

Editorial

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The recent *Greenhouse Action for the Nineties* conference organised by Greenhouse Action Australia and held at the Melbourne Town Hall on 21-23 July aimed to hold discussions to inform the development of a wide range of environmental, economic, industrial and educational policies. One of six study themes addressing the question of appropriate responses to human-induced climate change was entitled, "'And How We Will Rear Our Children' -- Community outreach and public education". Environmental education (formal and non-formal) associated with this enormously significant environmental problem was to be discussed in sessions linked to this theme.

In these sessions, a number of important points were touched upon, including: the need for concrete educational activities linked with the complex and abstract issue of Greenhouse; the need for schools to model appropriate Greenhouse actions; the need for Greenhouse curricula to be community-based and action-oriented; and the need for Greenhouse curricula to 'empower' students and teachers to influence local decision-makers. Overall, however, the view of 'education' that pervaded most of the discussions at the conference was one of 'transmitting Greenhouse information'. It was accepted that an ever-increasing amount of information about the Greenhouse issue was becoming available; the educational task was seen as finding better ways of improving access of teachers and students to this mass of information. Education seemed to be perceived as a one-way delivery system from experts to lay people, rather than as a process whereby lay people could *generate* information, knowledge or understandings about the Greenhouse issue. There was almost no consideration of how education could involve lay people, including students, in activities capable of actually *contributing* to an understanding, for example, of how people in particular communities contribute to or could ameliorate the Greenhouse problem. More worrying for me was the view that equated 'education' with 'changing behavior and attitudes'. Education seemed to be treated as an instrumental agent -- as a means of inculcating behaviors and attitudes that would reduce Greenhouse gas emissions. In the 'Community Outreach and Public Education' sessions, this behaviorist perspective was far more prevalent than, for example, a view of 'education' that implicates the development of abilities to think clearly and critically about (in this case) the Greenhouse issue. In short, in my view as a participant, the conference tended to take for granted a technical, instrumental, 'transmissional' view of education. There certainly seemed to be more interest in the 'environmental' than the 'educational' at this important conference. And that, of course, might always have been the intention of the organisers.

I would contend that the situation at this recent conference continues a 'tradition' in environmental education discourse in Australia and (more definitely) in

the USA in which developments in environmental education have historically been somewhat insulated from developments in more generic educational fields of study (like teacher education, curriculum studies, educational research, educational philosophy and theory, and so on). To some extent, however, most of the papers collected in this issue of the *Australian Journal of Environmental Education* adopt a different focus and demonstrate an interest in going beyond questions like, "What are the important environmental subject matters to study?", "What is the relationship between environmental, economic and business concerns in this environmental issue?" and "How can we get this wealth of environmental information to teachers and students?" (that is, questions that focus on the *environmental* part of the environmental education equation), to questions that treat as problematic some more fundamental pedagogical and curriculum issues (that is, questions that focus on the *educational* part of the environmental education equation). While a balance between the environmental and the educational is clearly required, I believe that our Association has the potential to provide some leadership in Australia and internationally in exploring environmental education from a critical educational perspective.

In this issue, Errington considers some ways in which role play can contribute to a form of environmental education that questions some taken-for-granted assumptions of educators regarding decisions about teaching, learning and knowledge. He argues for a contextualised form of environmental education that "serves to interrogate the social, political and cultural contexts in which the acts of education take place". His article follows an interest in drama and role play in environmental education expressed at a number of national AEE conferences and local field study centres (see Tooth *et al*, 1988).

Fien's article proffers guidelines for developing a school-level environmental education policy. His guidelines seek to provide support for practitioners faced with the task of translating centrally developed policies into locally relevant goals and practices. Further, his guidelines seek to retain and encourage the adoption of a "socially critical" orientation in local environmental education practices. The proffered guidelines are "framed upon seven principles of environmental education that have been developed from international and national documents ... which have sought to outline the key characteristics of environmental education as a socially critical practice". The guidelines are not intended by the author to be prescriptive -- rather as suggestive of a framework for curriculum enquiry. Since the guidelines are presented without explanatory rationale, the processes of curriculum enquiry they are intended to support would need to include the development of an educational justification for the principles themselves.

