

## BOOK REVIEWS

*Key Issues in Sustainable Development and Learning: A Critical Review* William Scott and Stephen Gough (editors). London: Routledge Falmer, 2004, 274 pp. ISBN: 0 415 27650 0

*Key issues in sustainable development and learning: a critical review* is one of two companion books. Its sibling is *Key issues in sustainable development and learning: framing the issues*. Both explore the relationships between learning and sustainable development.

This book is likely to be a key reference for anyone studying for higher degree qualifications in environmental education and sustainable development. As well, regardless of their disciplinary background, professionals who are dealing with issues of sustainable development and learning will find this work is likely to productively challenge their thinking.

The key line of reasoning in *Key issues in sustainable development and learning: a critical review* is that that we must engage with diverse perspectives of learning, sustainable development and their interrelationships. Learning is described as integral to the quest to live in harmony with the environment. It is the driver of social change. It is a view of learning that encompasses both formal and informal learning and is lifelong. Sustainable development is described as “inherently a learning process, through which we can, if we choose, learn to build capacity to live more sustainably” (p. 1).

The editors have carefully selected seminal readings from existing literature – most readings were originally published in the last 15 years – and the majority in the last decade. Each chapter is structured by two readings usually followed by two specially commissioned, critical vignettes from leaders in the field of sustainable development and learning. The readings are drawn from diverse sources including Agenda 21, the Journal of Environmental Education and extracts from books such as *The Chicago Gangster Theory of Life: Nature's Debt to Society* by Andrew Ross. The use of two readings has enabled the close juxtaposition of ideas and concepts such as the tensions and interdependence between humans and nature in chapter six. Vignettes vary from scholarly responses to the readings to more eclectic reactions, which use the readings as a stimulus for new ideas. This diversity of approaches may appeal to readers – this initially bemused me.

Argyris and Schön's single and double loop learning, deep ecology, curriculum as practice, capacity building, globalization, active citizenship and collective intelligence are examples of concepts that are incorporated into this book.

The structure of the book is easily accessible. Each of the chapters has a distinctive focus and these include the policy context, language and meaning, theory and practice, issues in curriculum design, pedagogy, assessing learning, evaluating effectiveness, globalization and a future orientation.

In Chapter 8's first reading entitled “Why I don't want my children educated for sustainable development” Bob Jickling argues that learning needs to be framed by a

critical orientation rather than a normative approach as the phrase “*for sustainable development*” suggests. At a recent seminar in Melbourne my thinking was jolted by the explanation that the original intention of the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development was a call to provide core universal education for all as this is a key means of achieving sustainable development. Jickling goes to the heart of pedagogy needed in arguing that a philosophical analysis is required. In contrast Hopkins, Damlamian and López Ospina in the second reading suggest that a transdisciplinary approach to learning will be essential in developing a holistic understanding. Considerable reviewing of Chapter 8 leaves me with the conclusion that there is no agreement about the concepts of Environmental Education or Education for Sustainable Development and consequently the call to examine curriculum and pedagogy is lacking. Perhaps this is as it must be but ought more common ground be explored? Rauch takes this up in vignette 8.3 where the model of ecologisation of schools project is drawn on to illuminate productive and integrated pedagogical approaches that are working.

In the final chapter Scott and Gough draw together some of the important themes and importantly conclude that the UN’s Johannesburg Summit in 2002 ought to have made educational goals more explicit as they are core to sustainable development. Overall the key strength of this publication is that it traverses a broad range of perspectives which challenges common assumptions about sustainable development and learning and in doing so provides the reader with opportunities for learning – for education towards sustainable development.

**Jeana Kriewaldt**  
*University of Melbourne*

Copyright of Australian Journal of Environmental Education is the property of Australian Association for Environmental Education and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.