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Educators' Perceptions and Approaches to Environmental Education and Pro-Environmental Behaviour in South African Secondary Schools

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Abstract. Environmental education is taught within the geography curriculum in the basic education system of South Africa. However, owing to various contextual challenges faced in 21st century South African schools, the teaching of environmental education has remained largely paper based. This poses a challenge to educators who are assigned the responsibility to teach environmental education and foster pro-environmental behaviour in learners. The objective of this study was to investigate how geography educators understand environmental education, as well as determining the possible reasons for the gap between content knowledge of environmental education principles and learners' pro-environmental behaviour. This study was conceptualised and articulated using the Tbilisi Principles of Environmental Education (TPEE) of 1978. An interpretivist paradigm was utilised for this study as it supports the qualitative approach of the study. This study was guided by phenomenology. Five geography educators from five non-fee-paying schools were sampled from a population of educators in the Kwa-Mashu Circuit of the Durban Pinetown educational district of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Data was acquired through voice recordings of five semi-structured interviews, which were consequently transcribed non verbatim to eliminate redundancies in the data. The data was analysed thematically according to the Tbilisi Principles, and discussed according to the research questions they satisfy. The findings indicate that educators are failed by a lack of resources to teach environmental education, as well as a curriculum which does not accommodate the teaching of environmental education constructively. The results of this study further revealed obstacles such as a lack of interest from geography learners, which then increases educators' challenges when teaching environmental education. It is recommended that the National Curriculum and

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Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) document be revised to include environmental education constructively within grade 11 geography. This can be done by allocating teaching time specifically for environmental education, as well as ensuring that assessment methods are specific and allocated with resources.

Keywords: environmental education, environmental awareness, pro-environmental behaviour, sustainable development

1. Introduction

Environmental education is an integral part of environmental awareness. It is a vehicle through which pro-environmental behaviour, environmental conservation and sustainability can be achieved. The abundance of litter on school grounds around the townships, as well as growing land and water pollution issues (Msezane, 2020) across South Africa's urban residential areas indicates that the gap between the teaching of environmental education and the environmental behaviours of school-going children is not being bridged.

Many of the public schools within South Africa are disenfranchised economically (Ndimande, 2012); therefore learners cannot be blamed for the social ills of pollution as this could also hint at a symptom (Msezane, 2020) of a failing environmental education system.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore geography grade 11 educators' understanding of environmental education by exploring their perceptions and approaches to teaching environmental education and pro-environmental behaviour in their classroom in the non-fee-paying schools in the townships.

This study aimed to bring insight into the possible reasons why environmental awareness principles taught in school might not be positively impacting the way learners perceive and take care of the environment. Concerning the above, the study reported in this paper was therefore guided by the following research questions: What is grade 11 geography educators' understanding of environmental education? and What are the possible reasons for the gap between content knowledge (environmental awareness principles) and learners' pro-environmental behaviour?

2. Literature Review

The relationship between education and sustainability is subjective yet interdependent. In academia, two main schools of thought exist. According to the first one, sustainable development is a vehicle through which education is disseminated (Elmassah et al., 2022). However, the second school of thought views environmental education as the vehicle through which sustainability can be taught (De Beer et al., 2014). These perceptions could indicate differences in aims; however, the aims and results of the two schools of thought are similar and therefore differentiating between them becomes meaningless. This is because both schools of thought are cognisant of the idea that sustainable development and education are interlinked and interdependent.

The aims of these two schools of thought indicate that environmental education is an effective and strategic vehicle that could be utilised to solve the complex issues of the environment which we are experiencing as humanity, particularly in the 21st century. These schools of thought also acknowledge that environmental education can only be implemented successfully through the fostering of environmental literacy and awareness in the broader society (Boiyo et al., 2015). This idea has led to environmental education being introduced into different countries' basic education systems to educate and train young minds on the habits and lifestyles which portray environmental awareness and literacy.

2.1 Environmental Education Globally

The publishing of the much-acclaimed environmental awareness book, *Silent Spring* (1962) by Rachel Carson, highlighted the effects of climate change as a phenomenon that could change the world. Its reception led to the incorporation of environmental issues into the United Nations' Agenda for Sustainable Development. Among the numerous subsequent climate summits, the most prominent were the United Nation's International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN, 1971) and the Earth Summit held in Rio De Janeiro in 1992 (Fien & Maclean, 2000). These summits culminated in environmental education being viewed as a necessity in understanding the root causes and symptoms of environmental and development problems (Tilbury, 1995).

