

Editorial - English Version

This special issue of the Brazilian journal *Pesquisa em Educação Ambiental* (Environmental Education Research) presents a collection of papers resulting from the reflections systematized by participants in the 13th Invitational Seminar on Environmental Education Research (EER-IS), held from July 13 to 17, 2015, at SESC Bertiooga, São Paulo, Brazil. The publishers of this issue acted as organizers of that event. Some of them took part in the “11th and 12th Seminars on Environmental Education Research”, the former held in Queenscliff, Australia, in 2011, and the latter in Uppsala, Sweden, in 2013.

This seminar series had its first edition in Denmark in 1993, and it is characterized by the meeting of a small group of researchers (approximately 35 to 50) who participate as guests in the different editions of the event.

The Invitational Seminar is a very particular proposal of a scientific event, distinct from a conventional conference or regular seminar. As is well known, for the most scientific events or meetings, the exchange of ideas and experiences is directed through the presentation of research results in communication sections, round tables, poster sessions and so forth. Although that is certainly an important objective, this invitational seminar, proposed in a different format from the usual ones, mainly aims at addressing issues related to specific aspects of research in Environmental Education. It also intends to point out possibilities for an agenda or future demands for the field of research in the area. In our point of view, some characteristics of this proposal make it a unique, peculiar and significant experience.

As particular characteristics of this meeting we can point out: 1) it is not an open meeting, as an event for which all of those who are interested can register and submit research reports for presentation. On the contrary, it is a meeting in which the participants, who were initially a group of scientific journal editors, are invited to take part by the Organizing Committee; 2) the group of participants has to be small, usually around fifty researchers, in order to guarantee an intense and wide interactional atmosphere in a personal level, between small groups and among the participants as a whole; 3) research in environmental education must be the focus of discussions, which implies that participants have a special interest in Environmental Education research; 4) all participants are invited to introduce themselves through some biographical notes and write a brief note in which they present some of their views regarding the main topic of the meeting; 5) senior and beginning researchers are invited to the meeting. Senior researchers are invited to nominate some doctoral students or researchers that have just finished their theses. Such dynamics is an attempt to guarantee a thought-provoking and generative inter-generational exchange atmosphere that can lead to new insights for the EE research field. At the same time the idea is to guarantee the participation of researchers from the five different continents; 6) the dynamics of the discussions are proposed to maintain a high level of interactivity: all the sections have to be productive (generative) and 7) in a distension atmosphere and in a slow-science way of doing it, the expectation is that such atmosphere can ensure the exchange of reflections and experiences in the EE research field, thus raising questions that could be taken as an agenda for environmental education research.

This is the first time that this international seminar has been held in Latin America. In this way, we made a great effort to invite fellow researchers from different Latin American countries. For the Brazilian context, invitations were sent to about thirty research groups in Environmental Education, registered in the CNPq Directory of Research Groups, also considering the possibility of participation of researchers from different Brazilian regions. Ten international researchers attended the seminar, one from Latin America and nine from other regions, as well as fifteen Brazilian researchers.

The theme for the 13th invitational seminar, namely “Critical Environmental Education: what is critical in contemporary critical environmental education: theoretical challenges, tensions, applications and methodological implications”, was chosen by

considering that Environmental Education's being referred to as transformative or critical is a strong tradition in the Brazilian experiences of EE research. Moreover, this perspective is justified when we consider the Brazilian context, in which the event was carried out, as one marked by great cultural, ecological and historical diversity and great social and political contradictions that define a framework of social and environmental injustices. We also have to consider that, for the group of researchers involved in this seminar, this theme continues to be relevant, since we believe that research in this line continues to be necessary in face of the intensification of the neoliberal globalization process, with severe impacts on the most vulnerable populations and environments.

In addition, it seems quite significant for the field of Environmental Education research to consider that, in this set of perspectives proposed by the so-called Critical Environmental Education, there is a wide range of approaches that are anchored on different ontological, epistemological perspectives and methodological approaches. These assumptions are sometimes clearly explicit in our research reports or sometimes, deliberately or not, much more implicit.

Some of these critical perspectives are anchored on the Marxist ontological perspective, whether on its most orthodox side or on other Marxist readings, such as the Critical Theory, for example, also seen today from different reference frames, while others assume themselves as neo-Marxists. Other research groups explicitly assume different models of meta-narratives and meta-theories.

