out of the dialogue. The actors and institutions bring with them the patterns of interactions that lead to different outcomes when various environmental resources and processes flow through these governance structures (Vatn, 2015). Education is that invisible thread that links these elements of environmental governance systems in various forms like knowledge, flow of information, acquisition of power, decision making for policy implementation to name a few. Education in context of sustainability is usually what motivates changes in ideas, values, knowledge, skills, and behavior to formulate a more environmentally friendly and just society for everyone (Wikipedia contributors, 2022a). Education is the key process required to shift power in any system and environmental governance is one such system which can benefit a lot from educated minds that have the ability and position to take difficult decisions which are backed up by knowledge rather than a hunch. Education can be attained from any means, but institutions play an important role in smooth flow of knowledge through a proper passage. Whenever the complex issues like environmental governance are discussed, it is often forgotten that decisions taken while being in power can only sustain in the long run if they have some sort of

rationale and logic behind it. Education in context of governing environmental issues lies in the power of knowledge and equitable access to it globally, which goes beyond merely knowing facts to conditioning of the brain to act for a just environment. The major issue faced by environmentalist and policy makers while managing environment is not related to achieving balance of natural resource availability and its usage. But the major issue lies in resolving conflicts to achieve that balance (Haughton, 2015). That's where education comes into picture. Education has the power to lead collaboration between people through knowledge sharing and communication which seems to be lost when people, instead of working together to achieve the same goals, do not indulge in healthy communication or exchange of collaborative ideas (Haughton, 2015; van der Molen, 2018). Education also helps to break down barriers like stereotypes and prejudice while making decisions concerning environmental policies as it helps to understand emotions and their implications for everyone involved in the process (Haughton, 2015). It not only makes the interactions between various actors in environmental governance system much smoother, but also helps in continuous two-way communication (Vatn, 2015). But how does education lead to collaborative action in the area of environmental governance?

3. EDUCATION AS DRIVER OF MOTIVATION

Education driving motivated action to collaboration in environmental governance

Education is crucial in making global populations recognize and address various environmental issues (e.g., increasing carbon dioxide emissions, melting of ice sheets, etc.) through changes in behaviors and psychology (Mäki & Crosier, 2019).

One cannot even begin to imagine the formation of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) if it hadn't been for educational awareness about climate change. IPCC development took place from the Advisory Group on Greenhouse Gases, which is an international level scientific body (Wikipedia contributors, 2022b). This shows an example of decision making due to educational transfer between scientific actors and political actors through coordinated efforts which led to establishment of the IPCC as an instrument to educate the future decisions based on facts and knowledge rather than just political emotions (Haughton, 2015). This is nothing but an indication of power shift from political actors into the hands of scientists conducting research. It may not be a power shift in absolute sense, but it does relay that the political actors will have to make decisions based on these kinds of research. Even the sustainable development goals have quality education as the fourth goal placed way before the goals concerning environment and sustainability (Desa, 2016; Wikipedia contributors, 2022c).

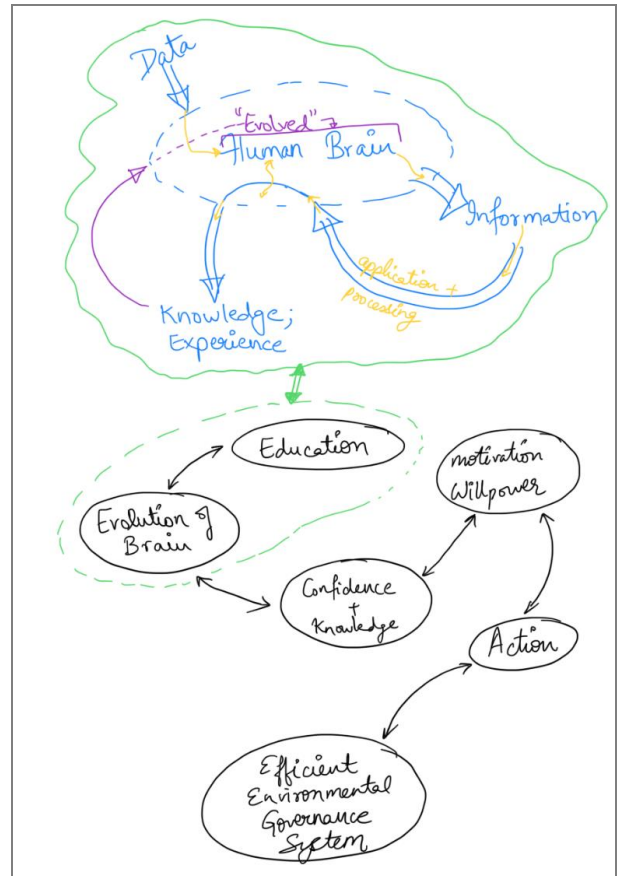


Figure 1: Educated mind making efficient environmental governance system (Breiting & Mogensen, 1999)

Education is not just limited to a small group of scientists or policy makers; it is meant to connect every soul on earth through evolved human brain. The goal number 13 also talks about handling climate change via improvement in field of education which points out that education is required to make action happen (Desa, 2016). Another example where education brings in collaborative efforts is how the whole world has in its own way come together whenever youth environmental activists like Greta Thunberg talk about climate change and failure of political actors in saving the climate. The mass movement of young protestors is solely due to educational awareness guiding the shift of power from bottom to upwards instead of other way around (Holden, 2019; Walker, 2017). It showcases how the education in environmental issues at every level cause shift of power from the hands of few to the hands of all. In any type of environment where human interactions happen, education exchange becomes absolutely necessary to achieve results when the timelines and schedules are strict. Environmental governance is an extremely interdisciplinary system as it entails the governance of environment which is being impacted so drastically that few individuals cannot handle the huge responsibility of making decisions and this also signals that education brings people together to achieve goals much faster than would be achieved separately (Clark et al., 2011; McClaren & Hammond, 2005). This means

education intuitively gives rise to collaboration and is needed in environmental governance framework.

4. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

In the realm of environmental governance, the meaning of education is vast and goes beyond the term "literacy". The framework of environmental governance systems needs constant education at each and every level with equitable access in order to achieve global consensus every time while discussing environmental issues. Education leads to evolved mindset that helps human to think beyond their self-interest and as a part of the environmental system. It has the power to feed motivation and willpower that leads to action with collaboration. And it is needless to say that collaboration often leads to resolution of conflicts which distributes power and help increase the efficiency of environmental governance system. It would not be incorrect to say that education does form a key thread in the complex fabric of environmental governance and without it, this fabric cannot be sewed or mended.

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