2.2 History of Environmental Education in South Africa

Prior to 1994, environmental education in South Africa had concentrated on conservation education and the sustainable use of natural resources (De Beer et al., 2014). However, what was missing from conservation education was social inclusion and cohesiveness due to segregation laws at the time. Post-1994, the recognition of environmental challenges led to a linking of the broader needs of a country with the existing education system (Rickinson, 2001). This led to the drafting of a White Paper on Education and Training in 1995 which presented an interdisciplinary, integrated, and active approach to learning with the aim of creating environmentally literate and active South Africans (De Beer et al., 2014).

This was followed by the outcomes-based education (OBE) curriculum, namely Curriculum 2005, which then became the National Curriculum Statement and in later years was amalgamated into the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for grades R-12. The CAPS for grades R-12 aims to ensure that children acquire and apply knowledge and skills in ways that are meaningful to their own lives.

Geography is one of the school-based subjects in which environmental education is incorporated. In the geography CAPS Document, there are nine aims and objectives of geography as a subject. Of the nine aims and objectives, four are directly linked to environmental education. The first one is to teach the learner to explain and interpret both physical and human geographical processes, describe and explain the dynamic interrelationship between the physical and human worlds, develop a commitment towards sustainable development, and make and justify informed judgements about social and environmental issues (CAPS Document, 2011).

3. Conceptual Framework

This study was conceptualised and articulated through the use of the aims of the TPEE of 1978. These environmental education principles highlight the importance of distinguishing geography and the environment from each other. The principles also encourage an active involvement of citizens in working for the good of the environment by providing every individual with the opportunity to obtain the knowledge, values, attitudes, commitment, and skills needed to protect and improve the environment. The Tbilisi principles are listed below:

Tbilisi Principles of Environmental Education (1978)

Environmental education should:

1. **consider the environment in its totality – natural and built, technological and social (economic, political, cultural-historical, moral, aesthetic);**
2. **be a continuous lifelong process, beginning at the preschool level and continuing through all formal and non-formal stages;**
3. **be interdisciplinary in its approach, drawing on the specific content of each discipline in making possible a holistic and balanced perspective;**
4. **examine major environmental issues from local, national, regional and international points of view so that students receive insights into environmental conditions in other geographical areas;**
5. **focus on current and potential environmental situations while taking the historical perspective into account;**
6. **promote the value of, and necessity for, local, national and international cooperation in the prevention and solution of environmental problems explicitly consider environmental aspects in plans for development and growth;**
7. **enable learners to have a role in planning their learning experiences and provide an opportunity for making decisions and accepting their consequences;**
8. **relate environmental sensitivity, knowledge, problem-solving skills and values clarification to every age, but with special emphasis on environmental sensitivity to the learner's own community in early years;**
9. **help learners discover the symptoms and real causes of environmental problems;**
10. **emphasise the complexity of environmental problems and thus the need to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills; and**
11. **utilise diverse learning environments and a broad array of educational approaches to teaching/learning about and from the environment, with due stress on practical activities and first-hand experience** (UNESCO-UNEP, 1978).

These principles state that the goals of environmental education are to foster an awareness and concern about the environment in both rural and urban areas. Most importantly, the main goal is to create a new pattern of behaviour in people, organisations, and society in totality in terms of their perception and behaviour towards the environment. The eleven aims of the TPEE are utilised as themes for the study.

4. Research Design and Methodology

The research paradigm chosen for this study was the interpretivist paradigm which aims to understand human behaviour (Sarantakos, 2013) as well as the reasoning behind that behaviour. The interpretative paradigm allowed for meaning to be assigned to the data being interpreted (Leavy, 2017) without changing the message that it conveys (Cohen et al., 2018). This study employed the qualitative research approach, which is advantageous in aiding the researcher to learn about the point at issue from participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) and to design the research to suit these aims, particularly when the data sought is of an explanatory, interpretative or descriptive nature. The research design for this study was phenomenological to allow the representation of the data through the lens of the participants of a study (Cohen et al., 2018). The sampling method utilised was purposive because the study specifically focussed on educators from non-fee-paying schools in Kwa-Mashu Township. From this population, five educators teaching grade 11 were sampled per school. In addition, the feeder areas of the schools were common in that most of the learners in these schools lived within this geographical area. This was critical to the study because it was to ensure that the schools visited enrolled learners of similar socio-economic backgrounds. The participants of the study had more than three years' experience in teaching geography in grade 11, along with other classes that were not part of the study. The schools involved in the study and the participants are given pseudonyms for purposes of anonymity as reflected in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Participants of the study

