



Ecopedagogy Work for Planetary Sustainability: Ecopedagogical Teaching and Research in Diverse Local-to-Global Contexts¹

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¹ Recebido em: 13/05/2026. Aprovado em: 19/05/2026.

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Abstract: This article explores eleven teaching and research projects from diverse contexts that employ Freirean-based ecopedagogy and ecopedagogical literacies to foster students' praxis. Reinventing Freire's work, ecopedagogy is founded on the inseparability of social violence and environmental destruction, aiming for "globally all-inclusive socio-environmental justice and planetary sustainability" (Misiaszek 2020). These projects illustrate key ecopedagogical principles: "world-Earth de-distancing", fostering a deep understanding of interconnectedness between humans and Earth; deepening and widening reflexivity, enabling critical analysis of local impacts and holistic planetary well-being; and utilizing (post)critical, problem-posing education that challenges dominant Northern epistemologies, neoliberal ideologies, and "wicked problems," while valuing diverse Indigenous and Southern knowledges. Collectively, these projects facilitate collective transformation and shared agency, moving beyond individual change towards systemic socio-environmental balance and ultimately achieving ecopedagogy's overall goal.

Keywords: Ecopedagogy. Paulo Freire. Critical theory. Social justice. Sustainability.

Trabajo ecopedagógico para la sostenibilidad planetaria: enseñanza e investigación ecopedagógicas en diversos contextos de lo local a lo global

Resumen: Este artículo explora once proyectos de enseñanza e investigación, procedentes de contextos diversos, que emplean la ecopedagogía de base freireana y las literacidades ecopedagógicas para fomentar la praxis de los estudiantes. Al reinventar la obra de Paulo Freire, la ecopedagogía se fundamenta en la inseparabilidad entre la violencia social y la destrucción ambiental, con el objetivo de alcanzar la "justicia socioambiental globalmente inclusiva y la sostenibilidad planetaria" (Misiaszek, 2020). Estos proyectos ilustran principios ecopedagógicos clave: el "acercamiento entre mundo y Tierra", promoviendo una comprensión profunda de la interconexión entre los seres humanos y la Tierra; la profundización y ampliación de la reflexividad, posibilitando el análisis crítico de los impactos locales y del bienestar planetario de manera holística; y el uso de una educación (pos)crítica y problematizadora, que desafía las epistemologías dominantes del Norte, las ideologías neoliberales y los "problemas perversos", al tiempo que valora los diversos saberes indígenas y del Sur global. En conjunto, estos proyectos favorecen la transformación colectiva y la agencia compartida, yendo más allá del cambio individual hacia el equilibrio socioambiental sistémico y, en última instancia, hacia el logro del objetivo general de la ecopedagogía.

Palabras clave: Ecopedagogía. Paulo Freire. Teoría crítica. Justicia social. Sostenibilidad.

Trabalho ecopedagógico para a sustentabilidade planetária: ensino e pesquisa ecopedagógicos em diversos contextos do local ao global

Resumo: Este artigo explora onze projetos de ensino e pesquisa, oriundos de contextos diversos, que empregam a ecopedagogia de base freiriana e os letamentos ecopedagógicos para promover a práxis dos estudantes. Ao reinventar a obra de Freire, a ecopedagogia fundamenta-se na inseparabilidade entre violência social e destruição ambiental, visando à "justiça socioambiental globalmente inclusiva e à sustentabilidade planetária" (Misiaszek, 2020). Esses projetos ilustram princípios centrais da ecopedagogia: o "encurtamento da distância entre mundo e Terra", promovendo uma compreensão profunda da interconexão entre os seres humanos e a Terra; o aprofundamento e a ampliação da reflexividade, possibilitando a análise crítica dos impactos locais e do bem-estar planetário em perspectiva holística; e o uso de uma educação (pós-)crítica e problematizadora, que desafia epistemologias hegemônicas do Norte, ideologias neoliberais e "problemas perversos", ao mesmo tempo em que valoriza saberes diversos, indígenas e do Sul global. Em conjunto, esses projetos favorecem a transformação coletiva e a agência compartilhada, ultrapassando a mudança individual em direção ao equilíbrio socioambiental sistêmico e, em última instância, à realização do objetivo maior da ecopedagogia.

Palavras-chave: Ecopedagogia, Paulo Freire, teoria crítica, justiça social, sustentabilidade.

Introduction

When education focuses on benefiting some humans on the backs of many others and is anthropocentric – centering only humans and ignoring the rest of Nature/Earth (ecopedagogical term of *world-Earth distancing*),^{6,7} authentic learning for socio-environmental justice and planetary sustainability becomes impossible (Misiaszek, 2020b). Such teaching is opposite to ecopedagogy, which has the goal of "globally all-inclusive socio-environmental justice and planetary sustainability (Misiaszek, 2018). Learning from such teaching is often from education for "sustainable development" (or sustainable Development within ecopedagogical terms) that is perversely separated and often counters ecopedagogy's goal. This article explores eleven teaching projects using Freirean-based ecopedagogy and associated ecopedagogical literacies from diverse contexts toward students' praxis rooted in the ecopedagogical goal.

To understand the deep interconnected relationship between the *world* of humans and the rest of *Earth*, with the world as part of Earth (i.e., teaching for world-Earth de-distancing) praxis includes both *deepening* and *widening* reflexivity.

