

ABSTRACT

The Influence of Place on the Environmental Attitudes and Knowledge of Children in Jamaica

Vivienne Annette Vassall

Many countries, including Jamaica, face a number of challenges in their efforts to bring about desired levels of environmental sustainability. Initiatives are constantly frustrated by attitudes and behaviours that contradict the objectives of sustainability. It is essential that the necessary changes in attitudes and behaviour occur among the young, since they play a significant role in the environmental change process. Thus, environmental education policies and strategies need to take into account the fact that children's environmental attitudes, knowledge and experiences vary from place to place, and address these variations accordingly. Yet, there is very little relevant information available from research relating to the variability in environmental attitudes and knowledge, on the basis of place.

This study examines the influence of place on children's environmental attitudes and knowledge in Jamaica, a developing country, where there is a lack of information on this issue. The study will help to inform policy decisions on environmental education strategies, so as to enhance the effectiveness of

environmental initiatives that relate to children. The ultimate aim of such initiatives is to contribute to the development of more environmentally responsible citizens.

Both qualitative and quantitative techniques were employed in the research. Questionnaires, focus groups, interviews and visual techniques were the main methods selected.

The study has confirmed that there are important place-related differences in children's environmental attitudes and knowledge in Jamaica. It has highlighted the need for a better understanding of people-environment relationships and, in particular, as these are influenced by place. The results of this study will contribute towards this understanding, and will raise the awareness of decision makers in the area of environmental education, in pursuit of a sustainable future.

Keywords: Vivienne Annette Vassall; place; environmental attitudes and knowledge; environment; children and Jamaica.