

**THE RELATIONSHIP OF PEDAGOGY AND
STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDING OF ENVIRONMENT IN
ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION**

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CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP/ORIGINALITY

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of the requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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ABSTRACT

Environmental education is a relatively young area that can trace its roots back to the global environmental crises of the late 1960s and 1970s. Research in environmental education since this time has established the justification for its existence in the formal curriculum of schools. Less research has been conducted on the actual pedagogy of environmental education. This forms one part of the justification for this research study. The other justification for this research study is school students' objectification of the environment evidenced from the findings of a large survey of NSW school students. The objectification of the environment finding referred to students' responses that suggested that the environment was separate from them in contrast to a minority of students' responses that referred to a relational view (Loughland, Reid, Walker & Petocz, 2003). The two foci of pedagogy and students' understandings of the environment come together in the research question of this thesis, *what is the relation between pedagogy and representations of the environment in environmental education?*

A Bernsteinian model of pedagogy, the pedagogical device, underpins the theoretical analysis of the pedagogy of environmental education in this study (Bernstein, 1990). A particular aspect of this device, the pedagogic recontextualising field, is used as a framework of analysis for the exposition of the major influences on the development of pedagogy of environmental education in NSW. Another theory of pedagogy, the NSW Quality Teaching Framework, is used to offer a performative angle on pedagogy to provide theoretical triangulation for the study.

The pedagogy of environmental education was examined through a classroom ethnography with the researcher acting as a participant observer. The data were in the form of field notes, curriculum materials including children's literature, transcripts of classroom learning and products of students' learning. The analysis of the data was conducted using a variety of methods of analysis. The data were initially coded for themes that were the different representations of the environment in the pedagogy of this classroom. Further, the NSW Quality Teaching Framework (NSW DET 2003) was used as a theoretical framework of analysis in order to examine the data from the perspective of student performance in relation to current understandings of what constitutes good pedagogical practice. Next, Bernstein's model of the pedagogic device (1990) was used to analyse the data in the larger context of the social construction of knowledge in the school curriculum. This analysis incorporated Bernstein's original notions of pedagogical classification and framing (1971).

This study has two main findings. First, the pedagogy of environmental education has strong classification and framing (after Bernstein 1971) that supports the objectification of the environment. Second, there is also some weak framing of the pedagogy of environmental education that generally does not support the objectification of the environment. The implications for these findings for practice are that environmental educators should be aware of deterministic curriculum that seeks to impose one view of the environment onto students. This curriculum positions the environment as an object that needs to be saved through human intervention. Further research into the pedagogy of environmental education that explores the relation of students' understandings of the environment and their relation to the epistemological and theoretical bases of pedagogy is warranted as a result of this study.

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