Ecopedagogical goals include "deepening" and "widening" students' and teachers' perspectives of environmental injustices and planetary unsustainability for enacting crucial transformation (Misiaszek, 2018). Deepening indicates teaching to critically understand the impacts of environmental violence locally through the eyes of those who suffer from it. Widening is teaching environmental well-being for all in the world globally and the planet holistically. I use the phrase "globally all-inclusive" to emphasize the former, and "planetarily" or "planetarization" emphasizes the latter. (Misiaszek, 2023c).

Teaching for such reflexivity within praxis needs teaching through multiple, diverse epistemological realities, especially countering sustainable Development is different from sustainable development, as described below.

[d/Development and ecopedagogy:] four defining factors of esD [and Development (capital and italicized 'D')]: (1) neoliberal economics as the sole factor of development analysis; (2) deprioritizing economic justice concern by ignoring how development processes sustain/increase hegemony; (3) deprioritizing planetary sustainability for Earth's balance; and (4) local framings of development are disregarded for globally constructed ones 'from above' (e.g. Western Development models), denoted by the lower-case, underlined, and italicized 'd'. (Misiaszek, 2020c, p. 16). I utilize the

⁶ "Earth" and "Nature" will be upper-cased to not ecolinguistically objectify either. In addition, the article "the" will not be written with "Earth" for the same reason.

⁷ Freire's wording of "the world" refers to anthroposphere, not separating from the rest of the Earth (Misiaszek, 2023a). These mean that all humans and the "trees, birds, animals, rivers, seas, the stars" are part of the world (Freire, 2000, p. 82)

lower-cased *d*development and upper-cased *D*Development to indicate, respectively, empowering versus oppressive, holistic versus hegemonic, just versus unjust, sustainable versus unsustainable, and many other opposing framings of who is included within “development” and framings of *d/D*Development goals. There are no absolute origins or framings differentiating between *d/D*Development, but rather the essence and outcomes of their framings... Constructs of *d*development that counters growth towards and emergent from *D*Development (Misiaszek, 2020b).

Gutiérrez and Prado (1989) argue that rediscovering the world requires valuing the cultural knowledge of the Self and challenging binary ideologies that frame traditionalism as an obstacle to modernity.

In various ways, this is deepening reflexivity for praxis but also for widened epistemological diversification for countering epistemologies of the North (grounded in coloniality, patriarchy, and capitalism (see Santos, 2018) towards ecopedagogy's goals. This widening coincides with Santos' (2018) essence of teaching through *ecologies of knowledges*). Modernities here would be grounded in *d*development in which traditionalism coincides with but modernities guided by *D*Development (Misiaszek, 2020d). Teaching to unlearn such false binary ideologies helps to disrupt *d*development opposing Northern dominant, neoliberal logics with traditional epistemologies.

Teaching students to (re)construct and (re)imagine their valuing of their relationships with the rest of Nature and the Universe among all other humans is essential. However, socio-historically, environmental justice for the world and non-anthropocentric valuing of Nature has been absent within dominant cultures grounded in neoliberal and other global Northern ideologies and approaches. Emergent rationalization leads to undervaluing and delegitimizing Indigenous and Southern knowledges and needs. Educating for other possible worlds that for learners to (re)connect with the universe in deepened and widened ways, helps to resist hegemonic powers through false neoliberal commonsense to instill values that prioritize solidarity and *d*development as the central elements (Gadotti, 2008a, 2008b; Misiaszek, 2011). In this context, engaging in critical, conflicting but peaceful teaching approaches for *d*development is vital for locally-to-globally-to-planetarily contextual reflexivity (i.e., deepened and widened reflexivity) for successful transformation towards ecopedagogy's goal (Misiaszek, 2022c).

Teaching for environmental justice and unending solidarity with the rest of Nature is guided by reinventing one of the most important educators' works of the twentieth century, Paulo Freire (Gadotti, 2008b; Gadotti; Torres, 2009; Misiaszek,

2023c; Misiaszek; Torres, 2019). Freire's approach to teaching environmental issues emphasizes the inseparability of social violence and environmental destruction, a key foundation for ecopedagogical praxis (Misiaszek, 2015)⁸. Freire's unfinished scholarship on ecopedagogy, which was his next planned publication before his untimely death (Gadotti, 2008b; Gadotti; Torres, 2009; Misiaszek, 2023c; Misiaszek; Torres, 2019), laid the groundwork for connecting environmental pedagogies with critical literacies aimed at transforming the world. As Giroux (2010) and Misiaszek (2023a) note, this approach links justice, peace, democracy, and citizenship with planetary sustainability and the broader social forces that shape (and often undermine) environmental actions. Freire (2004) emphasized the inseparability of the world and Earth, asserting that any liberatory approach to teaching must recognize that social justice and environmental violence cannot be separated:

I do not believe in loving among women and men, among human beings, if we do not become capable of loving the world. Ecology has gained tremendous importance at the end of this century. I must be present in any educational practice of a radical, critical, and liberating nature. (2004, p. 25).

Freire's scholarship meticulously acknowledged teaching in a way of loving the world and the rest of Nature which, in turn, deepens and widens connections among humans' need for socio-environmental justice in the world and/or planetary sustainability - in essence, world-Earth de-distancing. However, reading the world is a messy, complex, and ongoing process. It requires continuous questioning, planetary awareness, and the ability to critically examine what is happening around us to others and to the rest of Nature in order to cultivate balance between humans and the world. This balance is essential to what Misiaszek (2023a) defines as "planetary sustainability" within the context of *world-Earth* relationality.

