



Healing Earth: Education for Integral Ecology

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Abstract: My dissertation in curriculum and instruction explores educators' experiences teaching with *Healing Earth*, a curriculum for integral ecology developed by the International Jesuit Ecology Project (IJEP) in connection with Loyola Chicago's School of Sustainability. The conceptual framework of integral ecology is based on Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*. The integral ecology framework provides an expansive view of ecology based on an understanding of interconnectedness, emphasizing humans' relationship with our world. In this approach, ecology is inseparable from the other scientific disciplines and from fields such as politics, philosophy, and religion, and is integral to the Jesuit pursuit of social justice. I have completed a pilot survey as my first phase of data collection. I will follow up with in-depth interviews with some of these educators for the next and final phase of data collection. This poster presents an overview of *Healing Earth* and the integral ecology framework, my research methods, and my initial findings.

Introduction:



Healing Earth is a free open-access curriculum for integral ecology accessible at <https://healingearth.ijep.net/>.

As a "living text," HE is continually updated to remain current.

Each unit addresses a major aspect of our global ecological crisis:

1. Declining biodiversity
2. Natural resource depletion
3. Shift to renewable energy
4. Water quality and availability
5. Food quality and availability
6. Global climate change



Healing Earth presents science content in connection with human contexts and the perspectives of diverse faith traditions, ethical foundations and moral principles.

Healing Earth's Ethical Framework for Integral Ecology:

Moral Principles	Moral Goals	Moral Virtues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Care for creation *Human dignity and rights *Common good *Universal destination of goods *Preferential option for the poor *Subsidiarity (IJEP, 2020, para. 29) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Protect and preserve biological diversity. *Support sustainable and renewable energy sources available to all people. *Decrease damage done to nature and people by extractive industries. *Conserve and protect water and its availability to all people and forms of life. *Make healthy food available in a sustainable way to all people. *Reduce human-induced global climate change. *Contribute to authentic, integral development. (IJEP, 2020, para. 37) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Gratitude for the existence, beauty, and resources of the natural world. *Courage to live sustainably and advocate for the good of the natural world. *Justice in preserving, restoring, and distributing the goods of the natural world. *Prudence in decisions that affect the health of the natural world. *Temperance in consuming the goods of the natural world. *Generosity in sharing the goods of the natural world. (IJEP, 2020, para. 46)

Ethical Foundations:

Intrinsic Value, Instrumental Value, Environmental Sustainability (IJEP, 2020, paras. 24-27)



"The most basic issue of our time is human-Earth relations... To recover a situation where humans would be present to the Earth in a mutually enhancing manner, I believe we must return to a sense of intimacy with the Earth... The Great Work before us [is] moving modern industrial civilization from its present devastating influence on the Earth to a more benign mode of presence." (Berry, 2011, p. 396-399)

"(Three Levels of Integral Ecology" figure based on Miller, 2017)

References

- Berry, T. (2011). The great work. In K. D. Moore & M. P. Nelson (Eds.), *Moral ground: Ethical action for a planet in peril* (pp. 396-399). Trinity University Press.
- Francis, P. (2015). *Laudato Si': On care for our common home*. Ignatius Press.
- International Jesuit Ecology Project [IJEP]. (2020). *Introduction*. *Healing Earth*. <https://healingearth.ijep.net/introduction>
- Miller, V. J. (2017). *The theological and ecological vision of Laudato Si': Everything is connected*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Research Methods:

Research Questions

- In what ways do secondary- and tertiary-level educators use *Healing Earth* curriculum resources? How do these educators describe their experiences teaching with *Healing Earth*?
- How have these educators incorporated the principles of integral ecology in their teaching, including the understanding that all life and systems on Earth are interconnected; belief in the intrinsic value of nature; and integrating spirituality, ethics, humanities, politics, and social sciences, into ecological understandings?
 - What opportunities and topics barriers have these educators encountered when teaching with an integral ecology framework?
 - In these educators' accounts, how do students respond to the *Healing Earth* curriculum? What questions do students raise? What or actions are students most interested in pursuing?
- What lessons have these educators drawn about the possibilities of an integral ecology framework for education? What ideas and vision do they share for education moving forward?

Participants

I contacted all educators that I could identify who had taught with *Healing Earth* in any way.

Of the 14 educators I contacted, 12 responded to the survey, and 10 expressed interest in participating in interviews.

All participants teach in secondary- and tertiary-level Catholic educational institutions representing four countries.

Research Design

Qualitative Multiple-Case Study with Sequential Design

Pilot Survey

- Online (Qualtrics) questionnaire sent to all potential participants; 12 responses.
- Voluntary, anonymous (IRB approval)
- Questions about participants' contexts, experience teaching with *Healing Earth*, and other ecology-related teaching experiences.
- Used surveys to recruit participants for upcoming interviews.

Interviews

- 10 potential participants based on survey responses.
- 45-60 minutes per interview, conducted via Zoom.
- In-depth (semi-structured) interviews: guiding questions prepared, but questions will vary with flow of each interview.
- Phenomenological (focus on experiences, interpretations)
- Optional open-ended follow-up survey will allow participants to correct, clarify, or add to anything they said during interviews.

Findings:

- Participants have used *Healing Earth* in a variety of ways ranging from "the main source of curriculum" to only "as a source of ideas or inspiration" and as an information source for student projects.
- The units that participants most frequently reported having used were the *Introduction*, *Biodiversity*, *Natural Resources*, and *Global Climate Change*. The most frequently used components were *Case Studies*, *Science*, *Ethics*, and *Spirituality*.
- Six participants (50%) reported that *Healing Earth* meets their needs "extremely well," five participants (~42%) reported that *Healing Earth* meets their needs "moderately well," and one participant (~8%) reported that *Healing Earth* meets their needs "slightly well." No one answered "not well at all."
- Comments included appreciation for *Healing Earth*'s connecting science to spirituality; students' engagement with the content; opportunities to network with likeminded educators throughout the world; and the ethical framework.
- Participants expressed a wish for assessment materials to be included, and for more ongoing professional development opportunities. Participants also noted challenges in adapting *Healing Earth*'s content to various academic levels.
- Every participant reported incorporating most of these approaches associated with integral ecology in their teaching:

Participants' Reported Frequency of Attempts to Use Integral Ecology Approaches:



Implications: The survey reveals how teachers use *Healing Earth* and provides valuable feedback. The survey has also informed my approach for the rest of my dissertation research. Many participants use *Healing Earth* as a supplement rather than as their primary curriculum source, but all participants report attempting to incorporate principles of integral ecology in their teaching. In interviews, I will ask participants to share freely of their teaching experiences related to the principles of integral ecology.

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