



Sustainability Oriented Educational Action Research for Exploring Pre-Service Teachers' Views on Ecological Attitude

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Abstract

If we are aiming for sustainable relationships with the world, characterised by deep inclusion in its systems and processes, enhancing sustainability in teacher education becomes a major concern. Teacher education should be focused on transformation of teachers' frames of reference towards developing an ecological attitude to and sustainable relationships with the planet.

The paper reports the findings of one of the cycles in an educational action research conducted with 37 future pre-school and primary school teachers who are taking an action research based study course "Environmental Pedagogy" in a regional university. The authors explore the following research question: what dimensions of ecological attitude are discernible in pre-service teachers' frames of reference through experience-based reflections on this issue. Qualitative content analysis was used to analyse the data drawn from the research participants' written reports about their reflections on ecological attitude.

A holistic, multi-dimensional frame of reference was identified that outlines the research participants' views on the concept of ecological attitude. However, on the individual level only some research participants' frames of reference included all four of these dimensions. A considerable part of pre-service teachers were found to have three-dimensional, two-dimensional and even one-dimensional perspectives on ecological attitude. Furthermore, the behavioural and axiological dimensions were found to be slightly more pronounced than the cognitive and affective dimensions. It is argued that, in working with future teachers, it is necessary to specifically target the affective and cognitive dimensions of their frames of reference, focusing on the beliefs and emotions embedded in their experience to foster a more holistic ecological attitude. Educational action research with its commitment to reflection on experience can help engage pre-service teachers in critical exploration and, potentially, transformation of their frames of reference towards sustainability.