Ecopedagogical literacy

Ecopedagogy inherently has (post)critical approaches to teaching to disrupt banking environmental pedagogies, creating spaces that include dialectical, democratic participation and utopia rooted in justice and sustainability (Gadotti, 2008a, 2008b; Misiaszek, 2020b, 2023c). Unlike many other environmental pedagogies, ecopedagogy aims to deepen and widen reflexivity by engaging students in (post)critical,

⁸ "Unsustainable" is used with "environmental violence" because there is a continuum of human acts of violence from, for example, turning on a light switch to mountaintop removal for natural resources extraction (see Misiaszek, 2018, utilizing the work of Michael Apple).

problem-posing education that confronts the politics of environmental violence and fosters transformative praxis toward world–Earth de-distancing (Misiaszek, 2012, 2015). Misiaszek defined ecopedagogy as:

essentially literacy education for reading and rereading human acts of environmental violence with its roots in popular education, as they are reinventions of the pedagogies of the Brazilian pedagogue and philosopher Paulo Freire. Ecopedagogies are grounded in critical thinking and transformability, with the ultimate goal being to construct learning with increased social and environmental justice. Rooted in critical theories and originating from popular education models of Latin America, ecopedagogy is centered on better understanding the connections between human acts of environmental violence and social violence that cause injustices/oppressions, domination over the rest of Nature, and planetary unsustainability. (Misiaszek, 2020b, pp. 16–17).

Beyond the quote, there are the questions on the different dimensions, reinventions, and possible limitations of Freirean reinventions of ecopedagogical literacy, as well as ecopedagogy overall.

One key aspect for Freirean and ecopedagogical reinventing is teaching beyond the disruption of unlinking human oppressions from environmental violence. This is an approach crucial for reinventing post-humanist perspectives that critically explores anti-anthropocentrism beyond-humans (Misiaszek, 2025a)⁹. Posthumanist reinventions help in deconstructing critically to understand the limitations of humanization without losing humanism towards ending humans' domination of Nature beyond-humans (Misiaszek, 2025a). Freirean ecopedagogical teaching opposes banking education by acknowledging lived realities while emphasizing the importance of teaching through students' utopias. It creates space for dialogue and encourages the development of inclusive planetary imaginaries that challenge anthropocentrism. It deepens and widens Freire's (2000) notion of *unfinishedness* and reflexivity by expanding and diversifying epistemological spaces and intersectional understandings of the Anthropocene. In doing so, it disrupts dominant narratives about human–Earth relationships and invites us to (re)connect more deeply with the rest of Nature (Misiaszek, 2023b, 2025a).

Second, (post)critical ecopedagogical lenses are essential for teaching toward praxis that can help untangle the messiness of environmental (super) wicked problems – and ultimately work toward ending them (Misiaszek, 2025a; Rittel; Webber, 1973). Crowley and Head (2017; Misiaszek, 2025a) advanced Rittel and Webber's (1973)

⁹ Although posthumanism interrogates human's ability to counter anthropocentrism, it doesn't devalue critical theories and remove humans' existence. Instead of giving static solutions to environmental problems, it (re)invents/imagines epistemologies, theories, and pedagogies for ecopedagogical praxis.

original descriptions of (environmental) wicked problems. These problems scientifically deprioritize public good and bring subjective positions without valuing equity, justice, or planetary sustainability. Though "wicked problems," or which Levin *et al.* (2012) expanded to "super wicked problems" are difficult to navigate, and difficult to solve but Misiaszek (in press, 2025) has argued that ecopedagogy is essential to do so.

One key aspect of this is the need for ecopedagogically teaching to (post)critically unpack how media and technologies are entangled in instilling (anti-)environmentalism – often (super) wickedly with environmentalism. There are various approaches to incorporate within ecopedagogical literacy, including postdigitalism, to (post)critically unpack the "human destinies [that]cannot be thought of without technologies" and to read the "hard to define; messy; unpredictable; digital and analog; technological and non-technological; biological and informational..." (Jandrić *et al.*, 2018, p. 895). As "advancing" technologies are inseparable from obtaining ecopedagogy's goal, postdigital (re)reading offers scope to identify and disrupt the technological anti-environmental oppressions (Misiaszek, 2023d). This is especially important in an era of intensifying post-truthism, social media influence, and "advancements" in artificial intelligence (AI) and virtual reality (VR) to disrupt (super) wicked problems (Misiaszek, 2020a, 2020e).

In Misiaszek and Torres' (2019) writing, "Ecopedagogy: The missing chapter of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*," they call for possibilities of collective transformations to construct "actions by humans *for* all humans and *for* Earth. Such transformations are emerged from our histories, societies, and culture by continuously reading the world to search for (un)answered questions of being human withing the World (Misiaszek;Torres, 2019)".

Collective transformation through diverse epistemologies in ecopedagogical teaching from diverse contexts leads to (post)critical reflexivity—"what is for me, and what is for others?"—with the "others" in global and planetary scopes. The next section provides some examples of such ecopedagogical teaching.

Approaches and Practices of Freirean Ecopedagogy

The following subsections explore ecopedagogical practices from various contexts around the world, drawing from theoretical framings and empirical evidence. These works are derived from dissertations, program-based implementation, and

grounded knowledge-highlight transformative actions, inclusive pedagogical approaches to promote harmonious wellbeing.

Dancing The Biomes: A Body-Based Ecopedagogy (Stephanie Gottlob, Prescott College)

For my master's thesis (Gottlob, 2024), I designed *Dancing the Biomes, an ecological dance pedagogy for embodying environmental ethics* (DTB). DTB is a body-based ecopedagogy for higher education dance and environmental humanities programs. It is a trans-disciplinary, ecocentric, movement-based curriculum that brings ecojustice into dance education and embodiment into environmental humanities. Currently, I am a PhD student at Prescott College investigating *DTB* through participatory action research.

