Exploring and comparing the development of ‘self-esteem’ through education for sustainable development in two eco-schools

Key words
Critical realism, Communities of Practice, Cultural Historical Activity Theory, Education for Sustainable Development, Situated learning, Whole school approaches, Writing for generalisation

Abstract
My research formed part of a three year doctoral study that explored the processes and practices of two eco-schools engaging in education for sustainable development in England and South Africa. This paper presents the research methodology used in ‘unpacking’ one emerging theme, ‘pupil self-esteem’. Whilst I used an interpretive framework for presenting each case story to demonstrate how this might help in writing for generalisation, this paper aimed to draw the reader down into the critically interpretive research methodology to demonstrate how I explored ‘pupil self-esteem’. Critical realism and cultural historical activity theory provided the tools for the analysis of the (empirical) data. This was to help reveal the underpinning values that related to the practices that lay beneath the surface of what was seen and experienced by exploring the ‘empirical’ in relation to the ‘real’ and ‘actual’. The real were the structures and mechanisms in relation to the empirical (based on the observations), the actual is the vision or the reality in terms of what was happening or experienced and what could happen or be experienced in relation to this empirical data. These insights were drawn from the data collected to gain a deeper understanding of the processes and practices in these two case study eco-schools. It must be remembered that these case stories represented one moment in time, seen through the eyes of one researcher and represented by those interviewed (Smyth & Hattam 2002) and what they said at that time.

Introduction
My research emerged from a need for more detailed case studies (Henderson and Tilbury 2004) concerned with understanding the processes and practices of education for sustainable development. Whilst sustainable development has been described as ‘meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’ (WCED 1987), it has also been described as a process for achieving sustainability (Porritt 2005).

‘Unless we protect resources and the Earth’s natural capital, we shall not be able to sustain economic growth’

(Kofi Annan 2001)

This principle was reiterated in Nicholas Stern’s ‘Stern Review’ (Stern 2006). Throughout history education was and still is based on a need to provide human resources for economic growth. This type of development model within capitalist economies is being questioned (Porritt 2005). Sustainable development is needed to ensure that economies are still developing but within the constraints of a countries existing natural capital. To ensure that damage already done to the Earth, which threatens economic growth anyway (Stern 2006), there needs to be a shift in emphasis on economic growth to economic development which is sustainable (Porritt 2005, Stern 2006). This requires people to ‘think’ and work differently. It needs people to begin to consider the consequences of their actions, not though indoctrination or undemocratic
proceses but through participation, partnerships, reflexive and critical thinking (Tilbury 2008).

Education for sustainable development (ESD) is seen as a process for developing these skills and eco-schools offers a vehicle for schools to begin to engage in this process of change (UNEP 2003). Exploring two eco-schools seen as examples of ‘good’ practice helped in gaining a deeper understanding of the situated learning taking place and provided insight into how schools were approaching education for sustainable development. The case study methods provided the tools for collecting the empirical data. The use of analytical reflexivity throughout the PhD process provided a ‘check’ for my natural tendency to adopt a more scientific approach whilst needing to explore these ‘fluid’ contexts as an interpretive researcher. Internally reflecting and acting on these reflections became an integral aspect for adopting a reflexive interpretive methodology (Stronach et al. 2006). I was able to internally deliberate the externally visible (Archer 2003) aspects of practice. Using a theoretical framework that drew on situated learning and communities of practice helped me to explore levels of engagement, alignment and imagination (Wenger 1998) and provided an interpretive framework for presenting my case stories in writing for generalisation. The theories of critical realism and cultural historical activity theory provided ‘lenses’ to explore the empirical findings in relation to the cultural histories of the contexts. This involved exploring the real and actual in relation to the empirical to illuminate the relationships between policy-theory-practice and explore the schools’ experiences of meeting the requirements of the United Nations decade.

