

final year pre-service teachers, who were about to embark on careers in senior secondary teaching (mainly in environmental science). By definition they were the target audience on two (three?) counts. The following discussion was both energetic and enlightening, covering a broad range of issues which, in itself, indicated that the resource was a success in instigating discussion about salinity and its related problems. Many students claimed they learnt a lot from the video. All had something to say about the accompanying resource.

It was generally decided that the use of Roy Slaven as narrator was a clever move. Slaven is a modern icon who captures his audience's attention with his enthusiasm. A major feat given that it is mainly graingrowers (and perhaps geologists) that find soil of interest. Slaven (aka John Doyle) links the issue of soil degradation and salinity back to topics the students can relate to, in this case, footy ovals.

The video covered real and relevant issues where real people were working out practical solutions, and explaining how they came to these. Again, connections were made to the secondary classroom through examples of students undertaking experiments in the field in conjunction with experimental farmers.

The use of real farmers gave a feel for the issues that confront families faced with the problems of salinity and the resultant soil degradation. This, in turn, gave good view of what some farmers are doing and made the entire problem real to those that are not confronted with the problem on a daily basis.

Further connections were made with secondary students (and the pre-service teachers) through the use of the young female scientist as the 'field expert' who held the authority of knowledge. Video footage of senior school students (overlaid by the narrator discussing the issue) reinforced the connection. This made the issue relevant to their generation and, therefore, made it their problem as well.

The 'current' status of the presentation was given import through the use of the press releases that reflect/indicate that this is a *current* issue and therefore of *current* importance to students/people in general.

On the other hand, the pre-service teachers suggested that if this was targeted at all senior secondary students then the argument should have been urbanised. For example, taking all the products off a shelf at a supermarket that were produced in the affected areas, to represent the potential ramifications land degradation could have for everyone, not just those on the land. This would further enable urban-based students to relate to the problem.

In addition, it was suggested that issues like the population crisis and how this can affect salinity (i.e. Australia is an old and fragile land, to over-populate would lead to major land degradation problems) could have been touched on briefly by the narrator, thereby allowing teachers to explore other relevant issues.

The use of VENN diagrams was beneficial and quite appropriate, enabling a clear explanation of how/why salinity occurs to be covered. Further visual examples along this line would, however, have been appropriate in order to explain these issues at a deeper level.

The video is highly successful in getting across the seriousness of the issue. It is suitable for basing a unit around, although not perhaps for showing as a whole to students. If the video were broken up over a couple of lessons it would be suitable for VCE Environmental Science or for first year agricultural students. Alternatively video sections could be used to summarise lessons on salinity, acidification, land degradation, erosion, etc.

The accompanying manual is an ideal students/teachers manual that offers a good exploration of the history of salinity and provides a useful resource of potential websites and other references to follow up for teachers and students alike. Although the notes are extremely useful and offer a range of potential exercises and activities, it has the potential to lead to lazy teaching. A good teacher will, however, use the resource to build up an interesting and exciting unit of work on salinity for their VCE Environmental Science students. 🌱

## References

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Overton, J. and Scheyvens, R. (eds) 1999, *Strategies for Sustainable Development: Experiences from the Pacific*, University of NSW Press, ISBN 0-86840-689-9

As indicated by the title, this book focuses on the opportunities for sustainable development, by drawing on the experiences of people from the Pacific region. More particularly, the authors emphasise the importance of local experiences. As they say '... sustainable development seems mostly concerned with ideas which focus on global issues ("think global..."), and translating these into a myriad of small-scale activities ("...act local"), than those which arise from the multiplicity

of local needs, aspirations, resources and ideologies and challenge existing global discourses of development and environmentalism' (p. 2). So, an examination of sustainable development that emphasises sustainable lifestyles is overdue. In this context the Pacific region has the potential for providing much material as it covers some one-third of the surface of the Earth, and has some of both the most productive environments areas and some of the most marginal areas for humans. Also history shows '... many examples of both sustainable and highly destructive use of fragile environments' (p. 2).