DTB is influenced by ecopedagogy's sustainability education (see Misiaszek, 2023a) and seeks to expand its experiential approach by emphasizing the role of the sensing, moving, creative body in exploring environmental ethics. From the perspective of DTB, environmental ethics are not just facts and theories but are awarenesses and experiences that reside in the body kinesthetically, somatically, and kinetically (Shapiro, 2015). *DTB* offers a creative, somatic, movement-based, and mindful approach to embodying environmental ethics and experiencing a planetary perspective on the natural world. DTB is divided into three modules, which, like Ecopedagogy, combine environmental justice with social justice, bringing ethics into a planetary perspective. The three modules are: (1) *Place & Identity*: students explore the power inequities inherent in mapping and embody creative cartographic alternatives (Biggs, 2011); (2) *New Materialism* (Dolphijn & Tuin, 2012): students experience Nature through contemporary feminist theories; (3) *Environmental Ethics*: students embody ecofeminism, queer ecologies, and the rights of Nature. Additionally, the students creatively investigate the various Earth biomes.

DTB classes are designed for students in higher education but can also be adapted for community groups outside of academia. These sessions alternate between immersive experiential lectures indoors and exploratory movement sessions outdoors with landscape. In each session, students engage in movement improvisations, somatic mindfulness exercises, movement tasks, discussions, dynamic lecture presentations, and video showcases. Students record their body-based learning through drawings,

diagrams, and maps.

Ecopedagogy in Practice: Collective and Personal Contributions to Sustainable Education (Diana Cristina Oróstegui González, Santillana Colombia)

In Colombia, ecopedagogy has emerged as a powerful educational approach that integrates environmental education with social justice, cultural relevance, and community engagement. Rooted in Freire's critical pedagogy, it promotes environmental awareness, ethical responsibility, and active citizenship (de Andreotti, 2014; Misiaszek, 2015). Closely linked to Global Citizenship Education (GCE), it positions learners as agents of sustainable change. Academic research underscores its potential. Navarro Rojas (2024) created a digital booklet for Gimnasio La Arboleda in Ibagué, connecting ecopedagogy with science, technology, and ethics through activities on biodiversity and sustainability. Oróstegui-González (2023) documented how schools in Boyacá integrated environmental projects into the curriculum after implementing the Cátedra de Paz, fostering environmental care and peaceful coexistence.

Community-based initiatives further reflect ecopedagogy's impact. In Valle del Cauca, the OjO de Agua center and Corpopalo implemented a birdwatching and conservation project with Nasa Indigenous communities¹⁰. The Escuelas Sostenibles program, led by Santillana, OEI, and Fundación Santillana, recognized over 1,300 sustainability-driven schools in Latin America. Colombia's Granja-Escuela Amalaka was awarded for transforming eroded land into a natural reserve¹¹. My own work aligns with these principles. As an academic consultant for Santillana, I have supported teacher training in environmental education and completed courses on sustainable futures. Additionally, I worked in England for one year with International Baccalaureate students, designing modules, guides, and materials for the Sharing the Planet theme in their Spanish B oral assessments. This experience was particularly significant as it exposed students to global environmental issues, encouraged critical engagement with the Sustainable Development Goals, and promoted deep reflection on individual and collective actions. These experiences highlight ecopedagogy's transformative and

¹⁰ *Eco-pedagogical Projects in the Department of Cauca Region in Colombia*. Retrieved from <https://celebrateurbanbirds.org/community/events/eco-pedagogical-projects-valle-del-cauca-region-colombia/>

¹¹ see <https://www.santillana.com.co/conoce-los-proyectos-ganadores-de-la-etapa-nacional-de-premios-escuelas-sostenibles/>

context-sensitive role in Colombian education.

Empowering Rural Youth: Ecopedagogy in Lesotho Through Photovoice (Lineo Melida Kobeli (Embassy of Lesotho in China))

The study explores photovoice as a tool to empower rural students in a high school in Lesotho's Mokhotlong district through six months of participatory action research within an ecopedagogical framework (Kobeli, 2025). As co-researchers, students used photovoice to reflect on their socio-environmental realities, redefining empowerment within their rural context. Grounded in Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy, Ubuntu philosophy, and critical place-based education, the study showed how ecopedagogical participatory workshops (EPWs) nurtured critical socio-environmental consciousness¹². Through EPWs, students progressed "from identifying problems to questioning causes, beneficiaries, and solutions. Their narratives reflected Ubuntu-inflected empathy ("we suffer when the river suffers") and an emerging political agency aligned with Freire's (2000) notion of praxis (Misiaszek, 2020c).

The students' photographs documented water scarcity, erosion, and pollution in local rivers. Narratives from semi-structured interviews illuminated the lived realities of their villages, exposing the interconnected issues of poverty, gender inequality, and political neglect. Five interrelated themes emerged: spaces for critical reflection, Photovoice as civic witnessing, gaps in youth empowerment, shifts in power awareness, and reconstructions of school identity. These narratives fostered ethical responsibility grounded in place, Indigenous knowledge, and solidarity. The research reaffirms that ecopedagogy, when embodied through relational, participatory methods, can shift education from passive transmission to critical praxis.

