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Editorial

The Policy-in-Practice Nexus

Environmental policy development and implementation has become a 'hot topic' in southern Africa, following global imperatives for countries around the world to articulate their intentions to become more sustainable through public policy. Many policies in the region have been developed with the support of large scale donor funding. Much of the funding is often allocated to policy development processes rather than policy implementation processes, and many countries have experienced 'gaps' between policy intention and policy playing out in the field. Recently the Southern African Development Community's Regional Environmental Education Programme (SADC REEP) appointed an environmental education policy advisor to influence regional policy (our Guest Editor, Charles Obol). This edition of the journal, funded by SADC REEP, aims to provide perspective on the policy-in-practice nexus in southern Africa.

Countries in the region have been re-constructing their policy frameworks following independence from colonial powers, and in response to global environmental policy developments. At a regional level, the SADC is currently re-orienting its sectoral organisational framework, and opportunities exist to shape and influence policy processes at a regional level, as well as at national and local levels. Curious to explore some of these and other policy opportunities, processes and issues in more depth, we issued a call for papers inviting authors to write critically and creatively in the policy-in-practice nexus.

The contributions in this edition of the Southern African Journal of Environmental Education illustrate that there are many dimensions to the policy-in-practice nexus. They also reflect an increased sophistication in policy debates in the region, and provide EEASA members and other readers with some useful insights, conceptual tools and approaches to consider policy-in-practice issues. Of interest to us is the critical orientation of many of the papers, as authors report on and attempt to engage with policy-in-practice issues in multi-disciplinary ways. Papers in the journal reflect a broad spectrum of views on policy-in-practice. They also illustrate that environmental and environmental education policy processes are intertwined processes that are shaped by ethics and value orientations, and that these take place in varied contexts and sectors of society. A further theme permeating the contributions is a concern for democratic orientations to policy-in-practice processes. This interest appears to be leading to an 'opening up' of policy theories, and a clear move away from linear, top-down approaches to policy (from the contributions in this edition, it seems that these approaches have limited success). The papers reveal that a range of theoretical/conceptual tools are being explored by

educators, ethicists and environmental practitioners to explore these openings. Underpinning many of these perspectives is a message that policy making and policy implementation are closely linked to worldviews and knowledge construction processes that ought to challenge the dominant *status quo*.

The main aim of this issue is to 'tease out' and explore the different dimensions of the policy-in-practice nexus. The journal opens with a keynote paper by Peter Blaze Corcoran, delivered at the EEASA Conference in Namibia in June 2003. Peter's contribution draws attention to global environmental policy making processes. In presenting the Earth Charter to southern Africans, Peter notes that the Charter provides an inspirational example of a 'people's policy'; and he outlines the possibilities that this policy may hold for education. This perspective draws attention to the fact that policy processes are not always driven by ruling governments or institutionalised structures. People working together, if motivated, can collaborate and develop inspirational policies to guide pathways for sustainable living in healthy and just environments. His paper, and the response to the paper by Ursula van Harmelen (one of the Viewpoint papers), highlights the complex yet crucially important nature of ethical frameworks and value orientations embedded in policy processes and education. The review of Bryant Norton's latest book on his (ongoing) search for sustainability (by Johan Hattingh) provides a range of perspectives on ethical and value-oriented perspectives on the policy-in-practice nexus. Hattingh notes that Norton argues strongly for a pragmatic, adaptive and reflexive orientation to public policy and for a *contextualising* of sustainability questions within action-oriented deliberations and activities.

In a southern African regional context, Charles Obol, Irma Allen and Helen Springall Bach provide some interesting insights into policy development and implementation in different countries. Their paper highlights the fact that much effort seems to be going into the development of policies at regional and national levels, but little attention is being given to the evaluation and review of policies. Their research also draws attention to the way in which environmental education policy 'straddles' both the environmental and the educational sectors. Greater stakeholder participation appears to be a key feature of policy processes in the southern African region, and policies are being developed at a range of different levels, including schools where teachers in a number of countries are engaged in school environmental policy development processes with learners.

A second paper focussing on policy development and implementation processes, by Godwell Nhamo, illustrates changing trends in policy making in South Africa, which, he argues, are leading to an emerging stakeholder paradox. Through a detailed analysis of processes associated with the implementation of the recent Plastic Bags Regulations of 9 May 2003, Nhamo points to the way in which policy implementation processes are shaped by a range of different actors and actants, operating in interacting and inter-dependent network figurations. His paper reveals how these interacting network figurations influence not only the policy implementation process in unexpected ways, but also how they lead to changes in policy. A book review on policy processes in Africa, produced by Keely and Scoones (2003) (reviewed by Nhamo for this edition of the journal), provides further insight into the changing role and power of science in policy development and implementation processes in an African context.