To begin, the editors provide an insightful discussion of the ideas associated with sustainability. Without trying to develop a definition of sustainability they look at sustainability in the context of Pacific islands, by considering environmental, economic and social aspects. They highlight some of the ways in which sustainability may be achieved, rather than attempting to establish a single general strategy for sustainability. The editors also take exception to the 'outside-in' perspective which sees the Pacific Islanders as the victims of environmental change, largely generated by communities in the West. Rather, they contend that there is a need to balance this 'victim' view with discussion of the ways in which local environments are being changed from within, and the ways in which local people are adapting to global environmental and economic change.

Contributing authors to the 19 chapter are community and academic researchers from Pacific Islands and New Zealand. Their contributions are grouped into three sections.

The seven chapters in 'Contextual Issues' provide a thorough overview of both the physical and social contexts for life in the Pacific. Economic change is a key concern, now that the earlier colonial and military structures have all but gone, and the island nations are required to generate their own wealth if they are to participate in the regional and global economy. Cultural diversity and the range of cultural values are also identified, but the key to understanding social and economic issues is seen to be the system of land tenure that has held across the Pacific. This has been based on the dominance of communal ownership systems. However, there has been mounting pressure from both internal and external institutions to create freehold land. The implication then is that external economic and global influences will have to be absorbed into any initiatives for sustainability.

In 'Effects of Development', five chapters present a review of the impacts of logging, mining, exploitation of marine resources, commodity production and unsustainable agriculture, and urbanisation. Based on case studies from a range of Pacific countries, and using trends evident across the region, the authors paint a picture of the many pressures that have been felt by both physical environmental systems and social groups.

The final section draws together the desire for sustainability and the contexts that Western development pressures and the physical environment present the Pacific region. 'Sustainable

Alternatives' contains five chapters that focus on specific fields of opportunity for sustainable development. 'Green aid' associated with nature conservation clearly shows the possibilities for directing outside resources for the benefit of natural ecosystems. More associated with strict economic development, the chapters on sustainable forestry, agriculture and tourism look at the examples of where development and environmental protection have been merged, while the concept of sustainable urban footprints is used to indicate how more environmentally appropriate urbanisation can be practiced.

As in most texts, the final chapter provides conclusions about the prospects for achieving sustainable development in the Pacific region. This chapter draws out the themes of the previous chapters under several headings. Essentially these themes relate to the questioning of current development theory and practice. The authors maintain that there are three important issues: that Pacific islanders are not seen as passive recipients of outside goods and ideas, but as potential facilitators of sustainability; that a focus on 'livelihoods' is required for any analysis of development ideas; and that the issue of sovereignty and control over land is critical for sustainability of local environments and communities. Overall, from the material collected and assessed in the previous chapters, the authors conclude that Pacific islanders have much to teach outsiders and that we should seriously consider a dictum along the lines of 'think local, act global'.

There is little point in attempting to summarise the many issues and themes that are presented in the book. The important message coming from it is that dominant models of development, as applied to 'developing countries' are inappropriate in the Pacific region, and probably elsewhere. As many other authors contend, there is a lot to be learnt from local people if we are to move to forms of sustainability. However, *Strategies for Sustainable Development: Experiences from the Pacific* provides Westerners, including Australians, a long over-due awakening that across the Pacific region there is continuing severe disruption to ecological and social systems. Yet there are many instances of people in the Pacific coming up with approaches to manage environmental impacts while working to improve their social and economic conditions.

As a book for use in an educational setting, *Strategies for Sustainable Development: Experiences from the Pacific* will be best positioned on the shelves of teachers and the library. Its material is well written, easily read by senior secondary students, and frequently illustrated with maps and diagrams, presenting a good background to environmental issues in the Pacific. As I have already indicated it also provides many examples of local action for sustainability. Hence, for senior secondary and tertiary students there is a lot of material that can be drawn on to illustrate environmental impacts, and to provide positive examples of what people are doing to cope with these impacts.

