

## Education for Sustainable Development in the Caribbean: Demystifying the Concept to Enhance and Broaden Practice

**Therese Ferguson-Murray**

*The University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, Jamaica*

*Although promoted on a global scale through the recently-concluded Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) (2005-2014), education for sustainable development can be a fuzzy and complex concept to understand. This may be due, somewhat, to the conceptual confusion which surrounds the concept of sustainable development itself and, in part, by an inability to differentiate clearly between environmental education and education for sustainable development. Given the importance of education for sustainable development for the countries of the Caribbean, this paper attempts to demystify the concept of education for sustainable development, present its main tenets, and explore the implications of this educational paradigm for practice and application within the region. This discussion is particularly important in light of the new global Sustainable Development Goals and the Global Action Programme for Education for Sustainable Development meant to follow-on from the DESD, both of which contribute to the post-2015 development and education agendas.*

**Keywords:** *Caribbean, education for sustainable development, environmental education, sustainable development, Global Action Programme*

---

Email: [therese.ferguson02@uwimona.edu.jm](mailto:therese.ferguson02@uwimona.edu.jm)

ISSN 1727-5512

©School of Education, The University of the West Indies Cave Hill Campus  
<http://www.cavehill.uwi.edu/fhe/hum/publications/EducationCERJ.htm>

## References

- Barker, D., Dodman, D., & McGregor, D. (2009). Caribbean vulnerability and global change: Contemporary perspectives. In D. McGregor, D. Dodman, & D. Barker. (Eds.), *Global change and Caribbean vulnerability: Environment, economy and society at risk* (pp. 3-21). Kingston: The University of the West Indies Press.
- Barraza, L., Bal, A., & Rebolledo, G. (2003). Environmental education: From policy to practice. *Environmental Education Research*, 9 (3), 347-357.
- Bedasse, J. (2002). *Education for sustainable development initiatives in the Caribbean*. Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge, United Kingdom: IUCN, Commission on Education and Communication.
- Bonnett, M. (2003). Education for sustainable development: Sustainability as a frame of mind. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 37 (4), 675-690.
- Bynoe, P., & Hale, W. (1997). An analysis of environmental education provision in a sample of Caribbean National Environmental Action Plans (NEAPs). *Environmental Education Research*, 3 (1), 59-68.
- Bynoe, P., & Simmons, D. (2014). An appraisal of climate change education at the primary level in Guyana. *Caribbean Geography*, 19, 89-103.
- Collins-Figueroa, M. (2012). Biodiversity and education for sustainable development in teacher education programmes of four Jamaican educational institutions. *Journal of Education for Sustainable Development*, 6 (2), 53-267.
- Collins-Figueroa, M., Sanguinetti Phillips, G., Foster-Allen, E., & Falloon, C. (2008). Advancing Jamaican formal education through environmental education for sustainable development. *Caribbean Journal of Education*, 30 (1), 160-176.
- Down, L. (2006). Addressing the challenges of mainstreaming education for sustainable development in higher education. *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, 7 (4), 390-399.
- . (2007). Literature to address the problem of violence: Infusing ESD in the curriculum. In *Good practices in education for sustainable development: Teacher education institutions*, (pp. 7-10). Paris: UNESCO.
- . (2010). Teaching and learning in, with and for community: Towards a pedagogy for education for sustainable development. *Southern African Journal of Environmental Education*, 27, 58-70.
- . (2011). Education for sustainable development in the Caribbean – latest buzzword or paradigmatic shift in education. *Caribbean Journal of Education for Sustainable Development*, 1 (1), 9-17.
- Down, L., & Nurse, H. (2007). Education for sustainable development networks, potential and challenge: A critical reflection on the formation of the Caribbean regional network. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 33(2), 177-190.
- Dryzek, J. S. (1997). *The politics of the earth: Environmental discourses*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). (2010). *Caribbean regional report for the five-year review of the Mauritius strategy for the further implementation of the Barbados programme of action for the sustainable development of small island developing states*. ECLAC.
- ENACT and JBTE facilitate environmental education in teachers' colleges. (2001). *Enviro Ed Link*, 1 (1), 1-4.

