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Author

Laberge, Yves

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Review: International Handbook of Research on Environmental Education
Robert B. Stevenson, Michael Brody, Justin Dillon and Arjen E.J. Wals (Editors)

Reviewed by Yves Laberge
Québec, Canada G1V 0A6

Stevenson, Robert B., Brody, Michael, Dillon, Justin, Wals, Arjen E.J., editors. *International Handbook of Research on Environmental Education*, New York: Routledge, with the American Educational Research Association (AERA). 2013. xii+576 pp. ISBN-13: 9780415892391. US\$119.95, paperback.

This enormous *International Handbook of Research on Environmental Education* appears with the collaboration of the American Educational Research Association (AERA); it comprises 51 commissioned chapters within nine sections written by noted scholars in Environmental Education based in a variety of countries. As underlined by the co-editors, “contributions include philosophically and empirically grounded research (of all genres) that critically examines the conceptualization, discourses, policies, programs, processes, structures, and research approaches to Environmental Education in the broadest sense” (p. 2).

The opening chapters provide an excellent mapping of the field: Annette Gough retraces the history and the step-by-step institutionalization of this field (p. 13). Elsewhere, a group of Floridian scholars highlights some recent research trends in the thesis which are abstracted in selected databanks in Environmental Education (p. 45). One of the constant, underlying themes is the fundamental distinction between “Environmental Education” and “sustainability”, as Annette Gough indicates right from the first pages (p. 13). Lesley Le Grange (from South Africa) explains “Why we need a language of (Environmental) Education” or rather a language of “environmental learning”, as she suggests (p. 108). There is indeed a complete chapter, Chapter 25, focusing solely on environmental learning. Many other contributors contribute core concepts such as ideology in order to understand and deconstruct “sustainability ideologies” (p. 149). Then, Chapter 21 questions the possible links between environmental education, students’ life-world culture, and how environmental education itself is taught and represented in schools. These questions bring Albert Zeyer and Elin Kelsey to investigate in interviews with students the concept of “Cultural border crossing” (p. 206). In Chapter 33, a much needed articulation between environmental education and sustainability education (which are not synonymous) is being made; the authors keep in mind the context of the “neo-liberal capitalistic society” which precedes education for sustainability (p. 349).

Some chapters focus on a specific region, country, or subcontinent in order to show “what’s going on” in this field at a given moment in a particular place. For example, Chapter 18 on Latin America presents “twelve characteristics in the environmental education research field in Mexico” (p. 172). Elsewhere, Chapter 22 concentrates on the sense of places. A few daring chapters go far beyond the limits of environmental education but they remain interesting and engaging, for example “Getting the Picture” (Chapter 23), which borrows from Cultural Studies and postmodernism as a theoretical framework in order to discuss how images and video recordings can help researchers working in/with a classroom (p. 221).

The last section deserves some comments because it highlights various original perspectives. For instance, in an excellent chapter titled “Greening the Knowledge Economy”, Michael Peters presents the methodological dimensions of ecosophy (“green philosophy”) within a green critique of neo-liberalism (p. 498). Finally, the four co-editors sum up with some thoughts about the significant changes, shifts, “paradigm wars”, and theorizing within environmental education

research since the early 1970s (p. 512). Among these recent and ongoing trends, authors point out “an emerging interest in worldviews” and belief systems in environmental education, a trend which perhaps could be articulated with the analysis of ideologies present in environmental debates (p. 514). The final pages try to identify the actual needs and possible directions for future research in the domain of environmental education (Chapters 49 and 51), while Chapter 50 humbly overviews some handbooks (only a few publications in English) related to environmental education scholarship (p. 529).

Some of the best contributions in this comprehensive *International Handbook of Research on Environmental Education* from Routledge have been neglected in this review. But in themselves, the few selected topics mentioned above give a broad picture of the book’s high quality level and are sufficiently original to justify this interesting reading to all graduates students in disciplines related to environmental studies.

Yves Laberge, Ph.D., <yves.laberge.1@ulaval.ca>, Centre de recherche en éducation et formation relatives à l’environnement et à l’écocitoyenneté – Centr’ÉRE, Québec, Canada G1V 0A6

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