Can Voices end the Dominant Narratives of Development in Bangladesh? (Jannatul Mawa, Beijing Normal University)

Bangladesh is a land of potential with its natural and geographical resources. It's a South Asian country with deep connections to the environment. However, aspiring to

¹² Photovoice enables individuals to use photography to represent and improve their communities. It promotes participation, reflection, and knowledge-sharing through visual evidence (Wang & Burris, 1997).

be more economically developed, this densely populated country often embraces initiatives that appear as development, but overlooks the needs of local people and environmental well-being - thus Development. One notable example of resistance to such practices is 'Beel Dakatia Andolon' ('Beel Dakatia Movement'), which started in the late 1980s and ended successfully in 2002. Muganga, Mawa (i.e., myself), and Misiaszek (upcoming, 2026) have unpacked these issues within ecopedagogical framings through Indigenous Bangla and Ugandan epistemologies. This movement is located in the southwest coastal region, where the local communities suffered due to the modern water management systems that caused drainage blockage and adversely affected agriculture. This movement stands as one among many in protesting for socio-environmental justice and planetary sustainability in Bangladesh - the essence of ecopedagogy (Misiaszek, 2020b).

These visionary people who courageously raise voices against oppressions have demonstrated the impact of activism in bringing positive changes from local to the planet. The major concern is how to meaningfully educate this nation, Bangladesh, for Earth globally and planetarily. To address the aspect of socio-environmental justice, democratic education, and, what Freire (2000) stressed, disrupting apolitical, hierarchical 'banking models' of teaching for the populations of Bangladesh to deepen and widen their reflexivity on what is their, and others', contextual sustainable Development in world-Earth de-distancing ways. Critically learning, unlearning and re-learning the issues of socio-environmental inequalities, people may understand and reshape the dominant discourses of Development from diverse and contextually grounded perspectives. Such transformative education is essential for imagining and realizing sustainable futures in Bangladesh and beyond.

Bridging Ecopedagogy and Language Education (Ricardo Römhild, University of Passau)

The way we (teach and learn to) speak about Nature, Earth, and our positionality in relation to them matters – language constitutes realities. Therefore, the intersections of ecopedagogy and language education are worth investigating. My (Ricardo Römhild, see Römhild, 2023a) research focuses on how ecopedagogy (see, e.g., Misiaszek, 2020b) may inform language classrooms, particularly with regard to its socio-ecological aims, and how, in turn, language education may contribute to the objectives of

ecopedagogy, such as identifying, critiquing, and ultimately ending socio-environmental injustices (e.g., Misiaszek, 2018, p. 9). This includes queries into the language used in learning materials, in curriculum and in guiding policy documents. Part of this research tackles current roadblocks in implementing ecopedagogies across the curriculum and explores implications in theory and practice if consistent implementation were successful (Römhild; Gaudelli, 2021; Römhild, 2021, 2024).

Building on the premise that language and communication are at the core of human agency, a second trajectory of this research illuminates how language education may contribute to taking action for socio-environmental justice (Römhild, 2025). A third pillar focuses on how educators can bring ecopedagogical perspectives and objectives into the language classroom by means of learning objectives, contents, and materials (for an exploration of the potential of eco-documentaries in the English language classroom, see Römhild, 2023b). This is closely connected to the underlying philosophies that may guide such education, with hopeful approaches to language pedagogy (Römhild, 2023b; Römhild; Misiaszek, cf; Römhild; Weik von Mossner, 2025) promising to provide new impetus in theory and practice. These approaches are grounded in critical pedagogy and social justice education, and therefore closely relate to the goals of ecopedagogy. Communication, the art of argumentation and peaceful negotiation of perspectives is key to all of this; and connecting ecopedagogy and language education in theory and practice benefits both the language classroom and the wider struggles for socio-environmental justice.

Reinventing Business Education Through an Ecopedagogical Lens (Eva Svejdarova, Skoda Auto University and Anglo-American University)

In response to the interconnected crises of climate disruption, social fragmentation, and economic injustice, we must reinvent business education in higher education institutions (HEIs). Our work in the Czech Republic contributes by addressing key tensions between prevailing business logics, such as endless growth, resource extraction, and anthropocentrism, and the need for planetary sustainability and the disruption of dominant (Northern) epistemologies through ecopedagogy (Misiaszek, 2022b, 2023a, 2025a).

In our praxis, we have put into action a reinvention grounded in ecopedagogy that challenges the anthropocentric and neoliberal foundations of conventional curricula

to “read Earth to read the world” (Misiaszek, 2022b, p. 2298). As educators, we promote cultivation of ecopedagogical literacy, enabling students to “read” and “rewrite” the world through justice-oriented lenses extending to Nature and Earth themselves, reinforcing the ecopedagogical goal of de-distancing humans from the rest of Nature (Misiaszek, 2025).

In our own work, we apply Wholeness Systems Thinking (WTS) (Holman; Švejdárová, 2023a, 2023b, 2024), which critiques the reductionist mindset of traditional business models and promotes purpose-driven design. *Boundary literacy* (Švejdárová, n.d.) we employ requires ethically defining and addressing planetary, social, and epistemological limits, challenging the false neutrality of neoliberal economics and rejecting the logic of endless maximization, resource extraction, and exploitation of the Other.

Through the 21st Empowering Wholeness Adaptive (EWA) Educational Model (Holman; Švejdárová, 2023a, 2023b, 2024), six cohorts from 16 countries have collaboratively developed sustainable business models with small local Czech enterprises. Implementing principles of ecopedagogical literacy is not a hypothetical exercise; but an act of collective reinvention grounded in both local and global dialogue and action, while also reinventing relationships with one another and the rest of Earth. It fulfills one of the core needs of ecopedagogy: to foster transformative praxis through education that drives “crucial paradigm shifts leading toward globally all-inclusive environmental justice with planetary sustainability” (pp. 600–601).

