

Refereed article

Changing the Educational Landscape in India by Transnational Policies: New Perspectives Promoted Through Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

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Summary

Transnational educational policies are challenging current pedagogic practices in India. The United Nations Decade of “Education for Sustainable Development” (UNDESD, 2005 to 2014) is based on constructivist concepts of learning, and encourages the ongoing transformation from an authoritarian to a participative, student-oriented teaching methodology. The implementation of this global educational initiative in a local developing context is examined in this paper by applying the arguments of Basil Bernstein’s (1990) *Sociological Theory of Pedagogy*. Power relations (classification) and control mechanisms (framing) present in Indian classroom teaching as well as current teaching methods and content — specifically on the topic of “water,” as taught in Geography lessons — are analyzed in this paper on the basis of classroom observation and of policy and textbook analysis at English-medium schools in Pune. It is elucidated how traditional pedagogic practices, cultural constructions, and social hierarchies are fundamentally challenged. The central role of teachers and textbooks indicate the opportunities and challenges for the current transition process from performance-oriented to competence-based pedagogic practice in the Indian educational system. Furthermore, the potential that transnational educational policies have to effect social transformation is addressed.

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