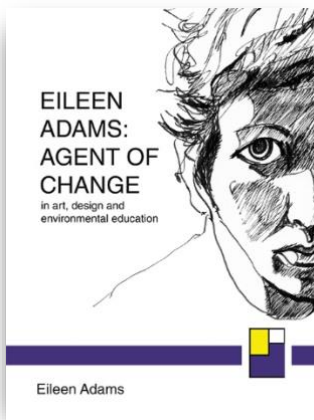


Review



Title:	Eileen Adams: Agent of change
Authors:	Eileen Adams
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Reviewed by: Dawne Bell, Edge Hill University

Authored by Eileen Adams *Agents of Change*, as the title suggests, is a book that serves to explore how the author's innovative initiatives have helped to shape government thinking, and subsequently have effected change art and design educators' practice both in the UK and internationally.

Published by Loughborough Design Press, this book sits within a suite of texts that each make a significant contribution to global design education research, and design theory. As such this book is of potential interest to policy makers, educational researchers and those with an interest in, and concern for, the educational and cultural development of visual literacy including institutions, organisations and charitable trusts. This text is also intended for teachers, student teachers, teacher educators, lecturers working in schools, colleges and other settings, and would prove valuable as a resource for the instigation of discourse and wider debate on the development of art and design within the context of educational settings.

Chapter 1. Introduction:

This short introductory chapter provides the reader with an early insight into the author's intentions behind the publication of this book. She outlines her early influences, before moving onto chronologically chart career milestones in a brief synopsis of her personal story, and as such lays out very clearly the ground work for the remainder of the book.

Chapter 2. Influences:

Building upon the previous chapter, in this section the author presents a very personal, detailed and reflective account of her personal life journey. From early childhood, through into primary and secondary schooling, her move into professional training and concluding with the impact work with influential mentors has had in shaping who she is. At first glance these recollections appear to be 'whimsical' but are in fact essential in giving the reader a very clear understanding how the authors passion for her subject has evolved. She talks of being 'disturbed into a new consciousness' and through these wonderfully powerful sparks of self-understanding and totally honest reflection, the author contextualises for the reader her ontological position, which makes it very easy to understand how these influences have fuelled a lifelong drive to make significant, positive differences to young people's educational experience.

Chapter 3. Art, Design and Environmental Education:

Having laid down a very clear base in the preceding chapters, in Chapter three we begin our journey with the author as she guides us through her early innovations. These begin with the 'Front Door' project (1974-1976), a pilot scheme that ran in partnership with teachers and architects. Coupled with our new knowledge of the authors personal ontology and motivation, the way in which reflections are presented paints a picture, from which the reader is able to gain a real sense of the 'era' within which the pilot work took place. Building upon this projects success, another followed, the Art and the Built Environment project, which ran from 1976 until 1982. This work enabled the author to move from the role of teacher to freelance consultant, and the potential challenges this presented are reflected in an open and honest way. The remainder of Chapter 3 maps a succession of projects, each with an environmental focus, that span from 1982 right up until almost the current day. Several have an international arm, and I suspect, as the author has intimated, will be explored in greater detail in the companion book which I understand is planned to accompany this text.

Chapter 4. School as a Learning Environment:

Having moved from teacher to freelance consultant in Chapter three, in this chapter the author explains how her work shifted from exploring the built environment as a focus for art and design education, to the investigation of the learning environment itself, and how that could be utilised as a resource to support learning across the curriculum. A series of innovation project case studies are presented, and as in previous and subsequent chapters, the section is well supported by wonderful

images, that are supportive of the author in presenting not only a rich summary of her work, but also illustrating to the reader the impact of its effectiveness.

Chapter 5. Public Art and Education:

Chapter five is a relatively short chapter, which is a shame, as it is perhaps my favourite. It begins with an outline of the political landscape, which provides an invaluable context for the reader. Projects are outlined and within each the author alludes to a series turbulent struggles to secure funding and see projects through to completion, battling against committees, meetings and bureaucracy. For anyone working within the field of art and design in schools during this period you will perhaps understand my fascination with this chapter. The imagery captures the era perfectly, and my only criticism of this section is that it should be longer. Whilst the inherent difficulties involved in measuring the impact of this type of project work are obvious, and as the author makes clear things did not always go to plan, and she holds reservations in relation to the imposed constraints of museum and gallery visits, it would have been nice if the author had been able to present some outcomes by children that relate to this phase of her work.

