

BOOK REVIEWS

DAVID HUTCHISON. *Growing Up Green: Education for ecological renewal (1998)*. New York: Teachers College Press. 192 pp. \$19.95 ISBN: 08077-3724-0 (paper); \$41 ISBN: 0-8077-3725-9 (cloth).

Nature is dynamic and historical. Man is but a fragment of history, but he directs and creates his own history, as well as his *mise-en-scène*, his ecology, for good and ill. . . . We cannot recognize this phenomenon of individuality, which differentiates man from all other animals, unless we accept the idea at cultural levels each individual is, as it were, a species in himself. (*italics in original*; Cobb, 1977, p. 18)

Thank God that Hutchison has not written another one of those 'gloom and doom' ecological polemics! Unlike some strident and shrill defenders of all that is natural, traditional, basic, and good, Hutchison wraps his plea for environmental responsibility within twin cloaks of 'curriculum' and 'childhood'. Additionally, he presents his case via deep philosophical concerns juxtaposed with notions of how children (and adolescents as well as adults) learn and interact with curriculum. What is particularly exciting is that the author is able to bring a broad intellectual sweep of over a hundred years of Western educational development to bear on this emerging postmodern societal problem.

Lest I be misunderstood, there is no question that as a civilization and a people we should be concerned about the environment, and must constantly be aware of ways to bring this overriding issue to the attention of young people who, after all, will soon inherit what previous generations have left them. However, Hutchison is subtle in his use of what might be termed 'scare statistics' and it is quite clear that his goal is not just a plea for an ecological friendly curriculum for elementary and middle school aged children, but he consciously places and situates his new curriculum within the traditions of Western educational thought

so as to anchor his notions within intellectual hierarchies that will resonate with the readers.

This is not a 'how to' kind of book with lots of quick and easy in-class activities of questionable long-term effect for teachers to use with various levels of learners. Rather, this is a deep and thought-provoking tome that demands a realistic rethinking of how curriculum is developed and applied in the schools and, further, how such a retooling – within the intellectual traditions that envelope our schools – might have a most positive effect, over time, on the environmental state that exists in our contemporary world. Hutchison is quite clear in stating that he feels that we are in the midst of an ecological crisis that, if left unchecked, could have a major impact upon how humans inhabit this planet; however, his solution rests in a carefully developed, crafted, and age specific program that emanates from the great educational traditions of Western civilization.

For this reader, the heart and soul of the Hutchison book were the concluding chapters in which the author creatively investigated the whole notion of 'childhood' from several points of view and over the last century or so. These three chapters lay bare a novel view of how children think and interact with their local environment and it is on this redefinition that Hutchison postulates a different curriculum – one that is ecologically centered and grounded – for the twenty-first century.

Growing Up Green is an essential read for just about all educators, regardless of their level of instruction. Hutchison has done a masterful job of realigning concepts of curriculum development along with aspects of how people learn such that a coherent and realistic master plan of ecological renewal emerges.

As teachers, parents, and caregivers, we need to involve children in ecologically and culturally significant endeavors that restore natural places and richly textured play and learning places to cities and strengthen ties to local communities. To sustain these initiatives, we need to renew our commitment to make our cities safe for men, women, and children. (Hutchison, 1998, p. 153)

REFERENCES

- Cobb, E. (1977). *The ecology of imagination in childhood*. New York: Columbia University Press.
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