Schools	**Participants**
School A	Participant A
School B	Participant B
School C	Participant C
School D	Participant D
School E	Participant E
TOTAL: Five participants purposively sampled from five schools	

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to capture the personal responses of participants' experiences (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). The data acquired for this study was transcribed non verbatim to limit data redundancies (Kara,2015) and focus on data which speaks to the research questions. Thereafter, a thematic analysis of the transcribed interview data was grouped according to the TPEE to which they related (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014). The data was then grouped according to the research question they satisfy. The following steps were utilised to analyse the data:

Step 1: After conducting each interview, the tape-recorded interviews were firstly transcribed non verbatim to eliminate redundant words, phrases and pauses which were not necessary for the research.

Step 2: The transcripts were ordered according to the themes of the Tbilisi principles they refer to and link with.

Step 3: The data was scrutinised further and categorised according to the research questions they answer.

The three core principles of research ethical principles as outlined by the Belmont Report (1979) are respect for persons, beneficence, and justice guided this study. The dignity of all research participants was respected and upheld, and the physical and psychosocial risks regarding the participants were minimised as much as possible by conducting the interviews within the school premises. This ensured that participants were comfortable in a familiar setting, and less likely to be affected by any criminal activities outside of the schoolyard which is guarded by security personnel. This measure was also crucial in minimising psychosocial risk because it ensured that participants were in a comfortable setting. Moreover, the researchers refrained from speaking in a tone that might sound confrontational and judgemental to the participants. The participants were also assured that the knowledge gained from the research would be shared with them. Hyder et al. (2009) corroborate this sentiment by stating that "the people who are expected to benefit from the knowledge should be the ones who are asked to participate" (p.151).

With the above in mind, the first step of the ethical process was to apply for and obtain permission from the KZN Department of Education to conduct research in selected schools. Upon receiving approval from the KZN Department of Education, an application was sent to the Ethics Board of the University of the Free State. In September 2021, the ethical clearance certificate was acquired. The data acquisition process began in October of 2021 with the recruitment of five schools and five educators in the Kwa-Mashu Circuit as the participants and subjects of the study, that is, one educator per school.

5. Findings and Discussion

This section presents the findings from the study according to the research questions. These findings are nuanced with the literature explored earlier.

5.1 Research question one: What is Grade 11 geography educators' understanding of environmental education?

Maila states that there is no correct or universal definition of environmental education, and that the approval of a definition depends on its capacity to define the environmental situation or context through those who are in that situation (2001). The participants of this study defined and conceptualised environmental education differently, yet with some similarities. Participant B defined environmental education as follows:

> *Environmental education is about ensuring that the resources that are found in an area are used responsibly by the people in that area. To ensure that even though the resources are used, they are not exploited to ensure their availability for future generations.*

Participant D defined environmental education as follows:

> *Environmental education is acquiring knowledge about the environment, environmental awareness is being aware of how the environment is being affected and how we can make it better and sustain it for the future. One must be aware first, and after that acquire further education.*

Similarly, Participant E defined it as follows:

> *Environmental education is a module that seeks to cultivate school kids' understanding of issues related to the environment. All the factors that affect the environment, from the positive to the negative.*

All three definitions from the participants quoted above have only the environment in common. However, their perception or conceptualisation of what environmental education is differs greatly. Participant B attributes it to how resources are used, Participant D links it to how the environment is affected by human activities while Participant E has a brief, yet broader definition by stating that it seeks to educate about the factors that affect the environment. The divergence in defining environmental education and awareness is explained by Benavides-Lahnstein and Ryder (2020), who maintain that environmental education is socially constructed, and that is constantly transformed by debates in the environmental, political, cultural, and technological spheres of the world.

