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Education for a liveable future: a study of three environmental education programmes that seek to bring about change

Sophie Perry

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Education for a liveable future: a study of three environmental education programmes that seek to bring about change

Sophie Perry 

School of Education, Communication and Society, King's College London & Centre for Food Policy, City St. George's University, London, UK

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Synopsis

Education is positioned as an important lever in addressing the interlinking crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and social injustice. Yet, scholarly debate remains important in order to critically consider whether education in general, and prevailing approaches to formal schooling in particular, are forces for transformative change towards a liveable future, or normalise learners according to hegemonic and unsustainable habits.

In contributing to this debate, this PhD thesis explores how education programmes with counterhegemonic aims translate from educators' plans into practice and learners' experiences. In doing so, the work describes how education can ultimately contribute to both the disruption *and* the maintenance of the status quo. A multiple case study approach was used to explore three educational programmes spanning formal and non-formal contexts, each of which addressed climate, environmental and social issues with learners aged from 13 to 25 in England. The methodology drew on ethnographic approaches, as the researcher engaged with each case site for at least three months, adopting qualitative data collection methods. Across these sites, interviews were conducted with 9 educators and 18 learners, and over 100 h of participant-observation took place. Age-appropriate participant information sheets were shared with all participants and informed consent was granted from participating educators, learners, and learners' parents where necessary.

Analysis took place recursively and adopted the lens of feminist poststructuralism, which pays particular attention to the power wielded by socio-cultural discourses acting upon and enacted by individuals. Through this lens, it is possible to recognise that within each of the case studies explored, learners and educators both challenge and reproduce dominant discourses that contribute (directly or indirectly) to unsustainability. That is to say, while seeking to realise transformation, the actors within each programme also contributed to the maintenance of the hegemonic status quo. The study offers novel insights into the intricacies and nuances that exist within

CONTACT Sophie Perry  sophie.perry@citystgeorges.ac.uk  School of Education, Communication and Society, King's College London & Centre for Food Policy, City St. George's University, London, UK.

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environmental education programmes that seek to realise change. The thesis develops a conceptualisation of how such programmes, while marred with contradictions and complexities, can nevertheless contribute to transformative change through what is termed '*good enough* environmental education'.

Thesis archive: <https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/portal/en/studentTheses/education-for-a-liveable-future-a-study-of-three-environmental-ed>

Supervisors: Dr. Melissa Glackin and Professor Heather King

Conferring University: King's College London

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ORCID

Sophie Perry  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3465-1966>