The next three papers in the journal focus on specific research-based accounts of policy implementation processes in three different southern African countries. Colin Griffin reviews the way in which environmental policies and priorities are/are not reflected in the implementation of the Department of Labour's Skills Development programme in South Africa. He concludes that, while there is an awareness amongst Sectoral Education and Training Authorities (SETA's) of the need for environmentally oriented training, little is actually being done to incorporate this focus in this major national policy process. Mandla Mhlipa and Anderson Mondlane review how industry are responding to national environmental policies in Swaziland. In reporting on a training needs survey conducted by the Swaziland Environmental Authority, they point to a similar phenomenon. Industry (particularly multi-national companies) are aware of the need for environmental compliance and greater attention to environmental policy requirements, but little is happening in practice. They conclude that small and medium enterprises should be 'brought into the picture' as there is almost no evidence that these groups are considering environmental issues in their business operations. They also conclude that in-service training for business leaders and practitioners is necessary to address this policy-in-practice problem. In Botswana, Mphemelang Ketlhoilwe has similar findings, this time in the context of environmental education policy implementation in secondary schools. His research investigates the support role of head teachers and education officers in enabling environmental education policy implementation. He concludes that very little is happening in schools, and that there is a need for in service education, materials and policy monitoring processes to improve the situation. These three studies confirm the findings in the Obol, Allen and Springall Bach audit, which reveal that there are excellent policies in place in southern African countries, but many are not being effectively implemented.

The last three research papers explore processes and issues associated with the policy-in-practice nexus in more depth, and from different vantage points. These papers begin to engage the issues surrounding linear orientations to policy implementation. The paper by Justin Lupele explores the meaning of 'community participation' in the context of Zambian natural resource management policies through a participatory materials development process in a rural Zambian context. This case study illuminates that there are intricate and complex social processes at play amongst actors in different contexts; and that a clearer understanding of these is likely enhance efforts to reduce poverty and respond to environmental issues and risks that affect the lives of ordinary people. His concern was not to 'implement' a national policy, but rather to explore community contexts and realities and respond appropriately within the social contexts in which people live their lives. Similarly, Michael G. Jackson from India (a sister country with similar challenges of poverty and inappropriate colonially inspired education systems) challenges assumptions about the effectiveness of national policy frameworks. He notes that there is little point in simply 'tinkering' with policy issues in attempts to enhance implementation. His paper argues for a fundamental re-orientation of the way in which we view policy, and he challenges educators to develop policy out of practice (and not to impose policy on practice). He draws on an example of a long-term initiative in the Uttarakhand environmental education centre to illustrate how policy can be developed from practice. His final argument is, however, not to expand the policy that has developed out of this practice, but rather to establish policies that

allow for open processes of enabling policy out of practice! His paper also illustrates the depth of the change in orientation that is required to approach the policy-in-practice nexus from this perspective. He indicates that a major change in worldview is required, and that the dominance of the Western model of progress and development needs to be challenged in postcolonial countries (such as India and southern African countries). In a similar vein, Luigini Mortari from the University of Verona (Italy) challenges dominant and hegemonic ways of thinking about public policy. Mortari, drawing on Arendt and Heidegger, notes that we need to learn to think differently in environmental education; and that environmental education processes ought to be oriented towards enabling citizens to 'learn to think'. Readers are left with this open-ended challenge to think differently and more ethically about the world and current social patterns and practices (including policy making).

The journal also provides a forum for shorter 'viewpoints'. These papers add perspective to the narratives introduced in the feature articles. Ursula van Harmelen reflects on some of the issues associated with applying ethical frameworks such as the Earth Charter in educational settings, and argues strongly for a critical orientation to values education. Soul Shava from Zimbabwe shares his experience of developing national environmental education policy in his country, and notes that policy making can also be a learning process. Eliwasayako Makundi from Tanzania illustrates that curriculum policy making can often be a long-winded ineffective process; and that there is a need for clear policy frameworks to guide educational practice in formal institutions. Kim Ward and Karsten Schnack step into dialogue with each other and a range of other conversationalists as they debate the environmental/educational focus of the EcoSchools project (a school-based policy initiative).

The journal therefore provides a richly textured forum for deliberations on the policy-in-practice nexus. Contributions from South Africa, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Tanzania and Lesotho combine with contributions from the USA, the UK, India, Italy and Denmark to enrich deliberations on the policy-in-praxis nexus in southern Africa. In this way, the journal reflects its intention becoming an international forum for environmental education practitioners, ethicists and activists in southern Africa and world-wide to step into dialogue with each other, and to advocate for and contribute to environmental justice and sustainable living practices in and through environmental education, ethics and action.

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