

TITLE: “An Evaluative Study of the Environmental Education Centres of KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture.”

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SUMMARY: This study evaluates the effectiveness of the three (3) extant Environmental Education Centres of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture (KZNDEC) as contributors to the environmental learning, and to education, in KwaZulu-Natal. In the process, it is an exploratory response as to how better the Centres can answer the call of the Reconstruction and Development Programme to “empower all communities to act on environmental issues” (African National Congress 1994:40).

The research traces the history, the philosophical background and functions of environmental education, of environmental education centres, and of personnel employed at environmental educators, in the ex-Natal Education Department and in its successor, the KZNDEC.

The researcher recommends that environmental education centres should become “agents of change” in the wider environment, and in the educational processes, of the communities of which they are a part. The study suggests methods by which people’s lives at a “deep rural” level may be improved by helping restore the balance of “the three pillars of sustainable development - economic, social and environmental – and [in the process, having a positive] focus on poverty eradication” (WSSD 2002).

The centres, the researcher contends, can become more effective agents of the KZNDEC for the protection of the environment “for the benefit of present and future generations” (Constitutional Assembly 1996:11).