



Teaching for Sustainability:

Perspectives on a collaborative, experiential
environmental education subject for pre-
service teachers

Wendy Nielsen, Peter Andersen, Amy Hurley,
Vanessa Sabljak, Amy-Lee Petereit, Vanessa Hoskin

Bachelor of Primary Education Program



Introduction

- Unique opportunity
- Common vision
- Dilemma: how?
- Theory and 'getting hands dirty'
- The learning garden
- Giving our students a voice



Methods & Analysis

- interpretive study
 - interviews (10 students)
 - Thinking Books (26 students)
 - instructor reflective journals
- search for emergent themes in data set*



Results Discussion

1. Sustainability & Teaching in Primary Schools
2. Developing Action Competence
3. Shifts/Challenges to Personal Thinking
4. Challenges to the Subject Design



Sustainability and Teaching in Primary Schools

“Having the students come and explain their experience of building a garden was a great opportunity for me to understand how creating a garden with students can open many avenues for teaching about sustainability”

(Student 21, Week 8 Thinking Book)



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Sustainability and Teaching in Primary Schools



“Through activities like the garden, the ecological footprint protocol and the university audits I have been able to experience on a personal level the value for authentic hands-on learning experiences which provide a multitude of learning opportunities outside the ‘normal’ classroom setting.”

(Student 20, Week 8 Thinking Book)

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Developing Action Competence

"I think that maybe a few steps have been skipped and in the eagerness to get us doing practical tasks everything is being rushed and not thought out or explained properly."

(Student 22, Week 6 Thinking Book)



Developing Action Competence

"I feel confident that I can do that and I know that now if I was at a school that doesn't necessarily have a big wilderness area around it, or even nearby, that I can sort of take man made materials and things like that and show kids how we can bring habitat into that sort of environment."

(Student 9, Interview)



Shifts/Challenges to Personal Thinking

“The Thinking Book caused me to constantly move beyond what I would just normally be thinking. It actually caused me to go to that next level and really analyse why I believe what I believe.” (Student 10, Interview)

“The Thinking Book was “a place to sort of process things” (Student 4, Interview)



Challenges to the subject design

“A lot of times, we sound like primary school, but we’d get all chatty and we’d talk about our own ideas and we’d get off track. And they just keep trying to bring the group back together. But I think because there was 200 of us in the lecture theatre and they wanted to hear a few peoples ideas it was just too hard. Maybe have less 3 hours lectures and have smaller tutorials.”

(Student 2, Interview)



Challenges to the subject design

"I feel one semester is not long enough to enable preservice teachers to acquire the knowledge to be able to plan such a garden, let alone establish and maintain it."

(Student 11, Week 6 Thinking Book)

"I have to say that I really value what they have done, like try to put power back in our hands and to sort of aim for projects even though for example, we didn't have our garden space yet."

(Student 4, Interview)

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Conclusion & Recommendations

"Through programs such as this one, we are learning the skills we will need to take into schools to make this possibility a reality. Through education and real experiences, the children we are teaching will grow to become conscientious users of resources and environmentally aware."

(Student 15, Week 7 Thinking Book)

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Thank you!

For more information or a copy of the paper,
contact:

Dr Wendy Nielsen
wnielsen@uow.edu.au