In this paper I have explored one emerging theme. I hope to demonstrate how a critically interpretive research methodology might be used to explore below the surface of what is ‘seen’ and start to understand what is ‘happening’, or not happening, and why. The lessons learnt from this research might be useful when considering the issues of ‘sensitive’ policy transfer (Phillips & Ochs 2004, Shallcross/UNESCO 2008), writing for generalization (Shallcross discussion 2007) and knowledge driven practice versus practice driven knowledge (O'Donoghue discussion 5/11/08).

Using case study
Case study is not seen as a methodology by some authors (Dillon and Reid 2004, Corcoran et al. 2004, Somehik et al. 2005) but I employed case study methods in collecting my data but adopting an interpretive framework to present these case stories which drew on communities of practice and whole school approaches. This helped in my writing for generalisation and in carrying out a comparison of the two ideographical case stories. Whilst case study may be seen as a ‘catch all’ (Robson 1993 in Corcoran et al. 2002) method it provided an opportunity to capture the essence of practice and the intricacies of processes that otherwise would have not been captured. I would argue that all methods have the tendency to miss some key aspects of context due to the situated nature and the need to keep the approach flexible.
Whilst some authors argue that case studies only tell the 'stories' of successes, leaving the data unavailable for public critique (Corcoran et al. 2002), I dealt with this by using corroborated empirical interview data as far as possible. These case stories were not claiming to be transformative (Dillon and Reid 2004) but merely telling the stories in my writing for generalization. These case stories were classified as critically interpretive due to my own critical interpretation of the data. The cases could have been classified as 'quick snap shots of reality as interpreted by a single individual' (Corcoran et al. 2002:14), but I would argue that by presenting them in this way they provided insight for the UN Decade of ESD. I used case study methodology to engage in a critically reflexive practice and would argue that:

'...through further and deeper engagement in critical and reflexive deliberations, and research explorations of socio-historical contexts within which our practices have developed and are grounded, that we shall be able to explicate new, different, and better ways of approaching environmental education.'

(Raven 2006:267)

Case study and generalisation is one of most debated issues (Kyburz-Graber 2004) and I have dealt with this by claiming to write for generalisation. Using an interpretive approach allowed me to understand the way in which individuals created, modified and interpreted their world. Emphasis was on explanation and understanding of what was unique to the particular case rather than general or universal (Burrell and Morgan 1979), whilst some commonalities and generics did emerge. In exploring this social phenomenon I employed methods that allowed me to capture the meaning of social activity of the individual and social structures and hence used a more qualitative, interpretive approach and developed this to help thickly describe rather than measure or predict (Partlett and Hamilton 1977) what was happening.

The empirical data represented what was experienced and in exploring beneath the surface I needed to reflect on the real and actual aspects of practice. The real represented the social and natural objects that existed independently of the human experience. One might argue that we cannot have social objects independent of human experience but these were the clubs that allowed people to come together to share practice. These were the structures and mechanisms which may or may not be understood or observed. The actual represented what was possible (the vision) or what was actually happening and what may or may not have been experienced (Bhaskar 1979, Danermark et al 2002, Sayer 2004). The critical aspects exposed the unobserved structures and mechanisms which may be barriers to engagement and agency.

Figure 1 represents the two case stories and shows I used the same data collection methods, profile of people interviewed and explored two eco-schools of ‘good’ practice to help in my writing for generalisation. Although I explored two ideographical cases, I was able to apply an interpretive framework for presenting these to help others in writing for generalisation.
Figure 1: Overview of Research Methodology

One emerging theme

Pupil **self-esteem** was highlighted as an emerging theme in both schools' practices. This was explored using a critically interpretive research methodology in presenting my writing for generalisation.

