

**Hicks, D.(2014) *Educating for Hope in Troubled Times: Climate change and the transition to a post-carbon future*. Pp202 (Pbk). London: Institute of Education Press 2014. ISBN 978-1-85856-553-8.**

At just 200 pages, this is a *big* book. It deals with massive issues facing the planet, its future and its inhabitants. David Hicks has spent a professional and academic lifetime studying and teaching climate change and futures, and much of the wisdom in the book flows from his experiences of working with students and teachers. In the present volume he brings together a rich and powerful explanation of how education and schools can transform society to meet and avert the global disasters of the changing climate, peak oil and unrestricted economic growth. In Part 1, *Troubled Times*, the technical matters are clearly and accessibly explained for the new reader, but systematically supported by a wide range of research evidence to inform and convince both experts and sceptics. And this is more than the usual finger-wagging invective about recycling and using less energy. Instead Hicks explores the social, political and psychological reasons why change is difficult and resisted.

The narrative on climate change can lead to a feeling of helplessness and despair with the woefully poor advances that have been made worldwide. The title of the book, *Educating for Hope.....*, summarises to the author's main intention: that while planetary catastrophe is staring us in the face, there is the possibility of a sustainable 'post-carbon' future. One of the most interesting chapters on the nature of 'hope' provides an original philosophical analysis of the term. 'Hope' is to be distinguished from 'optimism', an altogether simple concept which does not require deliberation or action. Hope and its antithesis despair are deep in the human psyche, often the subject of myths, and offer the depths of thinking and understanding which are appropriate for visualising global futures. While hope is an essential human attribute, it requires an educational process for the individual and it provides a dynamic for teachers and schools to move forward.

On analysing possible futures, Hicks envisages four potential post-carbon scenarios:

- *Business as usual*: warnings of climate change are exaggerated; new technology will resolve things.
- *Techno-stability*: a steep drop in carbon emissions because of government policy on green technologies.
- *Energy crash*: government fails to lead in the transition to a low-carbon future.
- *Sustainable transition*: climate change is taken seriously, the dilemma of peak oil has been recognised, governments encourage a major shift to renewable forms of energy and food security and there have been extensive educational programmes in schools, further and higher education.

In addition to the sophisticated analysis of the problems and theoretical potentials, Hicks offers substantial recommendations for educationalists and schools. Actions are listed in detail, both at the school and classroom levels. Bemoaning the neo-liberal free-market direction in which successive governments have taken education in the UK, he calls for schools to educate its teachers and its pupils for a post-carbon society. In his introduction to ten steps to post-carbon living he points out that:

This is not environmentalism. It isn't 'green'. It isn't 'eco' this or that. This isn't a lifestyle choice. It is just how life *will* be. The post-carbon life is an inspirational glimpse of the future.... a vision that will be here quicker than you think (p.158).

The book is extensive in its global scope, recognising the social and political forces that will aid or frustrate the change to a successful post-carbon future. There is perhaps one powerful dimension of current global society which isn't mentioned: religion. Religious convictions hold and determine the thinking of many, both in the UK and across the globe, and look set to grow. It would be interesting to reflect on whether creationist belief in an omnipotent God makes for complacency and indifference to the actions needed by humans now, or whether religious beliefs can be harnessed to achieving the sustainable transition which Hicks hopes for. But perhaps that's another book!

This one is a must for all schools and educationalists. It is especially relevant for education studies students because of the analysis of the social, political and economic theory which underpins it. It is a model for students in the use of relevant literature and reference to empirical data.

Stephen Ward

Bath Spa University