Participants A and C did not offer direct definitions but rather determined the function of environmental education:

> Participant A – *Environmental education needs to come first before awareness because if learners are not educated about the environment, they won't be aware of the environment to awaken some of the people around them about issues like recycling and preventing littering because now they are aware of the importance of the environment for us*.

and

> Participant C – *Issues of the environment, be it atmospheric, or water; needs to be utilised correctly and for us to utilise our resources correctly, we need to educate people. This is because some other people incorrectly do this, not knowing that in future, whatever that they are doing now can haunt us. Therefore, environmental education is the way to go.*

The participants above indicate that there is a discrepancy between defining environmental education, and understanding what environmental education is about. Because they gave detailed examples of what it encompasses instead of a definition, this hints at the fact that environmental education and its conceptualisation is completely subjective (Hebe, 2009). It is dependent on an individual's own prior knowledge and experiences as this determines how this individual will make sense of it in the long run. The subjective and interdisciplinary manner in which environmental education is defined or explained links with the Tbilisi principle which states that environmental education must be interdisciplinary in its approach and offer a holistic and balanced perspective (UNESCO-UNEP, 1978) on what it is as well as its function in society. Therefore, it is safe to deduce that none of the participants was incorrect in their definition of environmental education and awareness because this

divergence in conceptualisation reflects a progressing flow of ideologies and pedagogies in society (Benavides-Lahnstein & Ryder, 2020).

The participants were all sourcing from their circumstances and experience with environmental education, and it is through these definitions that we can identify what is the most important element of environmental education in their daily lives. For Participant A it is educating society about keeping the environment clean, for Participant B it is about how society utilises resources, while Participant C it is about looking at the environmental system holistically to use it wisely. In addition, Participant D focuses on how human activities affect the environment and Participant E focuses on educating society about the factors that affect the environment.

Subsequently, to answer this research question, the findings of this study indicate that the level of environmental education perception differs from one educator to another, which difference is influenced by a variety of societal factors. These findings are similar to those of Hebe's (2009) study, which revealed that the level of environmental literacy varies from educator to educator and that various factors influence the environmental literacy of these educators (Hebe, 2009). These definitions sound similar, yet those minute differences in definition indicate that although there is one definition for environmental education, it is multifaceted, mobile, and rich in variations and form, especially when it involves human understanding (Brown et al., 1999). Activity theory allows for this diverse understanding of environmental education because it is a multi-voiced theory.

To delve further into understanding geography educators' understanding of environmental education, the participants of this study were requested to explain what they understood about the geography CAPS Document aims: "To foster a concern for the sustainable and fair use of resources for the benefit of all" and "To foster a sense of fairness, sustainability and equality". The participants explained their answers in vastly different ways. Participants C and D explained the following:

> Participant C – *Environmental education itself has to be inculcated into the learners so that it permeates society. Geography is not just a subject or learning area that is founded…it talks about reality, and our lives. Because we are dependent on the environment, the air that we are breathing, the soil, the rocks, and the water. Therefore, the learners must be also part of environmental education, they must be aware.*
>
> Participant D – *When we teach learners, we have to teach in the context of the environment. They need to know the impact of the small things that they do within their environment and the larger area. Then, when they come to school, is where they will acquire more environmental education in addition to their awareness of the community around them.*

The participants' responses indicate that they view environmental education in a manner that reflects its complexity. Participant C explains that environmental education must be inculcated into the learners, through whom it will reach society. This is supported by Participant D, stating that learners need to know the

impact that the things they do have on the environment. These participants stress the importance of individual responsibility towards the environment, which links with the Tbilisi principle which states that environmental education must help learners discover the symptoms and real causes of environmental problems. It is necessary to emphasise the complexity of environmental problems and thus the need to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills in the learners and society at large (UNESCO-UNEP, 1978).

Participants A, B and E did not offer a direct response as to what they understood about these aims; they responded by providing examples as to what these aims pertain as well as the issues they face when having to teach these aims:

> Participant A – *Teaching environmental education practically is not included or involved within our curriculum. We have to make our learners act on what we are teaching them. For example, if we are dealing with energy resources in our curriculum, especially now that we are dealing with load shedding and Eskom on a daily basis, if we taught our learners practical methods, they could be able to come out of school and be able to consider solar energy, wind energy and other sources of energy which would help the environment and curb this Global Warming challenge.*

and

> Participant B – *Perhaps particularly other things which I think are a challenge, especially with our aims are that you find that like you do not know how you will coerce school kids to get into the issues of the environment because you do not have the resources. I see this especially when I initiate things like farming, we usually have farming activities in the school, it because hard when you want to involve them because you will find that there is a shortage of a very small resource, and now you find that you cannot involve a lot of them, end up only being able to involve only two.*

and

> Participant E – *Having environmental education and awareness content at the far end of the year's curriculum, towards the last terms, gives the message to teachers and learners that it is not important, especially when in the examination there is very little content on the topics of the last terms. If it could be moved to term one and two so that teachers and learners can see it as an important topic.*

