

EDITORIAL

In 1993 environmental education was looking forward to the first democratic election in South Africa - now it is in the midst of 'reconstruction-and-development'. For many local environmental educators, this means a contribution, in one way or another, to the new national curriculum. But the challenges of 1993 continue: processes of participative curriculum development are forcing us to clarify different orientations to environmental education in our efforts to shape a curriculum based on the best of our various visions.

A process of theoretical clarification began in the 1993 issue of the *Journal*, which featured descriptions and critiques of two curriculum initiatives, and reviews of approaches to environmental education in South Africa and internationally. This issue continues the process.

Curriculum proposals are informed and underpinned by research, and different orientations to environmental education are accompanied by different orientations to research. Several papers in this issue illuminate the research dimension of environmental education. The first contribution is a preliminary report on a recently completed project by **Eureta Janse van Rensburg**. This study specifically maps out a range of orientations to research and environmental education, in an exploration of research priorities in southern Africa.

Three further contributions provide examples of the orientations to research and environmental education outlined in Van Rensburg's report. **Ben Tyson** describes the results of a research project of the United States Agency for International Development, in which four African Countries were surveyed to explore "the status" of the "environmental education and communication activities" (EE&C). Within the EE&C approach, Tyson calls for social marketing campaigns in which the messages are tailored to 'recipients' researched needs, and recipients have a choice "to buy, or not to buy, the messages promoted" through its "targetted advocacy".

Tyson also notes the need to develop a better capacity in some African institutions for "participatory methodologies", "a new and somewhat divergent concept from past top-down approaches". **Karen Malone's** treatment of participatory research provides a strong contrast with the EE&C approach. From a *critical feminist*

perspective her concern is the unequal relationship between research-and-researched. From that perspective, the power-relations in the EE&C approach appears unacceptably unbalanced. The notion of uncontested messages is here replaced with one of constructed and re-defined knowledge. However, "emancipatory" approaches to research and education also have pitfalls, some of which Malone raises. Her meta-research questions introduce reflexivity in the study, particularly from a personal level.

Reflexivity at a social level features in the paper by **Rob O'Donoghue**. His is a theoretical analysis of the research which underpins a recent national curriculum proposal. The analysis reveals the philosophical and ideological underpinnings of a model apparently based on rigorous research. Expository analyses illustrate the value of theoretical critique in clarifying the various approaches currently featuring in environmental education in the region.

This is a point worth making, when, as O'Donoghue notes, questions are being asked about the value of environmental education which has become overly "academic". (This issue is also raised by Robottom in the editorial of the 1994 *Australian Journal of Environmental Education*). 'Theory' (which some associate, erroneously, with academia only) provides one with conceptual and analytical tools. Without these tools one would be like someone writing all day long with a blindfold on: very busy, relying on experience and intuition for guidance, sometimes getting it right and sometimes not... but never quite knowing, and unable to 'read', clarify, articulate and re-direct what one is accomplishing.

We see the SAJEE as a forum for practitioners to reflect on the theory of their practice. In this issue **Debbie Heck** describes practice in an Australian professional development course, and **Cooper, Coppard, Evans & Barsby** do the same with a South African teaching resource. These practitioners go some way towards exploring the educational ideas behind their interpretations of the initiatives. Heck's description of the educational principles of the *Landcare* course features both 'given-goal' directed and 'critical' ideals. Cooper *et al.* draw on 'didactics' to explain their use of the *Urban Jungle* game. Both papers raise issues which are questioned by the orientations taken by Malone and O'Donoghue's.

In our efforts to clarify environmental education, it is imperative to remember that which it is responding to - the environmental crisis. The major criterion should be how well these processes of social change respond to environmental issues.

EEASA has recently been asked to respond on one such issue, that of **hazardous waste**. Earthlife Africa and the National Environmental Justice Networking Forum is circulating a petition to the Department of Environment Affairs & Tourism to ask for the withdrawal of the recently-released Policy on Hazardous Waste Management. The Policy is aimed at contributing to environmental protection *without impairing* the much needed *economic development* of South Africa. Thus it promotes the importation of hazardous waste from neighbouring countries and "a flexible approach by the regulatory authorities". How much hazardous waste this "flexible approach" will allow in the country will depend, it seems, on how well environmental educators do their jobs, for the aim is "to reduce to a level acceptable to the broader national community, the risk to human health and possible damage to the environment..." (emphases added).

The framing of a hazardous waste policy within an economic imperative for South Africa contributes to an impression that in this region, liberation has come to be equated with economic growth. This has multiple implications, some of which relate to the paradox of our progress.

This brings us to a reminder, to our membership and other colleagues the 1995 EEASA Conference. Focusing on Environmental Education in Africa, the theme *Progress and Paradox* allows for an exploration of a myriad of current issues for consideration, including those raised in this volume. Papers presented at the conference will be considered for a special conference edition of the *Journal* in 1995.

Finally, we wish to **acknowledge** the important contributions of the editorial team (Joanne Ferreira at Rhodes and Allyson Higgs, EEASA Administrative Assistant) and the printing team at SHARE-NET, in bringing out this *Journal*.

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