

Effects of Neoliberalism and Internationalization of Education Curricula on Implementation of Education for Sustainable Development: Perspectives from Ontario's K-8 Environmental Education Teachers

Alvin Ugwu

Faculty of Education, the University of Western Ontario, Canada

Abstract

The contemporary global education sector faces numerous issues, largely policy or practice-related. In response, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) has emerged as a fundamental ideology in formal educational settings, aiming to address inequalities in environmental, social and economic domains of our ever-changing society. However, the pervasive influence of neoliberalism and the internationalization of education curricula has equally impacted education outcomes across the globe. This research paper underscores the intricate dynamics between neoliberal ideologies and internationalization of education curricula, and how they impact the implementation of ESD in the Canadian context. Focusing on Environmental Education (EE) as a key component of ESD, this research paper draws on perspectives of Ontario's K-8 EE teachers within the Ontario province in Canada, to provide valuable insights into the complexities surrounding the integration of ESD in elementary schools, within the framework of neoliberal policies and internationalized curricula. The ongoing study conducted in the Ontario province of Canada uses a qualitative case study research design to purposively select ten participants from a broader study that sought to investigate the challenges, opportunities, and adaptations emerging from global and local influences on sustainability education. Questionnaires, a focus group, and individual interviews were employed as qualitative data collection methods. The collected data were then analyzed using a thematic and content analysis to deductively interpret the emerging themes. Preliminary results from the analyzed data suggest a trend toward education outcomes driven by the job market and economic considerations, with insufficient emphasis on recognizing the interconnectedness of the global social system.

Keywords: Curriculum, Education for Sustainable Development, Environmental Education, Neoliberalism, Sustainability