ABSTRACT

This study investigated environmental education (EE) against a background of growing concern about the importance of environmental issues and international consensus on the need to develop an environmentally responsible global citizenry. The focus was on individual EE programmes in the context of the formal school curriculum in Zimbabwe and Scotland with special emphasis on the impact of each programme and the macro- and micro-context within which these impacts are determined. The results of a national survey in each country are the basis of the non-random sampling of one Secondary and three Primary case-study schools that were considered examples of ‘good practice’.

Data collection techniques included interviews with school staff and other stakeholders, observations, and programme document analysis. Programme theory guided the way cases were investigated and described. A qualitative research approach led to claims of socially constructed knowledge regarding the nature of good practice in EE in the two countries, contextual factors that shape the impact of EE, and what contrasting the two countries reveals about the factors that aid and constrain the development of environmental citizenship behaviour in the school context.

Claimed outputs of EE programmes are divided into four categories: personal development, environmental citizenship, social and community development, and school development. The socio-economic context, the position of EE in the overall curriculum, the nature of issues investigated, and the resource-base shaped the impact of EE programmes. The nature of the issues investigated, the role of learners in the development and maintenance of school ground developments, the role of these school ground developments, and the role of the school in the community all affected the development of environmental citizenship behaviour. In Zimbabwe pupil participation was pragmatic, focussing on pupils as current and future custodians of natural resources. In Scotland pupil participation appeared idealistic and lacking an action context. Rather the emphasis was on preparing pupils for future environmental decision-making. In Zimbabwe severe socio-economic problems have forced responsibilities upon children. Environmental education programme design has acknowledged this by providing a real and relevant contemporary context that has pressing current social relevance.