



Education for sustainable development (ESD) as if environment really mattered



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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the possibility of integrating deep ecology (DE) and animal rights (AR) perspectives within environmental education (EE) and education for sustainable development (ESD). The focus of this article is on three questions: why are DE and AR not currently central to EE/ESD debates? What is the probability that DE and AR will be central within EE/ESD? What can be gained if they were? Different ethical frameworks in relation to non-humans are examined. Both non-consequentialist and utilitarian approaches suggest that DE and AR could be linked to the conception of underlying duty as well as consideration of utilitarian value. From cultural relativism and subjectivism perspectives, DE and AR could be central to EE, but this possibility is contingent on socio-political and cultural context within which educational practices are embedded.

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1. Introduction

It is estimated that the current species extinction rate is between 1000 and 10,000 times higher than it would naturally be. The main drivers of this loss are converting natural areas to farming and urban development, introducing invasive alien species, polluting or over-exploiting resources including water and soils and harvesting wild plants and animals at unsustainable levels (IUCN, 2014).

There are many testimonials to increased global environmental concerns, particularly related to issues related to human security, welfare and health, such as climate change or pollution. There is also

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an increased ethical concern about species of or individual animals or plants, there is no consistent discussion about the scale of instrumental use of other species, either through direct or indirect actions. This scale has increased exponentially with human population growth and increase in consumption and simultaneously growing disregard for non-human species (Crist, 2012). While human rights are widely accepted, concern with the rights of species not instrumental to human ends is marginalized.

While the fate of a single slaughtered giraffe in the zoo may capture public attention through the media (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marius_%28giraffe%29), there is no consistent discussion about billions of farm animals used daily for consumption, or medical experiments. This aspect of consumption is rarely discussed in ESD (Kopnina, 2013c; Kopnina and Meijers, 2014). While some environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGO's) and concerned individuals express concern about negative effect of economic development on biodiversity, habitat loss with associated rapid loss of biodiversity continues unabated. The framing of 'nature' as a 'natural resource' has become prominent in international political rhetoric and is reflected in environmental education (EE) and education for sustainable development (ESD).

1.1. *Material and methods*

This article is based on desk research concentrating on deep ecology (DE) and animal rights (AR) perspectives. This article will focus on three questions: Why are DE and AR not currently central to EE/ESD debates? What is the probability that DE and AR will be central within EE/ESD? What can be gained if they were? In order to answer these questions, we will turn to ethics since the inclusion of varying moral outlooks was recommended by several EE/ESD scholars (e.g., Jickling, 2005a; Jickling and Wals, 2008; Öhman and Östman, 2008; Payne, 2010a, 2010b; Wals, 2010; Kronlid and Öhman, 2013, etc.).

2. **Theory/calculation**

2.1. *Deep ecology, animal rights and pluralism*

Within environmental ethics literature there is a division between adherents of anthropocentric and ecocentric paradigms (e.g. Naess, 1973; Goodpaster, 1978; Rolston, 1985; Taylor, 1986; Callicott, 1989; Merchant, 1992; Crist, 2012) and proponents of continuity between the two views (e.g. Latour, 2004; Ingold, 2006). Extended discussion about nature or animal rights involves debates about the rights should be granted to individuals within the species (Regan, 1985), or the entire species (Taylor, 1991), or even ecosystems (Singer, 1975). It was noted that the inclusion of the whole of nature generates conflicts with the protection of individual animals which is central to the animal ethics literature (e.g. Callicott, 1980, 1988; Regan, 1985; Jamieson, 1997; Garner, 2015).

Ecocentric or biocentric ethics authors, variously termed deep ecology, or dark green ecology adherents, argue that much of what passes for environmentalism, is anthropocentric in nature, condemning animals to be the servants of human interests, and argue for the inclusion of the entire ecosystems into the moral realm. Both DA and AR are inspired by philosophical underpinnings of Henry David Thoreau, Aldo Leopold, Arno Naess and Peter Singer. Some of DE and AR philosophy is said to have inspired the 'radical' environmental movements (Switzer, 2003; Sunstein and Nussbaum, 2004; Scarce, 2005; Taylor, 2008). DE and AR are largely based on a solid common ground of trying to defend the place of nature or animals and – to varying degrees – nature's value and associated rights – in relation to humans. While the range between DE and AR perspective is wide, many authors have argued for reconciliation of divergent views for the sake of mutual strengthening of the fields that typically place the interests of non-human species at the forefront of moral agendas (e.g. Callicott, 1988; Kahn, 2010; Shoreman-Ouimet and Kopnina, 2011). Cohesiveness of these two perspectives lies in the shared 'love of nature' or its individual elements (Milton, 2002). This position can be characterized by and the assumption that individual nonhuman entities or even ecosystems, have

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