The article on "Narrative and Nature ..." by Gough begins with an articulation of "the poststructuralist position" as preparation for an examination of some of the metanarratives that characterise the field of environmental education. One of the points made in this article is the relationship between our particular language system (the grammatical separation of subject-as-object and predicate-as-relationship) and the tendency to separate fact from value (ascribing primacy to the former) in environmental education narratives informed by modern Western science. The article argues for the adoption of a poststructuralist position in environmental education, and in particular for an ongoing critique of the ways in

which the adoption of Western science perspectives has prefigured our environmental and educational work in environmental education.

Huckle's article places the current interest in sustainable growth in an historical context and seeks to indicate an alternative pathway for "education for sustainability". A distinction between sustainable growth as "the greening of capitalism" and sustainable development as "the greening of socialism" provides a structure for the balance of the paper, including an appraisal of the Brundtland report, which in Huckle's view embodies a number of contradictions: "it appears radical in that it challenges the standard agenda of environment and development ... [yet] at the same time it appears conservative in that it seeks solutions ... which could leave existing structures of power intact". A recommendation that Huckle makes in articulating a pathway for environmental education is that we engage in more community-based action research projects aimed at closing the gaps between pupils and teachers, theory and practice, and schools and community.

The article prepared by Lindenmayer, Tanton, Linga and Craig offers a case study of the use of stagwatching (the observation of nesting sites in trees) in surveys for the endangered Leadbeater's possum. The article argues the values of stagwatching as an environmental education teaching activity for improving both methodological and substantive awarenesses in forest biology and conservation. In arguing the values of stagwatching in public education, the authors draw on an empirical base of responses from rangers participating in training programs in spotlighting and stagwatching.

Murphy, Watson and Moore contribute a report of a study of use of water resources. The study sought to explore the role of social and cognitive factors in influencing the ways that people conserve water in everyday life. One of the conclusions reached by the authors is that while conceptually convenient, "water conserving behaviour" as a general behavioural construct may not have a firm grounding in reality. The authors contend that "if this is so, it presents difficulties for those intending to measure such behaviour as well as those charged with the promotion of such behaviours in the school and community". At a different level, the concept of "water conserving behaviour" can be appraised from the poststructuralist position advocated earlier in this issue by Gough.

Like Murphy *et al*, Skamp expresses an interest in exploring humankind's active participation in maintaining and improving the quality of the environment. Looking beyond cognitive and social factors, Skamp implicates a spiritual connection in seeking an understanding of the way people interact with the environment, suggesting that "students of environmental education need to be conscious of their connectedness with themselves, others, and the environment, near and far, past and present".

The *Contemporary Issues Forum* is a new section in the *Australian Journal of Environmental Education*. The section has been added to the journal to provide a forum for analysis and debate of emerging issues in environmental education. The *Contemporary Issues Forum* in this edition is entitled "A National Curriculum for Environmental Education? Politics, Problems and Possibilities". The articles in the *Forum* were written for a panel discussion on environmental education at the Australian Curriculum Studies Association (ACSA) Conference in Adelaide in July 1991. The discussions focus on the place of environmental education in the

National Curriculum Project. The panel members were: Annette Greenall Gough (Deakin University, Victoria); Greg Hunt (Ministry of Education and Training, Victoria); Steve Malcolm (Victorian Environmental Education Council) and Noel Gough (Victoria College, Rusden Campus). The panel chairperson was John Fien (Griffith University, Queensland) who as well as being current President of the Australian Association for Environmental Education is the Convenor of the ACSA Environmental Education Network.

Two book review contributions conclude this issue. Under the heading "Exploring Green Issues: Curriculum and school organisation", Annette Greenall Gough reviews Grieg *et al* (1989) *Greenprints for Changing Schools*, and Hicks (ed.) (1988) *Educating for Peace: Issues, principles, and practice in the classroom*. Kath Murdoch reviews two publications: *The Informazing Resource*, and *Integrating learning in classroom, school & community*.

Reference

Tooth, R., Wager, L., Proellocks, T., Card, M., Braddock, K. and Butler, J. "Story, Setting and Drama -- A new look at Environmental Education", *Australian Journal of Environmental Education* 4, 1988, pp. 31-34.