
Preface

M.F.A. Goosen

School of Science and Technology, University of Turabo, Gurabo,
P.O. Box 3030, Puerto Rico 00778-3030, USA
Fax: (787) 744-5427
E-mail: mgoosen@mail.SUAGM.EDU
E-mail: mgoosen@suagm.edu

Biographical notes: Currently Goosen is in Puerto Rico, USA, where he holds the position of Dean of the School of Science and Technology at the University of Turabo, a private nonprofit institution of 15,000 students which forms part of the Anna G. Mendez University System. His Doctoral Degree is in Engineering from the University of Toronto, Canada in 1981. He spent three years in industry, and ten years at Queen's University, Canada (Engineering). In 1994, he moved to Sultan Qaboos University in Oman where he was Head of Department, Assistant Dean, Dean of Engineering, Dean of Agricultural and Marine Sciences, and Professor of Mechanical and Industrial Engineering.

Access to safe drinking water and sanitation is a basic necessity. However, such access is highly variable in the Latin American and Caribbean region. Much progress still remains to be made in infrastructure improvements and poverty reduction. A recent World Bank report noted that more than 100 million people in this region lack access to potable water and adequate sanitation systems. Compounding the issue of water availability is contamination of water supplies and the lack of wastewater treatment facilities. This affects human health. The presence of lead in the environment, for example, constitutes an ecological and human health concern.

Environmental education plays a major role in achieving changes in attitudes that contribute to environmental awareness in society. The average person is usually somewhat informed about environmental problems. However, not many fully understand the basis of these problems or how to deal with them. One example of rising public awareness is the increasing use of recycled materials, particularly in road systems. Environmental education is especially critical for young people who will be future decision makers. All disciplines and all segments of society will need to work together, proactively, in seeking long-term solutions to environmental problems. The recent establishment of the International Center for Environmental Studies and Sustainable Development (CIEMADeS) between institutions in Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico is one example of this new approach.

The main aim of this special issue was to assess some of the major environmental problems facing the Latin American and Caribbean region. Solutions were suggested. The issue will conclude with several papers on environmental education projects that help to raise awareness in young people about the interrelationships between pollution, the environment and society.