The primary issue highlighted by Participant A is that environmental education is not included practically in the basic education curriculum, which is problematic when in fact environmental education aims to create a proactive citizenry. According to the Tbilisi principles, this is a lifelong process that should begin at the preschool level and continue through all formal and non-formal education stages. This means that, throughout all grades, there must be a linking factor that pertains to environmental education. Bopape states that the effectiveness of teaching in a classroom is influenced by an educator's ability to find, use and develop teaching methods and resources appropriate to environmental

education. Thus educators need to be encouraged to develop and implement the methodology that will help them and their learners to acquire environmental skills (2006).

This concern is further supported by Participant B, who reiterated that it is a struggle to source learners who can volunteer in environmental activities because there is a lack of resources to afford them the opportunity to practise what they are being taught in the classroom. These issues are interconnected: a lack of allotted time to practising environmental awareness physically often leads to learners who are not interested nor motivated enough to want to be active. This is compounded by the fact that many schools lack the resources to support their environmental learning (Manik, 2020). Participant E's response was unique in that it made the researcher aware that most environmental topics are allocated towards the end of the year, especially in the last term. It is a fact that in South Africa, the end of the school year is inundated with tasks (Maharajh et al., 2016); educators have little time to cover the content for that term, revise the entire year's content and focus on the end of year's formal assessments. This, according to Participant E, leads to the perception that this part of the content is not as important as those preceding it. This sentiment is echoed by Benavides-Lahnstein and Ryder, who call it "low levels of agency in teaching" (2020, 44). Therefore, considering these issues, Boiyo et al. (2015) advise that a policy review that will enhance cooperation among stakeholders is key in building more vibrant curricula as well as responsive teaching and evaluation approaches.

5.2 Question 2: What are the possible reasons for the gap between content knowledge (environmental awareness principles) and learners' pro-environmental behaviour?

The prime disconnect between environmental content knowledge and learners' pro-environmental behaviour is, according to Participant A, due to a lack of scaffolding between knowledge acquired in each grade:

> *Grade 11 is different from grade 10. Part of Grade 10 is in Grade 11, but it's sort of like there is no link between grade 11 and grade 12 content, mostly. But you [educator] can try and fix some of the topics, like concepts, into Grade 12.*

It becomes the educator's prerogative to remind learners of prior knowledge before beginning the lessons of that year, which is even more challenging when the educator has never taught them in previous grades and does not know where their baseline knowledge about environmental awareness lies (Dube, 2014).

Participants D, C and E believe that learners mirror the environmental behaviour around them. Whether it is taught in school or acquired by default from society, they rarely ever stray from it:

> Participant C – *If learners have not seen the effects, and there is nothing beyond that which the learner can see…they do not know the effects of their actions. This also applies to adults, if one does not know the effects, one cannot make meaning of them. Preferably school kids should be shown the effects.*

and

> Participant D – *I cannot say that learners do not practise what they are being taught because we do not know what they do outside of the schoolyard. They learn through remodelling, so if the community at large does not practise the values of keeping the environment clean, they are copying these actions and that could be the factor that prevents them from practising environmental awareness.*

and

> Participant E – *A learner's background affects their pro-environmental behaviour. It is easy for us to throw litter at specific places because we grew up in an area where this happens, without knowing the ramifications.*

The above participants view learners as recipients of environmental knowledge who do not have the power to act positively toward the environment without it being modelled by the society around them (Hungerford & Volk, 1990). According to these participants, the school is the secondary source of modelling pro-environmental behaviour, the primary source being the family and society. Participant B's view differs significantly from the view above, as Participant B is adamant that:

> *Most learners are lazy; some of them would not want to pick up papers around the school because they say that there are people paid to do the cleaning up. If we give them an opportunity to practice farming along with some members of the community, they feel like it is not their responsibility, even though what you are trying to do is to teach them responsibility.*

The sentiments of Participant B are supported by the study of Boiyo et al. (2015), in which they maintain that most students understood the importance of having a conserved and clean environment; however, they attributed this responsibility to others, not themselves.