**Evidence: Silkmore Primary, England**

At Silkmore Primary an interesting aspect relating to pupil self-esteem emerged whilst exploring the empirical data:

The dyslexia tutor commented that:

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...a lot of children I teach get involved with it (eco-club). I am glad about that as they can be completely confident in that situation where as in the classroom in English and Maths maybe as well their self-esteem can be low and they can find themselves through the environmental things. They can be leaders where as they are not able to do that so it gives them a lot of confidence, self-esteem that they lack...'``

This excited observation made by the dyslexia tutor showed how the pupils benefited from engaging in ESD through the eco-club and eco-school. The pupils articulated how they were developing their own self-esteem through the activities and eco-club. Although pupils did not use the same language they could say how much they enjoyed things, how they could get involved and what else they were doing out of school. Some of the pupils had developed a love for

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gardening. They enjoyed taking on responsibilities as part of the eco-club committee but there was evidence that this was not sustained (Pupil and eco-coordinator quotes). This lack of commitment, when discussing it with the pupils, was partly down to parents not understanding the need for their child to commit. However, this was not surprising when

'...the majority (parents) see it (school) as a baby sitting service and there in lies the snag and because if it is a baby sitting service you don’t have to engage in the learning process…’

Head

Using a critical realist perspective it was evident that the real structures and mechanisms were only engaging a few pupils through the eco-club. Whilst the whole school community was able to contribute their ideas and eco-club membership was open on anyone, it only helped to develop the self-esteem of those engaged. However, whilst pupils had other ideas to contribute they did not always have the confidence to develop these ideas further (pupil quote). Therefore, agency was not mobilized. This could have been due to didactic relationships that exist in conventional schooling. The evidence showed that pupils were encouraged to contribute their ideas (eco-club video) but there was a lack of ‘time’ to develop these ideas further. The pupils were unable to discuss alternatives and engage critically. Situated learning was taking place and pupils were engaged as legitimate peripheral participants thus able to engage and align their practices but were still being held back in terms of imagination.

The dyslexia unit and readers group provided pupils with ‘out-of-class’ ‘space’ to discuss their engagement. The whole school supported the activities and showed an interest. The school policy was linked to the environmental policy through the school development plan. The eco-club adult members were passionate and committed and provided role models for children to engage in peripheral participation. The activities, trips and competitions were supported through the eco-schools network (Local and regional) and eco-schools programme (national). The main focus as an eco-school was on activities and not on the processes of learning related to education for sustainable development.

If we relate this to the cultural history of the community these children resided ‘...in a difficult area... a problem area...which at one time was a depository for some of the more difficult members of society…’

School Governor

Where approximately 67% of the pupils had learning difficulties and were supported through the dyslexia unit and Reader’s Group (local Rotary Club). The schools’ development as a community school had been to encourage parents to take an active role in their child’s education (Head quote). By attracting them for bingo and then engaging them in literacy classes it was hoped that they might attend the local college for further study. The evidence (Head interview) showed this was not happening. During my observations I
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noted parents lacked self-esteem. They would avoid eye contact and I only interviewed one parent through the family centre. This demonstrates how important it was and is to develop this attribute in the younger people of this community, hence one of the emerging benefits of ESD.

Schools in England are driven by government standards to raise achievement but to achieve this, the school needed to tackle the socialisation of its pupils. The development of a pre-school in 2000 was

'...to deal with the social element. You know, to help the children to sit and listen, to behave, to socialize with each other and I think in doing that then, and to gain confidence and self-esteem for themselves as individuals so that then when they move into receptions then they are ready to learn.'

Pre-school Manager

If we relate this to the cultural history of the community, the main focus for being an eco-school was to help pupils socialize, to help them to learn how to take care of things around them. The school mission statement talked about taking care of the environment, ourselves and each other.

It was thought that by developing pupil self-esteem then pupils were more able to learn as

'schools are fundamentally about raising standards... (with) 'every child matters' we are talking about making ‘rounded’ children as a key aspect...but fundamentally schools are about raising standards. So if gardening club actually chills down some of our slightly wilder behaviour problems and they come into school ready to learn then it's actually done its job...'

