

**IC - (20868) - ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PRACTICES IN PRESCHOOLS IN SWEDEN AND JAPAN:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY THROUGH ACTIVELY CARING MODEL**

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Background and objectives

There has been an increased interest in education for the environment in early childhood, but little is known about how the education influence young children's behavior. Moreover, the knowledge in different educational contexts is still limited. To adopt pro-environment behaviors, the children should be taught about caring for the environment and feel confident in their ability. With such recognition, this study explores the aspects of early childhood environmental education by targeting preschools affiliating to Green Flag program (an international environmental certificate for the education for sustainable development) in Sweden and Japan.

Process and methods (for empirical research)

The empirical data were obtained through nine interviews with educators involving in the program, and relevant documents received from the informants. Initially, the data obtained from two countries subject to a content analysis respectively to categorize environmental education activities. Subsequently, a deductive approach is applied in which all brought up aspects relating to the activities will be interpreted and discusses based on the three constructs of the actively caring model for the environment (Geller, 1995): (i) empowerment, (ii) self-esteem and (iii) belongingness.

Main results (or main arguments in the case of critical reviews)

Preliminary results have pointed out the important role of everyday green environments in environmental education activities in Sweden that could be associated with self-esteem and belongingness. The focus in Japan seems to be on performing actual pro-environmental behaviors due to a lack of local green space. The activities (e.g. making compost, growing own vegetables and making food, and energy saving competitions) could be considered as having tendencies that promote empowerment as well as belongingness.

Implications for research and practice/policy | Importance and originality of the contribution

The actively caring model was used to examine the potential for environmental education to increase the propensity of young children's care for the environment and therefore, pro-environmental behaviors. It is expected that the findings will facilitate design of environmental education activities taking into consideration different preschool contexts.

Palavras-chave : Early childhood environmental education, Green Flag, Pro-environmental behaviours, Young children, Actively caring model, Comparative study, Environmental education activities