Posthumanism in teacher education: human-nature relationships

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Due to extensive digitalization, an increasingly pressing climate crisis and continual advances within biotechnology, the material conditions of the world that today’s children live in and will inherit, are rapidly changing. Acknowledging these multiple challenges, UNESCO has called for an emphasis on global citizenship education, underlining the role of education in enabling children to face current global challenges (UNESCO 2014). Consequently, these priorities are finding their way into subject curriculums worldwide, demanding that teachers help foster awareness of global issues.

Academically, theories of the posthuman have flourished in response to the rapid technological changes, branching into multiple –isms (Ferrando, 2013). How can student teachers keep abreast of the continual advances within posthuman thought and learn efficient ways to encourage ecocritical awareness in their students in order to fulfil the competence aims on sustainability? In the post-doctoral project Posthuman Nature: Representations of Nature and Human Biotechnology in Contemporary Young Adult Dystopian Fiction I develop ecocritical literature circles as a teaching method to further teacher students’ awareness of human-nature relationships. A core hypothesis is that tailored literature circles help develop awareness of posthuman ideas and ecocritical tropes, placing student teachers in a position to reflect on both literary text construction and its posthuman and ecocritical aspects, thus enabling them to incorporate such awareness into their future teaching practices.

The project involves the design of reading roles aimed to highlight ecocritical aspects of the studied texts following lectures on posthumanism and ecocritical core topics prior to the circles and student feedback through pre- and post-circle questionnaires. A pilot study is implemented in March 2018. A class of student teachers will read two young adult novels describing possible uses of biotechnology. They will discuss the texts in two rounds of literature circles comparing their representations of human-nature relationships. Results from the study is presented at the conference.

References:


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