Head

ESD had a role to play in the development of pupil self-esteem at Silkmore. Whilst the pre-school had helped with the transitions of pupils into key stage one there was evidence of a lack of progress at key stage two. Through improved self-esteem through situated learning practices it was hoped that pupils' achievements would improve. However, was not being transferred into engagement in the classroom (Head quote). The school saw it as an opportunity to provide pupils with life skills and options later in life, an important aspect based on the pupils’ cultural histories. Going back to the ability of parents to engage with pupil learning there were links between parental support, cultural history of the community and academic progress. Parents who:

'... think it (school) is somewhere to drop the kids off...don’t see it as necessarily as a partnership...they (the parents) don’t see it like as parents, staff and the kids all working at it together.’

Pre-school Manager

Childhood stress and trauma meant that the pupils were unable to maintain progress throughout key stage two as the support mechanisms were not in place to facilitate this. Development of pupil self-esteem was seen as important and allowed all pupils to engage in some aspects of learning. However, there
was no clear understanding of this in terms of the curriculum, campus and community (DfES). There appeared to be a lack of joined-up thinking. Aspects of ESD were only integrated into the curriculum on an ad hoc basis. Integration into the curriculum often relied on the enthusiasm, passion and commitment of the eco-coordinator to remind other teachers of special days or one off events. There seemed to be insufficient time and other priorities, such as ICT, to integrate ESD into the curriculum. The actual or the vision of what could happen demonstrated that more of the school community could be involved by integrating this approach through the whole school. Whilst the school did vision their ESD practices as a whole school approach this was more concerned with whole school support. The reliance on the eco-schools programme could be limiting what might be possible (Deputy quote).

In exploring what might be possible the eco-club could provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their roles and understand the need to commit by providing them with the opportunities to lead projects with the older pupils taking the lead in working with younger pupils (with the help of an adult). The adult engagement could be widened to allow other teachers, community member and parents to engage and understand this partnership role in the education of their children. The opportunities for dialogue could help in developing engagement with the language of ESD and its processes for engagement. The language of ESD was not being used and the processes of learning related to ESD were not being centralized. Language acts as a vehicle for mobilizing engagement. Therefore, if the school were not talking about critical thinking, democratic decision making, participation, pupil voice or two-way learning then the possibilities for this would not be mobilized to the extent they could be.

The social and natural objects independent of human experience were the school systems and processes, the engagement in the eco-schools programme and reliance on auditing, production of evidence and the structures for the eco-club and committee. As an eco-school Silkmore relied on the need to create a clean and tidy environment in which to work and focused on recycling and healthy eating. This linked with the need to develop life skills in light of the children’s backgrounds and home environments. The eco-school network in the county provided links to other schools, projects, competitions and trips. Dyslexia unit, readers group, family centre, pre-school all provided support mechanisms within which the school worked. Engagement in the eco-schools programme simply provided recognition for school achievements and this, along with county council or borough council events provided marketing opportunities for the school to improve their profile and local image of a ‘failing, difficult school’. The eco-school was still working within a school system reliant on didactic relationships and transmission learning, but the role of pupils was being developed within these constraints of modern schooling which were heavily focused on meeting government targets and improving academic achievement.
Evidence: St. Nicholas, South Africa

At St. Nicholas the Deputy (and chair of eco-schools working group) spoke about the need to ‘empower’ pupils by getting younger pupils engaged in the eco-schools activities so as to build a sustainable practice. On the other hand the deputy spoke about how ‘powerful’ the older (year 11) pupils were and that they liked ‘being in charge’. These pupils had progressed through the school since it started and were the first group to take their matriculation exam in 2008. The deputy did not indicate that these pupils were engaging in legitimate peripheral participation with the younger pupils at present and there was little evidence of this. She did indicate this was due to their ‘ego’s getting in the way’. The year 10 pupils spoke about how they would like to engage with younger pupils in the school because of the benefits that they had experienced by being part of the eco-schools working group. Whilst they did not directly talk about ‘self-esteem’ this was indicated by their ability to socialize and communicate better.

