

## BOOK REVIEWS

### **International Handbook of Research on Environmental Education**

Edited by Robert B. Stevenson, Michael Brady, Justin Dillon, and Arjen E.J. Wals  
Routledge, London, UK, 2013

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Reviewed by Amanda Lloyd

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The *International Handbook of Research on Environmental Education* covers an immense amount of information on a large range of related topics. The text is organised into three categories: Part A: Conceptualising environmental education as a field of inquiry; Part B: Research on environmental education curriculum, learning, and assessment: processes and outcomes; and Part C: Issues of framing, doing, and assessing in environmental education research. While these categories are broad and the text comprehensive, the enormity of research that has occurred means the text only touches on certain aspects of the field and skims the surface of other large areas.

The handbook aims to illuminate what environmental education is and highlight what can be perceived as missing. Clearly, this is a huge task. As such, the handbook is useful as a summary for environmental educators and researchers who wish to grasp the topic succinctly. It could be used as a springboard to further references and topics. The text can be useful as a reliable reference source due to the sizable number of contributing authors, who hail from all corners of the globe.

Due to the size of the handbook, three aspects have been chosen for review.

#### *Section 1: Historical, Contextual and Theoretical Orientations That Have Shaped Environmental Education Research.*

The handbook opens with the complex task of historically placing and theoretically defining environmental education on top of its associated research field. Annette Gough focuses on the historical, contextual and theoretical orientations, which provide the groundwork for the subsequent chapters. This section contains the socioecological approaches to behaviour change (Kyburz-Graber), a critical history of thinking globally in environmental education (Noel Gough), selected trends in 30 years of doctoral environmental education research (Marcinkowski et al.) and a ‘history to the present’ approach to transformation, empowerment, and governing of environmental conduct (Ferreira).

This is known staple information for many environmental education researchers and focal to their subsequent research. It is also useful for practitioners who are wishing to gain a comprehensive understanding of the developments of the research occurring in their field. Overall, this chapter provides a sound background to the predominant themes prevalent in the handbook.

*Section IV: Curriculum Research in Environmental Education*

It is acknowledged that curriculum research in environmental education is a broad field encompassing a wide array of interests, academics, and methods. Consequently, Lotz-Sisitka, Fien, and Ketlhoilwe (2013) surmise: 'There are a broad range of research philosophies within this emerging field that include the ecophilosophical, place-based, culturally situated and phenomenological perspectives that underpin constructivist and socially critical environmental education perspectives' (p. 206). As a result, the handbook clearly could not delve into all areas currently being researched.

Understandings of environmental education in a cultural context (Lotz-Sisitka, Fien, & Ketlhoilwe), place-based education (Smith), and the case of environmental education in a rural region of Brazil (Hoeffel, Fadini, Machado, Reis, & Lima) are the curriculum research examples depicted in the handbook. Additionally, Shallcross and Robinson posit that there is a need to develop a more complex understanding of curriculum by juxtaposing multiple sources of data, including redressing the neglect of visual research methods.

The handbook manages to cover some of the more salient aspects of curriculum research in environmental education. However, there are significant gaps in the presented studies that centre on a narrow range of focus that were evidently beyond the scope of the handbook.

*Section IX: Insights, Gaps, and Future Directions in Environmental Education Research*

The overwhelming message contained within this chapter is the need to acknowledge past environmental education and its discursive, conceptual, and pragmatic evolution to constructively progress future research. Wals, Stevenson, Brody, and Dillon (2013) recognise 'environmental education research continues to adapt to the rapidly changing external circumstances and to grow in strength as the years go by' (p. 546). New areas such as climate change education and climate change adaptation education are noted to be key areas that are only going to increase.

While this chapter does not detail or present a list of the areas where there are gaps or the need for future direction in environmental education research, it does present a resounding, clear argument for being open to new areas and to employ innovative methods. Reid and Payne (2013) recognise the 'hard and necessary work' (p. 534) is to keep talking to each other across the post-positivist, interpretive, critical, and post-critical forms of inquiry. This is a key point why, in short, environmental educators need to continue their conversations, inquiries, understandings, and recognition of each other's research.

**Reviewer Biography**

Amanda Lloyd was a primary school teacher for 15 years before completing her PhD about developing place-based outdoor learning. Her passion is holistically developing the skills of our children to become active citizens. Amanda has always spent her free time on a bike, in a boat, swimming in the ocean, and generally enjoying the outdoors. This has led her into a field that develops her life experiences into educational opportunities for others. She is currently working as an educational consultant for Outdoor Connections, developing educational programs and delivering professional development to teachers. Amanda facilitates Nature Educators Network Australia (NENA).