

# **Learning About And Through Sustainability: Relational Pedagogy And Storyline As A Teaching Foundation**

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**Abstract:** *This article studies how environmental sustainability is integrated in a Storyline, which include learning about and through sustainability, conducted in two primary school classes, Grade 2 (children's age 8-9) in Sweden. It examines the significant aspects of the Storyline approach in relation to democratic values and young pupils' sense of agency. In addition, it examines how pupils comprehend the concept of sustainability, and the Storyline approach itself. The empirical material consists of classroom observation and individual semistructured interviews with 20 pupils and 2 teachers. Theories of relational pedagogy are used to analyze the material. The results show that Storyline work depends on a skilled, compassionate and caring teacher, who creates an open climate in the classroom. It is argued that both a pedagogical theoretical foundation, such as relational pedagogy, and a deliberate teaching and learning approach, such as Storyline, are crucial when implementing issues of sustainability in primary school education.*

**Keywords:** *Storyline approach, Teaching methods, Relational pedagogy, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), Pupils' sense of agency.*

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

“The climate crisis is both the easiest and the hardest issue we have ever faced. The easiest because we know what we must do. We must stop the emissions of greenhouse gases. The hardest because our current economics are still totally dependent on burning fossil fuels, and thereby destroying ecosystems in order to create everlasting economic growth. ‘So, exactly how do we solve that?’ you ask us – the schoolchildren striking for the climate” (Thunberg, 2018-2019, p. 65-66).

Greta Thunberg is a young environmental activist from Sweden, who has created headlines around the globe over the last years for challenging the world leaders on their shortcomings regarding climate change actions. She started a protest by sitting outside the Swedish parliament, with a simple placard, stating “School strike for the climate”. This inspired young people all over the world to do the same, which initiated an international movement called

Fridays for future (Bouilanne, Lalancette, & Ilkiw, 2020; Thackeray, Robinson, Smith, Bruno & Kirschbaum, 2020). Thunberg's interest in environmental issues began at school, where she was shown to a documentary about the pollutions of the seas. Her response to the worries, concerns and hopelessness she felt after seeing this documentary, was to act, by putting pressure on politicians. To all of us, who work in the fields of education and schooling, is it both interesting and necessary to understand how young pupils might become engaged and passionate about sustainability issues, and to find ways to encourage pupils to take a stand and to make their voices heard. One aspect to consider is how teachers could or should act when young pupils want to use their democratic human rights to speak out and to demonstrate against injustice or any matter they believe in.

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