

Summary

This thesis is a narrative analysis of the role of sustainable development in secondary education (ages 13-16) in Norway. The aim is to examine narratives on sustainable development in education, and find whether these stories have the power to captivate and engage students and teachers. Relevant questions are: (1) Does sustainable development have a prominent role in Norwegian secondary schooling? Is it an area of priority that receives attention and reflection from students and teachers? (2) Is the story of sustainable development told in a way that is accessible and empowering for students and teachers? Accessibility entails being able to grasp the story and frame it within the world as you know it. Empowerment, in this context, entails ability to include yourself in the story as an active participant and to explore alternative possibilities. (3) Are the textbook representations of development and the environment, two key concepts in sustainability thinking, conducive to promoting a sustainable future? (4) What are the strong and the weak areas of the story of sustainable development as it is told in secondary education?

The narrative analysis is based on the writings of J. Bruner that emphasizes the close connection between culture, education and narrative. The thesis' methodology is based on participant observation, interviews with students and teachers, and narrative analysis of curricula and textbooks.

The thesis argues that while environmental and developmental issues are part of compulsory secondary education, whether these issues are seen from a sustainable development perspective is very much left to chance. The holistic and inspiring story that provides a sound knowledge base, at the same time as it mobilizes students' reflective, creative and analytical skills to bring about sustainable development, is missing.