Pupil A (year 10) said: 'It also helps to socialize with people like when we come to the garden I don’t know most of the people here, I am a very quiet person and I do what I do and when I went to the garden I got to meet a lot of people and now I socialize with the other people basically…'

Pupil B (year 10) said: 'I communicate with people better and I can like analyse data a lot clearer, I got to understand and present it in such a way that everyone understands it and knows where I am coming from. I think that is one of the skills I have developed because I had to present it to the whole school…'

This indicated other aspects related to improved self-esteem. Whilst on the surface of practice some pupils were developing self-esteem the adults did not feel that pupils in South Africa were ready to take on responsibilities to lead projects. The pupils were voicing their ideas, which they wanted to develop further, but their suggestions to do this were based on transmission rather than participative models of learning. Eco-club coordinated the activities such as gardening or resource management. The working group organized how these activities were managed by focusing on the eco-schools portfolio and having members of staff, with two pupils to support them, for each of the focus areas. Each teacher was responsible for providing the evidence for their focus area. With teachers in the working group distributed across the school age range coordination of meetings was difficult. The eco-club activities were run at lunchtime or after school but attendance was variable due to competition with other school activities. Decisions concerned with which special days the school would engage with were decided on by the Deputy (eco-chair). The notice board and portfolio were the main ways to communicate. Integration into the curriculum occurred through the key focus areas (eco-schools programme). Pupils were making suggestions but there was no time/’space’ to develop these ideas or to consider alternatives using critical methods. The pupils engaged were reliant on a transmission model of learning and when the school was
awarded a green flag in recognition of their progression as an eco-school, not all the pupils were aware of the school's achievements. With the existing structures and mechanisms in place it might have been possible to engage in participative models of learning and develop critical skills in evaluating projects and taking on responsibility. The meetings needed to be scheduled at regular time slots on the weekly timetable, to demonstrate commitment and raise its profile in the school. By devolving responsibilities throughout the school it might ensure that all age groups were engaged and heard. Integration into the curriculum needed to be through participation in activities where pupils could think critically and through democratic decision making. Whilst pupils did experience some aspects of ESD in the curriculum it was not a conscious integration and often did not engage pupils in situated learning. Evidence showed that some pupils (those on the working group) were engaged in activities but this was only as directed. The pupils were coming up with ideas, but were not always listened to or did not have the time/skills to follow their ideas through. Although they were experiencing some aspects of participation this was only during school time. The pupils involved in the working group were experiencing legitimate peripheral participation through their engagement with two passionate and committed teachers but these teachers did not always have the time/space to engage the pupils further. The pupils who were engaged had been encouraged to participate as it would ‘look good on their c.v’. Integration into the curriculum was to produce evidence for the portfolio and therefore, the central aspects of ESD were not being experienced. There was no evidence of foregrounding ESD in school practices and learning. The school was still heavily reliant on transmission models of learning.

The Deputy acknowledged this need to get ‘... adults to take children seriously...’ there was a reluctance or inability to do this. Reflecting on the cultural history of the apartheid-era, where whites had dominated. The deputy said it was

‘...very easy not to take children seriously because most of their ideas (were) really awful anyway...’

So whilst she indicated the need to take children seriously she still felt she could dismiss younger pupils’ ideas. This might be due to the fact that she likes

'... being in charge, it is very hard asking children to do it when you know they are going to mess it up...so that is the problem, I think that is a case for all of us as teachers of letting the children have some involvement in it...’

Which relates to aspects of teacher training and she acknowledge the need to engage pupils and was learning to let go:

‘... I don’t know if you noticed the eco-schools board is changed, and that was a mission for me as well because I kept like, 'let me do it for you' ...I’m sitting on my hands and 'let the child do it', because she came to me and said I need to change it...’
This demonstrated how the strong didactic relationships were controlling the extent to which pupils could engage, align and imagine. Whilst the pupils were demonstrating a development of self-esteem this was being managed due to ‘time’ constraints.

The Head felt that

'...16 year olds are not in a position right now, in this country, where they can take the lead in something like that...there are too many regulations and stumbling blocks in their way. They will come up with a good idea and then they need someone, then moulds that ...there is insufficient guidance.’