Thus, we are faced with a theoretical and methodological complexity in the field of Environmental Education research which, if on one hand, brings great openness and possibilities for the construction of diverse and multiple interpretive frameworks, on the other, it has, in some way, fostered not so clear, ambivalent and often confusing educational proposals, in terms of their background.

This challenge to research in Critical Environmental Education gives rise to the question we posed as a guideline for the work of the 13th ISEER: what do we mean when we associate the term environmental education with the term critical? What are the consequences and effects of adopting this perspective for our research practices in the field of Environmental Education?

With this intention in mind - a dialogue on what could be understood by research in Critical Environmental Education - the participants of the event, organized in different sub-groups, held several workshops discussing the following sub-themes, relating them to the central theme of the seminar: 1) The constitution of the field of Environmental Education; 2) Training policies for the EE researcher; 3) Theoretical and methodological trends; 4) Aesthetics, ethics and politics; 5) Language and discourses. In a brief synopsis, we present a synthesis of the guiding ideas for the discussions in these different subgroups:

1 - The constitution of the field of Environmental Education:

Stories of research in critical environmental education: different contexts and epistemologies: geo-cultural-historical-ecological-political - local, national, regional.

2 - Training policies for the EE researcher:

Becoming a researcher in critical environmental education. Impacts of global trends and models of undergraduate programs, master's and doctoral research - fast science, scientific salami slicing - classification of institutions based on publications etc. Aspects of the institutionalization and legitimation of spaces and environments in which knowledge on Environmental Education is produced. Critical analysis of proposed policies - Bologna, Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DEDS) and post-2015 changes for education for global citizenship.

3 - Theoretical and methodological trends:

The explosion of theoretical turns and, consequently, emerging methodological perspectives. Coherence between theoretical, methodological and praxis perspectives - critical tensions / dilemmas in deliberating, accessing, choosing among the possibilities brought about

by pluralism. Relationship between ontology - epistemology - methodology in research in the field of Critical Environmental Education.

4 - Aesthetics, ethics and politics:

Considerations of a normative / axiological nature - aesthetics - ethics - Environmental Education policy, in local contexts and global conditions.

5 - Language and discourses:

Critical EE and discourse: theoretical and methodological assumptions and their implications. Analyses at macro and microsocial levels. Relationships between discourse change and social change.

Thus, most of the articles published in this issue respond to this organizing dynamics of the 13th EERIS and are related to the thematic organization of the Seminar. In addition to the articles produced from the results of the discussions in the seminar, two other articles, written by invited researchers, who have traditionally been involved with these critical perspectives and/or with these seminar series, are part of this special issue.

Then, in addition to the evaluation processes of the 13th Seminar and in order to bring forward the more detailed proposal for the 14th edition of the series, the event was finalized with a brainstorming on possibilities to establish networks of research in environmental education, for a more permanent performance along the interstices between the seminars. Finally, we discussed some alternatives for the publication of the memories of the 13th Seminar, which allowed us to have the joy and honor to gather the articles for this special issue of the Brazilian Research in Environmental Education, now coming to the public.

The paper that opens this special issue, by Australian researcher Phillip G. Payne, presents a brief commentary on the Invitational Seminar on Research Development in Environmental (and Health) Education series. By using a ‘history-of-the-present’ method, the paper brings forward some of the fundamental principles and purposes of the Seminar series which helped define the framing, conceptualization, and contextualization of the 13th Invitational Seminar held in Brazil in 2015. The author speaks of Brazil as a ‘location of knowledge’ and of a ‘geo-epistemological’ understanding specific of the local, trans-local, national, regional, and trans-national of what he calls the ‘Brazilianess’ of EER. Finally, the author presents some basic recommendations for the future local and trans-local endeavors of ‘post-critical’ framings of research that reinforce the relevance of “sustaining locations of knowledge production in and for critical perspectives of environmental education research”.

Rob O’Donoghue, researcher at Rhodes University in South Africa, offers to the reader, in the second paper of this special issue, some elements to understand the bases and the different trends in the critical theory and its influence on the environmental education field. The author problematizes concepts such as empowerment, democratic practices and critical pedagogies, with reference to action-research studies, and argues for environmental education as a critical open-ended and co-engaged process.

