

"SIGNIFICANT LIFE EXPERIENCES ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF ADULT'S ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS IN THE UK AND GREECE"

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SUMMARY

The sample for both countries were environmental educators who demonstrate a high level of commitment to environmental concerns. This was confirmed by the completion of a questionnaire where they gave details of their pro-environmental behaviour and practical concern for the environment. In addition subjects were asked to write an autobiographical statement identifying those influences and experiences that led to their environmental concern. Findings of this research relate to those of a number of similar studies (*Tanner 1980, Chawla 1995*).

The comparison of data of the two countries led to the illumination of important similarities yet also interesting differences in the apparent significance of categories of influence on people's lives. Within the UK sample it was found that the most influential factor in developing the concern for the environment is the childhood experiences of nature and countryside (*Palmer 1993, Palmer and Suggate 1996*). The same factor, although second in significance, seems to influence the Greek sample. The differences lie in the fact that what is termed as negative influences, i.e. of pollution and its impact ranks more highly in the Greek sample than the UK one. This might suggest cultural differences between the two countries related to people's experiences and perception. The results of this research convey important messages for environmental educators. They emphasize without doubt the importance of providing the young people with opportunities for positive experiences of nature and the countryside.

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