Head

This aspect of oxymoron demonstrates that pupils were not engaging in legitimate peripheral participation but the Head offered a possibility where this might happen:

‘...the Interact (group year 11 pupils and Rotary) could play a bigger role, be more involved in visiting and perhaps specific projects. I am hoping that the Nottingham Blue Coats visit will be a catalyst and our interact club are going to be involved with Nottingham learners and when they go out to St.Bernham Umzi (developing their school garden at a township school) and that they will be more a catalyst there.’

The interact club and eco-schools working group were a new development in the school (first year). The systems, processes/practices were in a state of transition. The staff were learning how ‘to take children seriously’. The pupils had ideas and whilst they criticized lack of participation of staff their suggestions for getting other pupils involved was based on the same transmission models through advertising as opposed to participation due to their own experiences.

Reflecting on the roles of the pupils and teachers who were engaged in the working group it was possible to see that the teachers involved needed to demonstrate their passion and commitment and value others points of view. The pupils would then mirror and model this behaviour through their own ways of working. This was happening to some extent. The structures and mechanisms behind the working groups, such as the senior management controlled the extent to which this was or was not possible. The school structures like timetabling and types of outreach programmes were decided on by the senior managers but were potentially reducing the opportunities for engagement.

Whilst pupils had voiced the need to engage others and were modeling some participative ways by getting the younger pupils to the gardening club, they were still reliant on publicity methods in trying to reach out further. They were not being provided with ‘space’ to come up with alternative suggestions, to think through alternatives and to try these out. It appeared to be the underlying schools structures and mechanisms that were inhibiting the opportunities for agency. The fundamental meaning of education for sustainable development
and its synergy with situated learning and engagement as a community of practice through participative, democratic and critical engagement were not being dialogued. This language was not central to the aims of engagement. The underlying structures and mechanisms in the school were not aligning the activities and therefore inhibiting the possibilities for imagination.

The social and natural objects, independent of human experience, were the eco-club, working group and focus areas, the eco-schools programme that was central to how the school engaged in ESD. The activities, projects, trips, outreach were all decided upon and organized by the deputy head (chair eco working group). The rewards and recognition, portfolios were the central driver for engagement in ESD and proved to be a powerful marketing tool for the school. The special days were linked into the school year through the curriculum and decided upon by the deputy. This was a school dominated by didactic relationships and transmission models of learning.

**Similarities, differences & generics**

Pupils in both schools were passionate. The pupils engaged were often pupils that might usually sit on the sidelines, quiet or under achieving pupils (though not always). They were able to make new friends. This raised the pupils’ self-esteem by allowing them to gain recognition for their involvement in the projects/activities. It helped pupils to develop their identity by developing a passion for something. Pupils respected the adults who they were working with and began to model their enthusiasm and passion by engaging in legitimate peripheral participation. Both schools were not engaging parents in their activities, which linked with their cultural histories. Silkmore was located in deprived area where parents lacked the self-esteem. In the South African case parents were the emerging middle class who needed to engage in their own education to ensure they could get ahead in the new South Africa that offered opportunities through affirmative action.

It is through programmes like the eco-schools that both these schools were able to develop their structures and mechanisms to support the development of ESD processes/practices. Both schools promoted sustainable development, though not directly, in ways that helped pupils to understand how things might affect their well-being and helped them to build their capacity to improve their lives. Didactic relationships, transmission models of learning were evident in both schools. Whilst engagement in eco-club activities fostered a participative and situated approach to learning, this was not transferred into the classroom. Engagement in both schools involved after school, lunchtime or special days. Whilst it was integrated into the curriculum in both schools, this tended to be on an ad hoc basis. This was documented better in the South African case due to ‘environment’ forming a central theme to the eight NC learning areas.

