

## Environmental Education Will Shape A New Generation Of Decision-Makers



**James Ellsmoor** Contributor

Under 30

A Forbes 30U30 entrepreneur and founder of the Virtual Island Summit.

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- in our relatively short history we have lost sight of the importance of nature.
- Environmental education is set to become the largest, most effective tool in combating environmental damage and promoting sustainable development.

The renowned biologist Sir David Attenborough once [remarked](#) that “An understanding of the natural world is a source of not only great curiosity, but great fulfillment.”

The natural environment has been critical in shaping our species and how we have evolved over millennia, however, in our relatively short history we have lost sight of the importance of nature. With the planet facing the dire consequences of climate change and a global effort underway to reduce emissions and create a sustainable future for new generations, the question must be asked: How do we include the environment and sustainable development in our education system? Educational reform in several countries is giving some enlightening insights.



A stunning view of the jungle near Te Rata Bay, New Zealand. PHOTO BY KARL ANDERSON/UNSPLASH

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) [recently signed](#) an agreement with the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) to cooperate in the integration of renewable energy and sustainable development in the UAE’s education system. In the United Kingdom, school districts [have begun](#) implementing courses that aim to educate students about the causes, risks, and solutions of climate change. In India, schools [have included](#) the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals in their curriculum and encouraged pupils to create their solutions to meet the targets.

### Environmental Education

The belief that ‘conservation starts with education’ has been firmly rooted in many programs worldwide that seek to improve environmental health as well as how people interact with nature. Usually promoted by local non-governmental organizations or private companies, environmental education has now been embraced by schools who recognize that students have much to gain by understanding sustainable development and its associated technologies.

After signing the agreement with the UAE’s Ministry of Education, IRENA Director Francesco La Camera explained how important such a collaboration could be: “It is critically important that we engage young people in the pursuit of sustainable development and climate action. The UAE has demonstrated its commitment to playing a leading role in the global energy transformation, and adopting a sustainable development model. Working with the Ministry of Education, we aim to inspire youth to support the action agenda and develop a model of collaboration that can be replicated in countries all over the world.”



Nature gifts us everyday, so why shouldn't we reciprocate? PHOTO BY ANNIE SPRATT/UNSPLASH

Renewable technology is at the core of the UAE and IRENA’s educational cooperation. A sector that has gained traction and grown in the United Arab Emirates, renewable energy has become a [viable solution](#) to replace the nation’s fossil-fuel power options. Along with a range of major sustainable development [projects](#), the UAE has positioned itself to become a leading figure in sustainability. Educating younger generations as to the benefits of renewable technology may seem like an oxymoron considering the nation’s [ranking](#) as a top oil exporter, but it can also be seen as an indication that after leading an oil revolution in the 1960s, the UAE is ready to start a [new one](#) with renewable energy.

On top of providing more information about the solutions available to mitigate climate change, environmental education gives power back to the younger generations. The programs in the UK and India are paving the way for a generation of problem solvers. With global [demonstrations](#) from students and a newfound push to drive sustainability into everyday activities, younger generations have become [more active](#) in defending the planet.

But giving them the knowledge needed to confront the issues ahead of them isn’t the only benefit of bringing sustainability into the classroom, as the UAE’s Minister of Climate Change and Environment, Dr. Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi [illustrates](#): “Incorporating renewable energy and sustainable development into the educational curricula will not only enable us to harness young minds and prepare them to become environmental stewards, but also pique their interest in pursuing careers in the emerging domains.”



Children these days should not only be taught of planting trees, but about environment preservation. ARBOR DAY FOUNDATION

### A Sustainable Future

Education has always led to revolutions in science, technology, and the arts - so why not the environment? By providing paths for students to learn about renewable energy, low-carbon technology, and sustainable living, we are enabling younger generations to choose how they develop, as David Attenborough [explains](#):

“Young people: They care. They know that this is the world that they’re going to grow up in, that they’re going to spend the rest of their lives in. But, I think it’s more idealistic than that. They actually believe that humanity, human species, has no right to destroy and despoil regardless.”

As nations worldwide continue to tackle climate change-related issues, many have identified that the next generation of decision-makers will need to be educated about the challenges ahead of them. Environmental education is set to become the largest, most effective tool in combating environmental damage and promoting sustainable development. With the planet facing the dire consequences of climate change and a global effort underway to reduce emissions and create a sustainable future for new generations, the question must be asked: How do we include the environment and sustainable development in our education system? Educational reform in several countries is giving some enlightening insights.