Uganda's Sacred Environmental Practices (Allan Muganga, Beijing Normal University)

Uganda has long used local epistemologies to protect the environment. In some of my ecopedagogical research, I explore how epistemologies from the Global South are often marginalized and disrupt such marginalization. I work on (re)valuing Uganda's local knowledge systems in shaping sustainable environmental pedagogies and practices, challenging Global Northern ecopedagogical dominance. Indigenous communities rely on beliefs and practices that are not just about conservation, but also deeply tied to their spirituality. Such ways of knowing challenge anthropocentric paradigms (Kopnina *et al.*, 2018), and resist oppressions and inseparable unsustainability embedded in neoliberalism and (neo)coloniality. Ecopedagogical work

disrupts socio-environmental injustices and challenge the anthropocentric dominance that underpins the Anthropocene, presenting a transformative framework for sustainability that moves beyond anthropocentric thinking (Misiaszek, 2023b).

In many of Uganda's communities, like the Baganda, humanity, Nature, and the supernatural are united within a single cosmos as reflected in their use of totemism, taboos, and the deeply embedded spirituality, connecting people to their environment and the supernatural (Mbalangu *et al.*, 2024). This interconnected worldview is a cornerstone of ecopedagogy, as it stresses the need for world-Earth de-distancing (Misiaszek, 2020b). Similarly, other Ugandan communities preserve forests to sustain ecosystems. For others, like the Batwa, Nature is sacred – connected to their ancestors and their spirituality. Cutting down trees acutely disturbs their deeper, spiritual connection to Earth.

The Karamojong people, known for cattle herding, practice a form of mobility-based herding that indirectly addresses global warming and sustainable land use (Barber, 1962). These Indigenous practices challenge the Northern epistemological dominations that have often excluded them from global conversations (Smith, 1999). (Re)valuing and (re)legitimizing Southern/Indigenous epistemologies to (re)imagine sustainable futures extends beyond Uganda or the Global South, for contextually ecopedagogical approaches to knowledge lending and borrowing globally (i.e., critical comparative education).

Ecopedagogy for Systems Thinking in Climate Education (Shaghig Chaparian, New York University (NYU))

Critiquing traditional Climate and Environmental Education (CEE) for its fragmented, neutral, and technocratic tendencies, my research is grounded in the principles of ecopedagogy (Misiaszek, 2020b). Ecopedagogy calls for deepening and widening learners' understanding of socio-ecological issues within broader sociocultural, political, and justice-oriented contexts. Drawing from this lens, my work explores how systems thinking can advance ecopedagogical goals.

Some of my work conceptualizes systems thinking in CEE as the capacity to understand and act on environmental issues across interconnected historical, political, economic, scientific, technological, social, health, and media/communication dimensions. Additionally, it argues that achieving ecopedagogical goals requires

developing key literacies, including critical socio-historical, civic, technological, political, epistemic, and cultural literacies. These literacies support learners and educators in linking local environmental concerns to broader regional, global, and planetary dynamics.

This study examines the development of a systems thinking framework for CEE through collaborative climate literacy design principles, informed by systems thinking dimensions from various partners in a regional, multi-sector partnership in Appalachian Ohio. Using a qualitative methodology that integrates ethnography, design-based research, and intervention research, the project facilitates the formation of Communities of Practice (CoPs), where diverse partners engage in dialogic, democratic spaces to collectively build the framework. This multi-voiced approach highlights the need for adaptable frameworks that respond to evolving environmental and social systems. An accessible systems thinking framework aligned with ecopedagogical goals is essential for addressing interconnected environmental issues, which are often ignored in fragmented methods. My research addresses critiques of abstraction in ecopedagogical work by applying principles in practice and providing a dynamic model to help educators, program designers, and policymakers implement ecopedagogical goals. While it is rooted in a specific regional partnership, the framework serves as a critical and adaptable tool for researchers and practitioners in various place-based environmental education contexts.

Developing ecopedagogy to provide Out-of-the-box learning experiences for youth (Syed Nitas Iftekhhar, Bard College)

Ecopedagogy, as an education theory (see Misiaszek, 2018), has significantly inspired my educational practices to innovate in curricula and pedagogy. This innovation extends beyond traditional school settings, where youth aged 16-18 participate in excursions with specialists and professors to engage with diverse, often interdisciplinary subjects.

The theoretical framework of ecopedagogy and *pedagogy of place* developed during my comparative research in China and India (Iftekhhar, 2018), is the foundation of my work at Bard College's International Extracurricular Residential Programs for high school students. Offered in diverse locations across China, Kyrgyzstan, and Germany, these programs aim to immerse youth in real-world experiences. The objective is to

cultivate an understanding of the vital interconnectedness between ecological well-being, social systems, and the personal responsibility crucial for meaningful action and global citizenship. This is done by integrating community engagement, fostering an understanding of interconnected fields through research, alongside conventional reading, assignments, and hands-on projects.

