The Handbook of Research on Environmental Education

Call for Contributions

The AERA/Routledge Research Handbook Series

The American Educational Research Association (AERA) has announced a call for proposals for initial volumes in a new series of handbooks in education research. The handbook series, a joint effort of AERA and Routledge (Taylor and Francis Group), will focus on major areas of inquiry within education research. The aim of this series is to publish signature volumes that offer state-of-the-art knowledge and the foundation to advance research to scholars and students in education research and related social science fields. Each volume will be designed to provide comprehensive treatment of major lines of research and the resulting knowledge base on well-defined issues or areas of inquiry in education. The handbooks will also provide an opportunity to take stock and to advance thinking about the future directions and scope of research in an arena. The volumes in the series will be distinct from similar efforts in several respects. First, each volume will be deliberately expansive by considering research bearing on a topic both from within and outside the field of education research. Second, each handbook will draw on the strongest research irrespective of context—including from within and outside the United States. Third, each volume will assess the knowledge base and chart a research agenda attentive to the diverse populations served by contemporary educational systems. Finally, each handbook will include a critical analysis of the strengths and limitations of extant studies as well as address the essential tools and elements for research progress.

Why a Handbook of Research on Environmental Education?

The present time is propitious for the generation of a Handbook of Research on Environmental Education. In part, this is because of the conceptual progress that the field has already made—which the Handbook will draw together; but it is also because it is necessary to evaluate that progress against the challenges environmental education researchers face in carrying out their work in relation to both environmental and educational contexts. Such a handbook needs to reflect the richness of scholarship across the field and to be put together by researchers committed to respecting the history of environmental education research and the work of those who have contributed to it. We also believe that such a volume should challenge existing notions of research handbooks and that the process of constructing it should itself be an opportunity to engage researchers (and research users) from a wide range of interests and dispositions in order to help us all rethink and reorientate our own ideas—and (through the Handbook’s use) the ideas of those who use it.

Recent years have seen an increase in the number of academic journals devoted to research in education and the environment. The Ecological and Environmental Special Interest Group of the American Education Research Association (AERA) has grown in numbers and diversity since the early 1990s, and the National Association for Research in Science Teaching (NARST) has added a new Environmental Education strand to its annual meeting. Where once the field was dominated by a small group of empirical-
analytical researchers publishing in one relatively small circulation journal, there are now several journals across the world publishing research from a wide variety of traditions, espousing multiple methodologies and involving a broad range of methods. At the same time, the environment (and contested notions of sustainability) has become a topic of conversation among the public, the subject of media interest and the focus of political debate and legislation. Systemic linkages between environment, health, development and education have become more widely accepted as the years have passed. Because of this, the need to consolidate what we know as a field and to demarcate the limits of our (un)certainties has never been clearer.

In summary, the purpose of the handbook is not only to illuminate the most important understandings that have been developed by EE research, but also to address the way in which the field has changed over the decades, current debates and controversies, what is still missing and where EE research should be headed.

**Intended audiences**

The proposed Handbook of Research on Environmental Education will be useful for undergraduate, graduate students and faculty in environmental education or any field in which educating about the environment is an essential component. Researchers and practitioners involved in environmental issues and sustainability will find the Handbook a useful reference to guide their work. Administrators including government officials working in conjunction with environmental programs and ecological issues will find the Handbook useful in guiding their work.

**How Can You Contribute?**

Proposals for contributions may be one of two types: (1) a section that focuses on a broad research topic or issue and includes a number of chapters addressing that topic or issue; or (2) individual chapters on a specific research topic or issue. Both section and chapter proposals may address any of the areas identified below. Other topics or issues identified by contributors also are invited. The 11 potential areas outlined below do not necessarily represent the final structure or sections of the handbook but are intended to provide some guidelines to possible topics and issues for contributors and an approximation of the envisaged size and scope of the handbook.