Chris Eames, Per Sund, Maria Inês Higuchi, Haydée Torres de Oliveira and Rob O’Donoghue, in the third paper of this set, offer a common narrative from a set of vignettes on critical approaches of environmental education in different countries, such as Brazil, New Zealand, South Africa and Sweden. From the emergence of critical environmental awareness in Brazilian education, through critical educational experiences to cope with situations of oppression in New Zealand and Zimbabwe, they come to a critical analysis of an innovation in teaching and research in Sweden. Convergences between these contexts are identified, especially the perspective of participatory research and action as a potential to trace emancipatory paths in EE processes.

In a paper authored by Luiz Marcelo de Carvalho, Marina Battistetti Festozo, Daniel Fonseca de Andrade and Flávia Torreão Thiemann, the authors discuss a perceived undue influence of the current neo-liberalization tendencies in processes of researchers’ training and education. The paper also presents some movements that try to go against this influence and

opens up new opportunities to allow for more diversity in the training and support of new generations of researchers in the field of environmental education.

In the following paper, Paul Hart and Catherine Hart bring a careful reflection on current theoretical and methodological trends in environmental education research, followed by Claudio Aguayo and Flávia Torreão Thiemann's presentation on the issue that took place in the "World Cafe" session that occurred in the 13th Invitational Seminar on EER on "Critical Environmental Education Research: Theoretical and Methodological Trends". In order to contextualize the seminar's theme, they also offer a brief history of Brazilian critical EER.

In the paper "Affectivity in Environmental Education Research", Phillip Payne, Cae Rodrigues, Isabel Carvalho, Laísa Freire, Claudio Aguayo and Valeria Ghislotti Iared present narratives about ethnography in "walking". The authors discuss the crucial role of aesthetics and the importance of affectivity in generating meaning about the agency of the researched by the researcher/actor. The research could aim to reposition the participants as subjects of the study and as authors (doing a "self-study") and tried to challenge their own textual production. With this regard, the contribution to the discussions about what is critical in environmental education goes beyond conceptual issues. In addition to considering the reflexive positioning of a given reality and the concept of ecosomaesthetics, needed in a new language, the paper uses semiotics expressions, such as images/photos and a different idiom to report the research, each idiom represents the comfort of respective "first" languages in which they were collectively and individually "positioned" in the potentially transformative praxis performed.

The two final papers deal with the issues of language and discourses.

The article written by Angelica Cosenza, from Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora, and Isabel Martins, from Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, analyzes aspects of the pedagogical treatment of an environmental conflict that involves environmental injustice and territorial disputes, and problematizes participants' ambivalences towards environmental education discourses identified with emancipatory and conservative views.

Finally, Rosana Louro Ferreira Silva, from Universidade de São Paulo and José Arthur Barroso Fernandes, from Universidade Federal Fluminense, present in their paper a qualitative survey of the abstracts of theses and dissertations read in Brazil between 1981 and 2012 which explored meanings associated with the concepts of discourse and language in such studies. Abstracts were available on the EArte Project database, an open-access digital repository of state-of-the-art Environmental Education research in Brazil. The analyses reveal a wide range of research perspectives present in the studies that mention "discourse" in their titles and open up a discussion about the meaning of such diversity.

We hope that this first special issue of the Pesquisa em Educação Ambiental Journal will bring elements both to the Brazilian community of environmental educators and researchers and to the international community, elements that will allow us to further our understanding of the process of knowledge production related to Environmental Education, thus allowing for advances in our understanding of what is critical in contemporary critical environmental education. As can be seen from the texts compiled here, the intention of the seminar and the researchers who took part in it was not - and such an unrealizable claim was not really in question - to solve the theoretical challenges, tensions, applications and methodological implications. On the contrary, what we hope is that the set of experiences and reflections systematized here can only bring forward the challenges and tensions already perceived by many of us. And, equally, to raise so many others that are certainly present in every step of this practice, which is also the construction of the field of research in Environmental Education. Anyway, our expectation is that the readings can be inspiring and allow those interested in EE research to have some insights and productive ideas for the continuity of our research activities.