Chapter 6. Research, Teaching and Examining:

Chapter six presents a now established as a pattern of project case study and reflection by the author. In this Chapter, within the context of her work within higher education, the author presents a review of her work that explores specifically work that sought to change art and design and environmental education. However, as a reader I found myself being drawn into the areas not explored in specific detail, the pressures and disappointments, and tensions unseen. An insight into how the author overcame these issues and challenges would be enthralling to read.

Chapter 7. Learning through Drawing:

Chapter seven is one of the largest sections in the book and deserving so. There are five smaller projects outlined in the latter half of the chapter, but principally the bulk of this section is devoted to the hugely successful Campaign for Drawing. Initiated in 2000, the scope, range and impact of this campaign, in all of its permeations are described in detail. A chapter not to be missed!

Chapter 8. Strategies for Development:

In Chapter eight the author reflects upon the strategies she employed in order to progress her work. I found this be an insightful and extremely useful section of the book. The first section presents in the very simplest of terms a 'how to' style guide, before moving onto explore the numerous strategies the author adopted in order disseminate her project and research findings. The final section makes reference to future work by the author, which would seek to focus upon the far reaching impact of her international work. As I have alluded to in my summary of Chapter three, this dimension would be welcome addition and I would think prove to be a most useful companion to this book.

Chapter 9. Conclusions and Policy Recommendations:

Chapter nine is in effect the authors final chapter. Here the collection work is brought together with the author's final thoughts and reflections. After the initial summary which covers learning through art and design, education for participation, the role of the teacher and policy recommendations, the chapter is then divided into ten key sub sections. This is an extremely useful section, which is enhanced further by a single summary page of recommendations at the chapter's end.

Chapter 10. Publications by Eileen Adams:

Whilst it is perhaps unusual for an author to include a section on their published work, this short chapter is extremely effective in presenting a powerful visual summary of the authors work to date. In addition to being a useful tool for quick reference, readers of the book will find it useful as a guide to signpost them to other similarly relevant key work in the field.

In summary:

The book charts a logical journey, with the author guiding us carefully and thoughtfully through each of the ten chapters and projects contained within. This adopted approach contributes to the books 'flow' and engages the reader in the authors personal life journey. Chapters are sub divided to aid understanding, with each incorporating sections that in some way describe the projects context, partners, sometimes its struggles and challenges, the outcomes and impact.

Within each chapter the author gives a clear and honest reflection of her perspectives and perceptions whilst working on the project at the time, and then at the end of each chapter (highlighted in lilac shaded areas) she provides an overview of the chapter with a summary 'reflection'. Throughout the book, the authors recollections are lovingly supported by a series of delightful (and quite often nostalgic) photographs that capture moments in time. These are accompanied by numerous reproductions of work by students and children which include illustrations, sketches, models and drawing.

Whilst not essential, I do think that having an understanding of the authors ontological position, is beneficial to the reader. Therefore, I would suggest that to get the very best out the book it needs to be read in order, although having read it through it would be easy to dip in and out of the text. There are particular chapters that work well together, for example Chapter's three and four. In utilising the book with students, for example to instigate debate, it would be best if these are read together, or at least explained to the students in advance.

I would imagine this book will be readily available to anyone who would wish to read it via libraries and so forth, however should a reader wish to purchase their own personal copy the book is reasonably priced and not prohibitive in cost for purchase of either the hard or paperback edition.

Eileen Adams: Agents of Change is a timeless publication. The authors initiatives have undoubtedly resulted in significant changes to both local and national government thinking, and have helped to shape developments in art and design educators' practice both in the UK, and internationally. Thought provoking on numerous levels, and I have no doubt that many elements will almost certainly cause the reader to stop and consider their own art and design education practice. This

book is easy to read and I would recommend it as worthwhile reading for any parties interested in furthering their understanding of art and design education.