Interested contributors are invited to forward abstracts (500 words) of their proposals to the address listed below. These abstracts will be reviewed by the editors and editorial advisors who will both select those to be invited to expand the abstract into a full section or paper and provide them with feedback and suggestions. All invited sections and chapters will then be peer reviewed and revisions may be requested prior to publication.
We seek contributions of conceptually or empirically grounded research (of all genres) that critically examines the conceptualization, discourses, policies, programs, processes, structures and research approaches to EE (and ESD or EfS, education for sustainable development or sustainability, which we view as related to EE). More specifically, contributions might address – but are not limited to - such areas as:

A. Conceptualizing EE as a field of inquiry

1) **Histories, philosophies and theoretical orientations that underlie and have shaped EE research.** What are the historical, conceptual, philosophical and values issues in conceptualizing EE as a field of study, for example:
   - changing foci of and theoretical orientation to EE research over time and context
   - the conceptualization of the environment and education in EE research
   - philosophies of environment and education that have (explicitly or implicitly) guided EE research
   - the relationship of EE research to research in other related fields of education such as science, social studies/sciences, health, development, social justice, citizenship and peace education, as well as to educational research in general.

2) **Research on environmental conceptions, beliefs, values, ethics, literacies, and competencies that (explicitly or implicitly) define the goals or intended outcomes and foundational knowledge of EE (for different groups of learners).** For example, what are the beliefs and values embedded in different conceptions of environmental literacy?

3) **Analyzes of EE discourses and policies, and their cultural and political influences, at the international, national and/or local level that articulate goals, content, processes and/or structures for EE.** For example, to what extent do national EE (or ESD/EfS) policy statements treat different educational sectors as having more than an information dissemination role? How are different professional, social/cultural and political groups involved in formulating and disseminating such policies?

B. EE Curriculum, Teaching, Assessment and Learning: Processes and Outcomes

4) **Research on programmatic/curriculum and teaching/pedagogical issues in EE.** For example, research on the effectiveness of particular programs and settings for EE for particular kinds of learners? What are the contextual influences (organizational, community, regional/state/provincial, national, global) on EE programs and structures?

5) **Research on the processes and outcomes of engaging learners in various kinds of EE experiences (in formal or informal education or workplace settings).** For example, research about:
   - developing understandings of environmental concepts and issues?
   - developing skills and dispositions for investigating environmental issues?
   - learners’ experiences of EE?
   - pre-service and in-service preparation (and professional development) of educators in general and environmental educators in particular?
6) **Research on EE and environmental attitudes or values and behavior change.** What are the links between education and either engendering responsible environmental attitudes, values and/or behaviors and/or creating environmentally responsible or sustainable communities? For example, how do personal and professional life histories and different kinds of EE experiences relate to environmental beliefs?

7) **Evaluation and analysis of EE policies, programs, materials, technologies or supporting structures and the assessment of learners and learning (in formal or informal settings).** For example, what degree of coherence is evident across local school policies, curriculum, instructional and assessment practices, and professional development activities? What do youth and adults learn about environmental issues from popular media?

C. Issues of Framing, Doing and Assessing EE Research

8) **Methodological (and epistemological and ontological) issues of doing EE research.** For example, what are the distinguishing characteristics of EE research, criteria for judging quality of EE research, challenges of framing and conducting EE research, or issues in preparing EE researchers? What are the roles of educational and environmental theories in EE research? How do different (including mixed) methodologies contribute to advancing knowledge of different EE issues?

9) **Issues of marginalization in EE research.** For example, how have such issues as race, class, gender, geography, and colonialism played out in EE and EE research? How have the politics of research shaped the funding of EE research and such debates as EE research as both scholarship and activism?

10) **Assessing the use and impact of EE research and evaluation.** What is the relationship between EE research or evaluation and EE policy and practice? To what extent and how is EE research used by policymakers and practitioners? How might EE research be framed and conducted to involve practitioners and/or facilitate its use in practice? What is the role and contribution of program evaluation and student assessment?

11) **Gaps and future directions in EE research.** What has been missing from EE research? Where should EE research be headed? What are new or emerging spaces or opportunities, perhaps at the margins of education and/or research, for furthering EE research?
Proposals will be accepted until November 15, 2007

Timeline of Tasks and Completion Dates

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<th>Task</th>
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<td>Call for contributions</td>
<td>October 5 - November 15, 2007</td>
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<tr>
<td>Submission of handbook proposal to AERA</td>
<td>December 21, 2007</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contributors notified of accepted proposals</td>
<td>March 15, 2008</td>
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<tr>
<td>Submission by authors of draft chapters/sections</td>
<td>September 1, 2008</td>
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<td>Submission by authors of final revisions</td>
<td>March 1, 2009</td>
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<tr>
<td>Submission of handbook for production</td>
<td>December 1, 2009</td>
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<tr>
<td>Publication of handbook</td>
<td>AERA meeting, April 2010</td>
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