For example, during the Huangshan program for Biodiversity Conservation, participants learn Geology, Biology, Anthropology, and History holistically, actively participating in numerous hands-on fieldwork—such as setting camera traps, species identification, and night patrols—to protect broadleaved evergreen forests and conduct wildlife surveys alongside forest rangers. They also work to solve community case studies alongside their research projects. This praxis-oriented approach, deeply intertwining action with daily reflection, transforms learning from theoretical concepts into lived realities with tangible, project-based outcomes. Students develop an ecological connection and also acquire the ethical grounding and practical skills necessary to become active agents of change. Ultimately, the goal is to cultivate engaged global citizens, equipped to contribute meaningfully to sustainable futures, alongside fostering nature enthusiasts and interdisciplinary researchers. Such programs advance ecopedagogy by moving beyond theory (Iftekhar *et al.*, forthcoming, 2025). Along with subject knowledge, focus is also on developing essential core competencies: critical thinking, effective communication, and self-governance. This approach equips students with vital skills for higher education and life.

Postdigital Ecopedagogy and Autoethnographic Cellphilmig: Fostering Inclusive More-Than-Human Kinship (Bachar Chbib, L'Université du Québec à Montréal (UQÁM)).

The acceleration of environmental crises has intensified the need for educational frameworks that go beyond raising awareness. Ecopedagogy teachers and learners need to constantly consider new ways to think and act creatively and independently towards agency, democratic, and ethical practices, including a transformative understanding of their position on Earth. I wrote with Misiaszek the following: "Democratic ecopedagogy offers a comprehensive framework that expands the boundaries of democracy beyond human-centered concerns to include more-than-human others, thereby fostering inclusive democratic practices essential for planetary sustainability

and social equity" (Chbib & Misiaszek, 2025, p. 438). This requires reimagining democracy to include more-than-human entities.

In the postdigital era, digital tools like virtual reality and AI foster critical digital literacy, participatory learning, and storytelling, crucial for engaging more-than-human perspectives and challenging (un)sustainable narratives (Jandrić, 2019)¹³. My PhD research at L'UQAM explores autoethnographic cellphilmaking – short, self-reflexive films using mobile devices – as a transformative praxis for ecopedagogies inclusive of more-than-human entities (Chbib, in progress). Cellphilmaking fosters kinship and emotional engagement beyond anthropocentrism, disrupting traditional environmental education and cultivating ecological justice and ethical relationality. We propose that postdigital ecopedagogies offer practical possibilities to reinvent democratic engagement with the more-than-human, pushing boundaries of citizenship and belonging education toward inclusive, democratic, and sustainable futures for humans and more-than-humans (Chbib; Misiaszek, 2025).

My research-creation studies the relational possibilities between MTHs, the World and the rest of Nature. By foregrounding materiality, MTH agency, and creative experimentation, he practices what Braidotti (2012) calls nomadic thought: a fluid, situated way of knowing/being/valuing that remains ethically attuned to ecological precarity (Chbib, in progress). I argue that cellphilmaking praxis integrates theory and practice, empowering learners to enact just and sustainable futures through affective and sensory experiences mediated by digital tools.

Ecopedagogy through Food, Nature, and Relational Repair (Michaela Ensweiler; University of California, Los Angeles UCLA; Paulo Freire Institute (PFI), UCLA)

My work in ecopedagogy explores the (dis) and (re)connections between humans, food, and Nature, particularly through the lenses of *Industrialization*, education, and relational repair. Grounded in Freirean praxis, my dissertation examines how food systems and pedagogical structures both alienate and offer pathways to connection through embodied, justice-centered learning¹⁴. Freire (2000) framed

¹³ Postdigital ecopedagogies aim to address the multifaceted challenges of our time, by cultivating educational practices that emerge from, negotiate, and potentially transcend the evolving landscapes of human-machine-Nature interactions.

¹⁴ "The (Eco)Pedagogy of Convivium: Nurturing Roots of Food Pedagogy for Sustainable Socio-Ecological Relationships"

education as a dialogic, liberatory process; my work emphasizes collaborative meaning-making and lived, communal experience. This aligns with Misiaszek's (2018, 2020b) framing of ecopedagogy as deepening socio-ecological understanding and de-distancing learners from Nature, helping mend what I call the *Food-Culture Divide*.

I first developed and co-taught an experimental curriculum, *Edible Nature*, at an elementary school in Los Angeles. Students aged 11–12 engaged in hikes, plant identification, collaborative cooking, and mosaic-making while learning about local and Native plants. The curriculum (re)rooted students in their local (eco)systems, countering the artificial distance created by standardized schooling. It also helped bridge three key relationships: human–food, human–Nature, and human–human. These threads form a cycle: what supports one, supports the others. As students deepened relationships with food, the Earth, and each other, they also strengthened cognition, awareness, and care. This cycle supported deeper learning, community building, and ecological wellbeing.

Building on this, I conducted a secondary analysis of the study in interviews with adult practitioners in food, sustainability, and education. Their narratives revealed acts of rebellious care: growing, teaching, and building community as resistance to *Industrialized* systems. Their actions emphasized justice-driven, multisensory education rooted in food, Nature, and human relationships. Across both studies, this triad of relationality remains central to ecopedagogical praxis.

Conclusion

The discussed ecopedagogical projects that are located throughout the world exemplify how theoretical framings (re)create practices for praxis reaching towards achieving ecopedagogy's overall goal - "globally all-inclusive socio-environmental justice and planetary sustainability" (Misiaszek, 2023b). We present, with the write-ups of various ecopedagogues, a rich gallery of ecopedagogical practices and research to illustrate how the Freirean reinventions have transformed teaching, methodologies, educational policy-making, and societies in different ways towards achieving this goal. In various ways, countering world-Earth distancing to create a (post)human common world-Earth good. The works provide empirical evidence on a variety of ecopedagogical teaching-learning methods to deepen and widen students' reflexivity for socio-environmental, world-Earth (re)connections to (re) construct their actions (i.e., (ecopedagogical) praxis). The work occurs in specific contexts; however, through

(post)critical comparative education methodologies, it is possible and needed, as Misiaszek (2022a), to contextually lend and borrow their ecopedagogical findings worldwide.