Environmental education is a vehicle through which educators help learners discover the causes and symptoms of environmental problems (UNESCO-UNEP, 1978). This, according to the Tbilisi principles, is to enable learners to have a role in planning their learning experiences and to provide an opportunity for their making environmental decisions and accepting the consequences that come with these decisions. In essence, the aim is to mould them into a responsible citizenry. Nevertheless, from the responses of the participants, the three main reasons why learners are not practising the pro-environmental behaviour they are being taught is because they behave in a manner that has been instilled within them by society, and they do not have the influence or power to act outside of what their society dictates. Another reason could be that they are lacking a sense of responsibility for their environment as they are raised in a society that delegates certain environmental tasks (such as recycling) to certain sectors of society, and does not encourage individual responsibility. These challenges are further aggravated by a lack of cohesion (Dada et al., 2017) between environmental awareness knowledge from one grade to another, meaning that most learners forget the knowledge from previous years if it is not being built upon in the next grade.

Geography grade 11 educators conceptualise and teach environmental education as a predominantly physical subject which is unfortunately taught theoretically. This necessitates a change in the curriculum structure to allot time for fieldwork to ensure that it is inculcated in learners. The findings of this chapter were discussed in and supported by literature and empirical studies of environmental education.

5.3 Consolidation of Findings

The participants of this study defined and conceptualised environmental education differently, from linking it with the usage of natural resources, to how the environment is affected by human activities or broadly speaking, the factors that affect the environment. This finding indicates that the concept of 'environment' is socially constructed, and therefore has diverse definitions which depend on each person's experiences of the environment. It is also important to note that environmental education can be defined according to the functions that people perceive it to perform in society, which makes defining it furthermore diverse.

Therefore, the study revealed that although there is a discrepancy between defining environmental education and understanding the role that it plays in society, the two are directly linked, and neither conceptualisation of environmental education is incorrect because they are subjective in nature. Each sources their definition from personal experience with the environment and environmental education, and it is through these varying definitions that one can deduce what everyone deems as the most important element in environmental education.

The study revealed that there are varying degrees of the reason why there is a gap between the knowledge that learners are taught and their pro-environmental behaviour. The first reason is a lack of scaffolding between environmental knowledge taught from grade to grade as there is no clear link between prior knowledge from the immediate previous grade and the one taught that year. The knowledge scaffolding skips years and grades; thus it becomes the responsibility of the educator to remind learners of prior knowledge before beginning the lessons of that year. This is even more challenging when the educator has never taught them in previous grades and does not know where their baseline knowledge about environmental awareness lies. This challenge is further exacerbated by a lack of resources to teach environmental education within the school and classroom, as well as a curriculum which is not structured to teach environmental education constructively.

In addition, the findings suggest that learners reflect or mirror the environmental behaviour by which they were raised, or that surrounded them in society. This is because they do not have the power to act on behaviour that has not been modelled for them by the society surrounding them, even if they were taught differently in schools.

Another finding, however, suggests that the primary reason for learners' poor sense of environmental responsibility and lack of pro-environmental behaviour is because they are lazy. This could be due to attributing certain environmental

activities to designated people, not their personal responsibility, which could also be a symptom of the society in which they were raised.

6. Conclusion and Perspective

Most of the conceptualisations were aligned with the literature consulted and interrogated in this study, which ensured that a gap in the literature in this field is narrowing. However, some of the perceptions from the educators were not aligned with literature specific to this geographical area. It is our hope that this study mentioned in this article will open opportunities for environmental education research in South African schools and that all educators who are apprised of the results of this study will utilise them constructively to ensure the success of environmental education lessons. It is hoped that this study will illuminate the state of environmental education in South Africa, particularly in under-resourced schools. Whilst environmental education research is scant in South Africa, this study was able to identify researchers such as Manik (2020) and Dube (2014) and a few others who conducted geography and environmental research. It is further hoped that this study will help to expand this field of research by adding to the body of knowledge. Environmental education is a type of education which thrives when it is being taught practically; therefore this paper recommends that the CAPS curriculum for geography for the Further Education and Training (FET) phase be reviewed extensively. It would be beneficial if environmental sustainability topics were linked from one grade to the next, and that grades not be skipped and resurface when learners have no recollection of the topic. Furthermore, the geography programme of assessment could be reduced to include only the most critical topics required for the next grade. This is to allow thorough teaching of content without the educator being stressed about completing the content. It is further recommended that time be set aside to accommodate excursions, outdoor activities, and field trips in the geography curriculum, preferably from the intermediate phase and upwards.

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