- Glasgow, J. (1989). Environmental education: Global concern, Caribbean focus. *Caribbean Journal of Education*, 16 (1 and 2), 1-11.
- Gough, A. (2002). Mutualism: A different agenda for environmental and science education. *International Journal of Science Education*, 24(11), 1201-1215.
- Grün, M. (1996). An analysis of the discursive production of environmental education: Terrorism, archaism and transcendentalism. *Curriculum Studies*, 4(3), 329-347.
- Haque, M. S. (2000). Environmental discourse and sustainable development: Linkages and limitations. *Ethics and the Environment*, 5(1), 3-21.
- Harrison, N. E. (2000). *Constructing sustainable development*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Hiebert, M. (2013). Education and sustainable development in Commonwealth small states. *Commonwealth Education Partnerships, 2013-2014*, 77-79.
- Hopkins, C. & McKeown, R. (2001). Reorienting teacher education to address sustainability. *Environmental Education*, 66, 8-9.
- Howell, C. A. (1994). Environmental education in the English speaking Caribbean. In W. L. Filho (Ed.), *Environmental education in small island developing states*, (pp. 65-87). Vancouver, British Columbia: The Commonwealth of Learning.
- Huckle, J. (1996). Realizing sustainability in changing times: In J. Huckle & S. Sterling (Eds.), *Education for Sustainability*, (pp. 3-17). London: Earthscan Publications Ltd.
- IUCN/UNEP/WWF. (1991). *Caring for the earth: A strategy for sustainable living*. Gland, Switzerland.
- Jones, V., Modeste, N., Hopp Marshak, H., & Fox, C. (2013). The effect of HIV/AIDS education on adolescents in Trinidad and Tobago. *ISRN Infectious Diseases* 2013: 1-8.
- Lotz-Sisitka, H. (2011). Teacher professional development with an education for sustainable development focus in South Africa: Development of a network, curriculum framework, and resources for teacher education. *Southern African Journal of Environmental Education*, 28, 30-71.
- Lucas, A. M. (1991). Environmental education: What is it, for whom, for what purpose, and how? In S. Keiny & U. Zoller (Eds.), *Conceptual issues in environmental education* (pp. 25-48). New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.
- Martin, P. (1990). *First steps to sustainability: The school curriculum and the environment*. Surrey, United Kingdom: World Wide Fund for Nature.
- Matthews, H., & Limb, M. (1999). Defining an agenda for the geography of children: Review and prospect. *Progress in Human Geography*, 23, 61-90.
- Matthews, H., Limb, M., & Taylor, M. (1999). Young people's participation and representation in society. *Geoforum*, 30, 135-144.
- McCaulay, D., Falloon, C., Longman, A., Spence, N., Curtis, K., Milbourn, M., & Singh, T. (2008). The schools' environment programme in Jamaica: Evaluating the effectiveness and sustainability of ngo-led environmental education programmes. *Caribbean Journal of Education*, 30 (1), 177-192.
- McKeown, R., & Hopkins, C. (2003). EE ≠ ESD: Defusing the worry. *Environmental Education Research*, 9 (1), 117-128.
- Miller, B. A., & Howell, C. A. (1989). Environmental education in the English-speaking Caribbean: A report. *Caribbean Journal of Education*, 16 (1 and 2), 105-116.
- Ministry of Education. (2012). *National education strategic plan: 2011-2020*.
- Ministry of Education. (2014). *Guyana education sector plan: 2014-2018*.

- Paden, M. (2000). Education for sustainable development: Small is bountiful. *Human Nature*, 5 (2), 1-2.
- Pigozzi, M. J. (2003). UNESCO and the international Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2015). *Connect: UNESCO International Science, Technology and Environmental Education Newsletter*, 28 (1-2), 1-7.
- Planning Institute of Jamaica. (2009). *Vision 2030 Jamaica: National development plan*.
- Potter, R.B., Barker, D., Conway, D. & Klak, T. (2004). *The contemporary Caribbean*. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.
- Redclift, M. (2002). Pathways to sustainability? *Geography*, 87(3), 189-196.
- Robinson, J. (2004). Squaring the circle? Some thoughts on the idea of sustainable development. *Ecological Economics*, 48(4), 369-384.
- Robottom, I. (2007). Re-badged environmental education: Is ESD more than just a slogan? *Southern African Journal of Environmental Education*, 24, 90-96.
- Sachs, J. D. (2015). *The age of sustainable development*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Sauvé, L. (1996). Environmental education and sustainable development: A further appraisal. *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*, 1, 7-33.
- Scott, W. (2002). Education and sustainable development: Challenges, responsibilities, and frames of mind. *The Trumpeter: Journal of Ecosophy*, 18(1).
- Selby, D. (2006). The firm and shaky ground of education for sustainable development. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 30(2), 351-365.
- Sterling, S. (1992). *Coming of age: A short history of environmental education (to 1989)*. Walsall, United Kingdom: National Association for Environmental Education.
- Stevenson, R. B. (1987). Schooling and environmental education: Contradictions in purpose and practice. In I. Robottom (Ed.), *Environmental education: Practice and possibility*, (pp. 69-82). Victoria: Deakin University Press.
- Sustainable teacher environmental education project augurs an optimistic future for greening teachers' colleges. (2003). *Enviro Ed Link*, i, 1.
- United Nations. (1989). *UN convention on the rights of the child*.
- . (1994). *Report on the global conference on the sustainable development of small island developing states*. Bridgetown, Barbados: Small Island Developing States Conference Secretariat.
- . (2015). *Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development*.
- United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) (1992). *Agenda 21: Programme of action for sustainable development*. New York: United Nations.
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2012). *Caribbean human development report 2012: Human development and the shift to better citizen security*. New York: UNDP.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (1997). *Educating for a sustainable future: A transdisciplinary vision for concerted action*. Paris: UNESCO.
- . (2002). *Education for sustainability: From Rio to Johannesburg – lessons from a decade of commitment*. Paris: UNESCO.
- . (2005). *United Nations decade of education for sustainable development 2005-2014. Draft international implementation scheme*.
- . (2009). *Bonn Declaration*. UNESCO.
- . (2014). *UNESCO roadmap for implementing the global action programme on education for sustainable development*. Paris: UNESCO.

- The University of the West Indies and the United Nations Environment Programme. (2011). *Report of the audit: Mainstreaming environment and sustainability in Caribbean universities (MESCA)*.
- Wals, A. (2009). *Review of contexts and structures for education for sustainable development 2009*. Paris: UNESCO.
- World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) (1987). *Our common future*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.