We found the following three emergent threads throughout the ecopedagogical works: world-Earth de-distancing as multifaceted systems; praxis through diverse theories, epistemologies, and transdisciplinarity; and praxis widened beyond the private sphere through systems approaches.

World-Earth De-Distancing as Multifaceted Systems

A unifying insight emerges throughout the works: each project reflects our human journey to rediscover relationships with ourselves, mirrored by Nature as both of us are multifaceted, interconnected systems. In numerous ways, this is the embodiment of world-Earth de-distancing. Whether exploring embodied environmental ethics through dance, cultivating biophilia in gardens, or creating immersive outdoor curricula, these works demonstrate that healing our disconnection from Nature is inseparable from healing the fractures within ourselves in an increasingly globalized world. The ecopedagogical works together reveal that fostering ecological consciousness means recognizing that humans and the rest of Nature co-create each other – our well-being and futures are fundamentally entwined. In short, we, as humans, are part of Nature.

Ecopedagogical Praxis through Diverse Theories, Epistemologies, And Transdisciplinarity

The experimental and emergent nature of ecopedagogical curricula throughout the works illustrates that ecopedagogical praxis is not a one-size-fits-all prescription, but is through living, organic, and creative processes. Each author adapts ecopedagogy through their own cultural, ecological, and social lens – whether, for example, by integrating Indigenous/Southern knowledges, arts-based methods, or language education for sustainability. This diversity of approaches underscores that Freirean-based ecopedagogy thrives when rooted in local realities through diverse epistemologies, affirming Misiaszek's (2018) call for deepening reflexivity for meaningful widening reflexivity for ecopedagogical praxis. Such reflexivity is initially through local knowledges, while resisting/unlearning, for example, falsely normalized colonizing/settler frameworks.

Conflictive dialectics through globally diverse epistemologies, as discussed by Southern Theorists (Connell, 2007; Santos, 2018; Takayama, 2022), are needed to disrupt Northern epistemologies for ecopedagogical (e.g., justice and planetary sustainable-based) (re)inventions of cosmopolitanism. As such, countering cosmopolitanism rooted in paternalistic, salvationist, and triumphalist epistemologies of the North. Such dominant Northern perspectives are innately world-Earth distancing. Ecopedagogies can have vital roles in guiding dialectics to unpack complex power dynamics that, in turn, guide (re)constructions of our and others' civil (local-to-planetary) engagement (Gadotti, 2008a, 2008b; Misiaszek, 2015, 2018). In turn, it's crucial to teach ecopedagogical literacy for (re)reading how these issues affect local-to-global communities and the rest of Nature planetarily. This is especially true in teaching to actively disrupt the denigrating and marginalizing of Indigenous/Southern epistemologies. Within the contested terrains of globalization_g (see Torres, 2009), with needed possibilities of globalizations *from below* to influence world-Earth de-distancing and to disrupt environmental pedagogies grounded in only dominant epistemologies of the North (Misiaszek, 2020b, 2025b).

Lastly, the works highlight the transdisciplinarity essence of ecopedagogy to meaningfully connect to multiple disciplines with local-to-planetary contexts, such as business education and language education, to create spaces for problematizing human-centered (environmental) education (i.e., anthropocentric teaching) to local-to-planetary inclusive teaching that ecopedagogies offer. Ecopedagogy provides dialogic environments in those disciplines by centering the unveiling of the politics of humans' environmentally violent acts. Partially, it is (post)critical unveiling neoliberal ideologies and other dominant narratives that lead to education for Development rather than for development, towards ecopedagogical praxis to counter such instilled ideologies. In short, (re)developing systematic awareness for just and sustainable environmental wellbeing, and praxis emergent from these ends.

Praxis Widened Beyond the Private Sphere through Systems Approaches

The ecopedagogical works illustrate how ecopedagogical literacy and public engagement from its praxis provide real opportunities to tackle non-local socio-environmental problems, impacting one's private sphere but also well beyond it, towards the planetary sphere, and the intersectionalities between these spheres.

Ecopedagogical approaches, as given throughout this article, provide more integrated frameworks – from students’ and teachers’ contexts. The works are entirely different from shallow environmental pedagogical approaches. They showcase possibilities to disrupt reductionist socio-environmental ideologies, such as those rooted in only the Enlightenment's ideas and other Northern normative underpinnings.

The ecopedagogical works collectively demonstrate the collaborative and participatory essence of ecopedagogies, which are needed for truly reimagining futures beyond individual transformation to global transformations. Ecopedagogy's utopic teaching that counters fatalism of a singular oppressed, unsustainable future (Misiaszek, 2023c), is a bedrock for Freire's (Freire, 1992, 2000) work. Projects like community-driven photovoice in Lesotho, collective cooking curricula in California, and cross-cultural environmental programs show that relational learning (re)builds shared agency and strengthens community resilience. By centering dialectics, possibilities for shared meaning-making, and resulting collective action towards ecopedagogy's overall goal, these works move beyond isolated interventions toward systemic change. Collectively, this affirms that justice-centered ecopedagogy *with* non-anthropocentric planetary sustainability is most powerful when it is communal, dialogic, and grounded in relationships.

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