

**Review: Education in Times of Environmental Crises: Teaching Children
To Be Agents of Change**
By Ken Winograd

Reviewed by Yves Laberge
Ottawa, Quebec, Canada

Winograd, Ken, ed. *Education in Times of Environmental Crises: Teaching Children to Be Agents of Change*, New York, NY, USA: Routledge, 2016. xviii+283 pp. ISBN: 9781138944367, paperback, US\$52.95. Also available in hardcover and as a Kindle eBook.

This cutting-edge book was originally made for scholars in environmental education and citizenship studies (and even in interdisciplinary fields such as environmental citizenship), but elementary teachers looking for ways to empower their pupils will be inspired by these pages. “We all want to change the world,” said John Lennon in a song, half a century ago, and this collection of 24 new essays proposes a great variety of fertile avenues and strategies for teaching awareness and activism — activism is the key word here. In his opening remarks, Ken Winograd (from Oregon State University) brings in some basic concepts such as “the effective citizen” (p. 4), “place-based education” (p. 5, and section II), but also the idea of “reconnecting with nature” (p. 7, and section II). Learning just the facts like a distant, unfamiliarised observer is not enough if one seeks social progress and community change: “The goal of all education must be to teach students to raise real-world questions and problems and, then, take action with others to build a more just and sustainable world” (p. 6, and section III).

Most contributors introduce case studies based on some inspiring concepts or emerging ideas to be tested in classrooms, for example in Rhys Kelly’s chapter 12 (“Nurturing Social and Ecological Relationships”) on restorative justice programmes and similar pedagogical approaches that can create a “dialogue about what happened between those involved and those affected by the incident” (p. 138). Elsewhere in Karen Malone’s excellent chapter 11, we learn about experiments in kindergartens and elementary schools in Australia; in her analysis of children’s drawings (mainly around 10 years old) about the places they like in their neighborhood, the author interprets their representations of their environment and highlight many child-friendly neighbourhood themes (p. 122).

Many contributions are down-to-earth studies often linked with the immediate reality and tangible situations. For example, in Japan after the 2011 earthquake and tsunami, educators commenced teaching skills for “disaster risk reduction,” or school-based DRR education, since “most children do have questions and concerns about hazards and disasters, particularly when these are subjects to media coverage during and after an event” (see Chapter 21: “Children as Change Agents in Reducing Risks of Disasters”, by Mayeda Rashid, Kevin R. Ronan, and Briony Towers, p. 234).

Some fundamental ideas reappear in many contributions, for example “place-based education” (p. 16) or “place-based pedagogy” (p. 104), defined by Christy Radhouse as “an educational approach that recognises, values, and embraces the local context both as knowledge base and as a connecting point for communities and schools” (p. 104). The author final thoughts point out some possible directions for future action and strategies but these should not be understood as just a partial abstract of what preceded (p. 262). In other words, this whole book truly deserves to be read and reread.

In summary, *Education in Times of Environmental Crises* is an important, rigorous, empowering book that provides the notions and guidance for environmentalists who are seeking new ways to create awareness and consciousness raising that will lead to action and change. Instead of throwing mere facts and numbers about our endangered planet, contributors discuss methods and real-life experiences centred on environmental education and citizenship studies, with an insistence on the local scene dynamics and issues. Advanced undergraduates and students in higher levels would also benefit from these strong case studies; many of those essays are so rigorous they could serve as templates for future research in other settings. Elementary schools and university libraries (in English-speaking institutions) should own a copy of it.

Yves Laberge, Ph.D.<ylaberge@uottawa.ca>, Department of Visual Arts, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Canada

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