The Pacific region, islands and people are generally ignored in Australian education curricula. I hope that *Strategies for Sustainable Development: Experiences from the Pacific* will

provide the opportunity for environmental educationists to include this region in our consideration of regional and global sustainability. 🌱

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Malcolm Plant (1998) *Education for the Environment: stimulating practice*. Dereham, Norfolk (UK): Peter Francis Publishers. ISBN 1 870167 30 9 £24.95 (hb)

Reviewing this book interested me for several reasons. First, the title—which echoes the title of an earlier work by John Fien (1993)—is consistent with an approach to environmental education that I also support, and Malcolm Plant acknowledges John Huckle as an inspiration for this orientation (as do Fien and I). Secondly, Plant teaches in a Master of Arts program in Environmental Education by distance education, while I teach in a Master of Education program in Environmental Education by distance education. Thirdly, Plant is involved in a collaborative teaching and research project with universities in South Africa, as am I (albeit in a different project). Fourthly, he professes an interest in environment, gender and development issues, as do I (see A. Gough 1997, 1999). I found a fifth hook for my interest in the book's Preface where Plant offers three purposes for writing the book: to share with others his enthusiasm for environmental education and conservation; to describe how the MA course is helping to meet the professional and environmental interests of educators in other parts of the world; and to argue for a particular approach to environmental education (reflecting critically on the socio-political origins of environment and development issues).

I regret that Plant succeeds only in achieving the second of these purposes. He subverts his first purpose by representing his enthusiasm for environmental education as pessimism. His third purpose—arguing for a particular approach to environmental education—is again cast in negative terms: he discusses the difficulties of enacting a socially critical approach to environmental education and argues against a postmodernist approach without arguing for an alternative. Valorising critical theory and diminishing a postmodernist approach is consistent with Huckle's (1999) more recent work, but many others see considerable merit in postmodernist approaches (see, for example, A. Gough 1997, N. Gough 1994, Sauve 1999). However, the strength of the students' writings in Part 2 make the book worth reading.

Plant's book is divided into two sections. The first, *Ideas and Issues*, is where changing nature, enigmatic nature, sustainability, environmentalism, development, and postmodernity and environmental education are discussed (pp. 1-86). The second, *Stimulating Practice*, considers the challenge for environmental education (pp. 89-101), then focuses on the MA course (pp. 102-115), including MA

students' writings to illustrate their involvement in reflective practice and socially critical forms of environmental education in their diverse professional and cultural contexts (pp. 116-167), and concludes with a final reflection.

The structure of Chapter 9 (Students' Writings), in which eight of the students contribute 50 pages to the text (but are acknowledged only in their respective section titles), is similar to Palmer's (1998) approach, where 60 pages of global scene reports are contributed by others. Perhaps this is a new approach to publishing, but it is not one with which I would feel comfortable if I were an author of one of the 'sections'.

Nevertheless, the students' stories are very worthy of wider dissemination and I regret that they have not also appeared in journals that might reach larger audiences. Topics covered include a reflection on using Earth Education materials with students (Irene Popiolek), an essay on the implications for environmental education of postmodernism's 'retreat from the real' (Helen Perkins), a discussion of the challenges faced in encouraging local communities in the Columbia Amazon to use natural resources sustainably (Sarita Kendall), a reflection on being environmentally educated and educating in Tokyo (Charles Paxton), and responses to world politics and the global environment (Susan Tyzack).

Plant professes an interest in gender issues, but I was disappointed that the only discussion of gender comes in the form of less than two pages on ecofeminism as 'a conspicuous strand of environmentalism' (pp. 52-53). But, Plant's understanding of ecofeminism seems somewhat superficial in that he presents it as a totalising discourse rather than recognising that ecofeminism has many forms—such as those discussed by Merchant (1992) who is cited in Plant's references.

I was also disappointed by some sloppiness in regard to the accuracy of the references and the index as well as in the editing of the main text. For example, Henry Giroux writes with Peter McLaren, not 'McClaren', A. Gough and N. Gough are two different people (but all 'Gough' citations are included under N. Gough in the index), and 'this module is appears in Section 9.9' (p. 156) is not grammatically correct. Two almost identical references to N. Gough (1993), and identical paragraphs excerpted from this source, are repeated on pages 84 and 134.

I recommend this book to anyone who might be interested in the work undertaken by students in the MA program at Nottingham Trent University. However, the book's cost in Australia (around AUD\$70) means that it is more likely to be a library acquisition rather than an individual purchase.

## References

Fien, J. 1993, *Education for the Environment: Critical Curriculum Theorising and Environmental Education*, Deakin University, Geelong.