

## Teachers' Beliefs About the Environment: The Case of Azerbaijan

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**Abstract :** As a driving force of society, the role of teachers is important in inspiring, motivating, and encouraging the younger generation to protect the environment. In light of these, the study aims to explore teachers' beliefs to understand teachers' engagement with teaching about the environment. Though teachers' beliefs about the environment have been explored by a number of researchers, the influence of these beliefs in their professional lives and in shaping their classroom instructions has not been widely investigated in Azerbaijan. To this end, this study aims to reveal the beliefs of secondary school geography teachers about the environment and find out the ways teachers' beliefs of the environment are enacted in their classroom practice in Azerbaijan. Different frameworks have been suggested for measuring environmental beliefs stemming from well-known anthropocentric and biocentric worldviews. The study addresses New Ecological Paradigm (NEP) by Dunlap to formulate the interview questions as discussion with teachers around these questions aligns with the research aims serving to well-capture the beliefs of teachers about the environment. Despite the extensive applicability of the NEP scale, it has not been used to explore in-service teachers' beliefs about the environment. Besides, it has been used as a tool for quantitative measurement; however, the study addresses the scale within the framework of the qualitative study. The research population for semi-structured interviews and observations was recruited via purposeful sampling. Teachers' being a unit of analysis is related to the gap in the literature as to how teachers' beliefs are related to their classroom instructions within the environmental context, as well as teachers' beliefs about the environment in Azerbaijan have not been well researched. 6 geography teachers from 4 different schools were involved in the research process. The schools are located in one of the most polluted parts of the capital city Baku where the first oil well in the world was drilled in 1848 and is called "Black City" due to the black smoke and smell that covered that part of the city. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teachers to reveal their stated beliefs. Later, teachers were observed during geography classes to understand the overlap between teachers' ideas presented during the interview and their teaching practice. Research findings aim to indicate teachers' ecological beliefs and practice, as well as elaborate on possible causes of compatibility/incompatibility between teachers' stated and observed beliefs.

**Keywords :** environmental education, anthropocentric beliefs, biocentric beliefs, new ecological paradigm

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