

ECOPEDAGOGY: CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL TEACHING FOR PLANETARY JUSTICE AND GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Misiaszek, Greg William (2021) *Ecopedagogy: Critical Environmental Teaching for Planetary Justice and Global Sustainable Development*, London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Over the past decade there has been increasing recognition of the need for a convergence of the goals of global citizenship and sustainable development education. This has been most clearly articulated within the Sustainable Development Goals. There are, of course, practice-based examples of this in Scotland and Wales but there has to date been little academic work that aims to bring these fields more closely together. There is the recent work by Sharma (2020), but perhaps the most significant and important academic work is that by Greg Misiaszek. A student of Carlos Torres, Misiaszek (2018; 2019 with Torres) has through a range of publications outlined a new approach to environmental education and sustainable development that brings in key thinking from traditions linked to global citizenship.

Central to his thinking, and this is most clearly outlined in this volume, is the term ecopedagogy. This is a pedagogical approach that is informed by the thinking of Paulo Freire and focuses on the importance of environmental justice and planetary sustainability. Misiaszek defines ecopedagogy as ‘essentially literacy education for reading and re-reading human acts of environmental violence’ (2020: 1). His approach is rooted in popular education with an emphasis on critical thinking and transformability.

Misaszek notes that there had been some criticisms of Freire’s work for not addressing environmental matters and suggests that this was an area the great Brazilian thinker was working on when he died. Ecopedagogy is in many ways an attempt to take forward Freire’s thinking and locate it within the context of the economic and environmental crises of the 21st century.

The volume covers a very broad canvas including critiquing concepts of development, neoliberalism, globalisation, post-truthism and the shortcomings of the Sustainable Development Goals. Reflecting the influence of Freire, Misiaszek emphasises the importance of dialogue, praxis and trans-disciplinarity. There is also a recognition of the value of the work of Sousa Santos and epistemologies from the global South, the importance of indigenous knowledges and countering dominant global North narratives.

This volume provides a welcome addition to the academic discourses around sustainability and global citizenship. However, it is not an easy read, it is theoretical and in many ways repeats its main theme several times. There are passing references to examples of practice, but the volume would have been enriched by more examples that give a more explicit explanation of what ecopedagogy could mean in practice. For example, the impact of the climate emergency campaign and the ways in which thousands of young people around the world have engaged in this issue poses wider questions around ways in which people learn and what they do with this learning. I was also disappointed that discussion on the Sustainable Development Goals was limited to a few pages at the very end of the volume. I would have thought that the issues these Goals pose in terms of environmental and social justice warranted a more detailed critique.

Whilst global citizenship themes are implicit throughout the volume, they are only discussed in some detail over three or four pages and then only within the framework of citizenship more broadly. The author does make reference to the need for a more critical global citizenship education, but there is little discussion of the work and influence of Andreotti, Tarozzi and Shultz for example. They are referred to but the volume could have been enriched by comparing his ideas to their work.

However, these critical comments should not detract from what is clearly a very important publication. It provides an important framework for taking forward ideas and thinking on sustainability and global citizenship. Misiaszek reminds us of the continued value of the ideas of Paulo Freire and that calls for planetary justice pose much wider questions about the purpose of

education and learning and the need for constantly questioning the influence of neoliberalism.

References

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Misiaszek, G and Torres, C (2019) 'Ecopedagogy: The Missing Chapter of Pedagogy of the Oppressed' in C Torres (ed.) *Wiley Handbook of Paulo Freire*, Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.

Sharma, N (2020) *Value Creating Global Citizenship Education for Sustainable Development*, Cham: Palgrave.

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