Oral Defense Announcement
University of Missouri – St. Louis Graduate School

An oral examination in defense of the dissertation for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy in Education with an emphasis in Teaching & Learning Process

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B.S. in Education-Middle School, December 2005, University of Missouri-St. Louis

Barriers Teaching Environmental Justice Education as a “Practice of Freedom”

Date: Nov. 22, 2021
Time: 11:00 am – 1:00 pm
Place: 211 SCC

Abstract
The idea of freedom in education has its roots in the social justice movements of the nineteen fifties and sixties. Civil rights groups coalesced independently of other marginalized groups and movements of its time. One of these autonomous groups included, what came to be known as, environmentalists. While similar in nature, environmentalism and civil rights issues rarely crossed paths. As environmentalism made its way into science education and curriculum, social justice issues were restricted to historical perspectives in education. This research initially sought to create an understanding of purpose driven, social justice conscious, Environmental Education as it is related to marginalized learners and identify the barriers of creating and implementing culturally relevant environmental education curriculum. The results of this researcher’s experience is the most distinctive and telling example of barriers in teaching Environmental Justice education. Initially this research was meant to identify and incorporate Environmental Justice education into Missouri science curriculum. It would identify the Environmental Justice deficiencies in the current Missouri curriculum, coupled with identifying current barriers in teaching Environmental Justice Education, for use as the basis for teacher education tools and educational programs. The findings of this research suggest science educators in the have limited access to environmental education teacher training, resources and support. This poses the dilemma, without adequate teacher education training, bridging the gap between environmental education and community based action is difficult. The political and racial objections serve only to widen this gap. The barriers identified by this researcher include a lack of support from administration. In many ways the teaching of environmental justice issues related to environmental education was simply impractical when coupled with the insurmountable challenges of teaching marginalized learners. Administrative turnover, curriculum changes, lack of adequate teacher resources and limited building staff serve as inhibitors. The systemic challenges which exist in marginalized schools can serve to discourage some educators to the point of exhaustion and abandonment. Leaving diminution, both emotionally and measured, for addressing the social inequalities which exist in environmental education.

Defense of Dissertation Committee
Chairperson, William C. Kyle, Jr., Ph D
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