



## **Promoting Arts Based Environmental Education for Primary School Pupils in Guyana**

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### OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

EE is the cornerstone for preparing young children for life through an understanding of the major global environmental problems today, and for the provision of skills, values, attitudes and commitment needed to play a meaningful role towards protection of the environment with due regard to ethical issues. Importantly, at a very young age, children need to develop greater sensitivity to the local and national environment and their role in protecting it. To this end, the use of arts based approaches is invaluable to such a life-long process that takes children from awareness to informed actions. This paper explores the following questions: (i) What is the status of the use of the Arts in EE in primary schools in Guyana? (ii) What are the perceptions of art teachers, as well as pupils, with regards to arts based EE? and (iii) What are the challenges and opportunities for promoting arts based EE in primary schools in Guyana?

My study reveals that Arts-based EE is limited in the current primary school system in Guyana. Moreover, it is confined to Grades 1, 2 and 3 where it is integrated in Drawing, Decorative Craft, Imaginative Composition, Fibre Arts, and Drawing in the Visual Arts options. Importantly, there are no guidelines for implementation; as such the teachers are the sole decision makers in this regard. Consequently, there is no uniformity in approach, and this situation is further exacerbated by the constraint of time, trained teachers, appropriate teaching and learning materials, parents' perception of the Arts, among others. The paper posits, among other things, that teachers must first understand and appreciate the fact that art-based education fosters environmental learning; hence the need for urgent review of the curriculum of Teachers Training Institutions to ensure that Arts-based EE is integrated in its training programme. Additionally, a series of workshops must be designed for teachers who have already completed the Teachers Training Programme.



#### INTRODUCTION TO THE AUTHORS

Dr. Paulette Bynoe is a Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Earth and Environmental Sciences at the University of Guyana. She has approximately 22 years of professional accomplishments as an inter-disciplinary trained academician and teaches undergraduate and post-graduate courses in community disaster risk management, environmental education, environmental impact assessment, environmental management, environmental research methods, and environmental resources policy. Her research interests are in environmental education/education for sustainability, natural resources and environmental policy, sustainable livelihoods and climate change and disaster vulnerability and resilience. Dr. Bynoe has contributed to the design and implementation of environmental education programmes in Guyana and throughout the Caribbean.

#### IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE:

The Arts provide an important prospect for pupils to connect with nature and to freely express their fears and hopes in respect of the current ecological crisis. Educators throughout the world therefore need to be pro-active in not only recognizing the potential of the Arts, but be motivated to take actions that will optimize the opportunities to revise their teaching and training curricula to foster a greater sense of environmental responsibility.