Silkmore pupils engaged in the eco-club were primary pupils and at St.Nicholas secondary pupils. This meant that when interviewing pupils at St.Nicholas they were more articulate about their ideas but both pupils were very passionate about their involvement. The lack of parental engagement linked to their cultural histories and therefore differed. Silkmore in an area of socio-economic
deprivation with low parental literacy and self-esteem meant the parents were not aware how they could engage and appeared to ‘not care’. If parents did get involved in school activities they tended to be out of the classroom to avoid complications arising due to their poor literacy or confidentiality issues. This highlighted a lack of trust between parents and teachers, but also the issue of time/’space’ to develop these relationships. At St. Nicholas parental engagement was influenced by issues of post-apartheid and the need for parents to improve their own employment opportunities through education in an economic climate of affirmative action and the emerging middle classes. The boarders St. Nicholas indicated that their parents were working away or wanted their children to be able to be educated away from the risks of HIV/AIDS and child rape.

‘Real’ aspects of practices in both schools were similar. These structures and mechanisms were inhibiting the mobilization of what was possible. The pupils were not being given the ‘space’ to critically reflect on alternative visions of what might be possible. The parents were not engaged in schooling or ESD. ESD was mainly being integrated into the curriculum through transmission models of learning. The eco-schools adopted certain aspects of working as communities of practice where pupils could engage as legitimate peripheral participants, but this was limited and the fact that it only reached a minority of pupils meant schools were not benefiting from the situated learning. The schools were not committing to the language of ESD and therefore were unable to mobilize pupils’ critical thinking, democratic decision making and commitment to develop their roles and responsibilities.

By engaging with a critical realist perspective and reflecting on the cultural histories of the two ideographical case stories I presented my understanding of the empirical, actual and real for each case story. The empirical showed how through eco-clubs/eco-school practices pupils were developing self-esteem. Whilst the terminology may have varied there were clear benefits of ESD in relation to developing pupil self-esteem that emerged out of practice. This might are been articulated in terms of excitement, motivation, ability to communicate and come up with ideas. However, the development of this self-esteem seemed to be limited. I wanted to understand:

Why was the development of pupil self-esteem limited in both contexts?

Exploring the actual there was evidence to show engagement in activities which to some extent the schools supported. Only a few pupils engaged as practice focused around eco-club activities and ESD was only integrated into the curriculum on an ad hoc basis. The wider community were not involved (except outreach, specific projects or trips, eco-schools programme). Parents were not engaged in eco-clubs or school in general. ESD in the curriculum was still based on transmission models of learning, with situated learning mainly through the eco-club. By exploring practices at a deeper level it was clear that much more was possible. For example, pupils’ engagement in critical thinking and the decision making processes, engagement with ESD Dialogue, by centralising situated learning within schooling and mobilising parents to engage in their children’s learning.
This led me to explore:

**What was preventing pupil engagement in critical thinking, decision making processes, ESD dialogue?**

Exploring the real, i.e. the structures and mechanisms that mobilise agency/action were similar in both ideographical case stories but related to their context and needs of the school. More importantly they were related to the eco-schools programme and supporting documents. So perhaps it was the real that was preventing this agency.

Reflecting on some of the commonalities and differences we see that conventional schooling has an emphasis on transmission models of learning with a history of didactic relationships. The eco-clubs and eco-schools provided the opportunities to engage in situated learning BUT this was limited. Whilst both schools talked about whole school approaches – they were more about whole school support where the ESD processes of learning were not being centralised, transmission models of learning dominated and pockets of ‘situated learning’ were isolated to eco-club. Going back to the two questions that emerged from the empirical and actual analysis it was possible to see emerging the links between agency and situated learning. What was limiting pupils and preventing them engaging in ESD processes of learning were these transmission models of learning and didactic relationships which pupils had grown up with. Whilst ESD engaged with situated learning this did not form a centralised aspect of learning in either school.

**Conclusions**

- Modern schooling was and is still rooted in transmission models of learning and didactic relationships
- Whilst ESD is concerned with situated learning it is only happening in ‘pockets’
- By centralising ESD as a learning process in schools, pupils might begin to mobilise agency through critical thinking, democratic decision making and two-way learning
AARE International Conference Brisbane 2\textsuperscript{nd} December 2008

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