

A Book Review of David Hicks' "A Climate Change Companion: For Family, School and Community"

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By David Hicks. 145 pages. UK: Teaching4abetterworld

David Hicks, former Professor in the School of Education, Bath Spa University, is a prolific author on education and global concerns. He writes in the interest of helping readers make sense of big and tricky issues, with this book it's all about climate change. This along with previously self-published titles may be freely downloaded on his website: www.teach4abetterworld.co.uk.

Through historical, current and futures focussed perspectives, *A Climate Change Companion* is presented in four parts: *Changing the climate*, *Telling new stories*, *Working for change* and *A journey of hope*. Each part contains 3 chapters.

David Hicks defines companion as; friend (always there to turn to), acquaintance (may give advice), supporter (offers encouragement), guide (shows you the path), partner (you can really rely on), ally (in it for the duration), assistant (helps with the work), associate (follows a similar path) and comrade (committed to the same values). Indeed, his latest book attempts to fulfil this multifaceted definition. This companion for climate change education is aimed at family, community, and primary and secondary school levels. It offers a practical and somewhat philosophical approach to the topic. Beginning with how we got here, to why it matters that we pay attention, to what we can do to limit and adapt to climate change, Hicks covers the gamut. A multi and interdisciplinary gamut that many of us in the Education for Sustainable Development (EforSD) grapple with daily. Interestingly, EforSD is not named as such in the companion. Nor are the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals referred to, even though The United Nations' Environmental Programme (UNEP) is mentioned in Chapter 1 and discussed in Chapter 9. Adding to this mystery Chapter 3 discusses the triple bottom line, but also doesn't name it or the 4 other Ecologically Sustainable Development Principles as put forth by the UN in 2005.

Hicks does, however effectively outline a comprehensive view of climate change through acknowledging the magnitude of disciplines involved, including history, journalism, politics, science, business, psychology and futures, to name a few. Hicks offers the reader as educator a road map of sorts, suggesting how and where to begin to navigate and guide audiences; be they family, community, learners, listeners – for sure cohorts comprised of all citizenry – away from climate change and towards sustainable futures.

A Climate Change Companion weaves a vertical connection through time, outlining how we've arrived here, and continues the connection vertically towards desired sustainable futures, all the while clearly stating why we need to pay attention now. As he reaches into the vertical or historical depths Hicks requests that a new story be told; "writers, commentators, business people, activists and visionaries, [are all] doing similar work. The seeds of the new story are all around us and have been for the last fifty years" (page 47).

In discussing the departure from the mechanistic worldview of Newton and Descartes or, as Hicks states the *old modernist story* to the *new ecological story* he affirms "[a]bsolute objectivity is impossible and the intellect needs to be balanced with intuition and rationality with other ways of knowing, such as the aesthetic".

He continues; “In human and natural systems, i.e. not mechanical ones, it is often not possible to predict outcomes. It helps therefore to be more flexible, accept uncertainty and learn from change” (page 50). The horizontal interconnectedness of our present day activities are discussed via systems thinking and the philosophy of Fritjof Capra. The transition towards a more systemic or holistic approach is unpacked in the following categories: Buildings and energy, Travel and transport, Consuming and wasting, Food and farming and Biodiversity. Missing from this unpacking is a discussion of how the outputs of one system (ie. transport) are currently toxic as inputs into another (biodiversity). This is exactly where unsustainability lives and where understanding the nature of interdisciplinarity can transform the outcomes of the above categories or systems (Braungart & McDonough, 2009). It is also interesting to note a lack of discussion or mention of the patriarchal dominance inherent to the vertical trajectory of our modern history which has led to the current state of unsustainability. Many scholars share this perspective (Warren, 1990). Overlooking this is especially strange considering Hicks calls for feminine character traits of flexibility and intuition to aid our crossing sustainability speed bumps. As well, the word feeling and/or feelings (a feminine character trait inherent in both genders) appears 53 times as Hicks emphasizes the importance of acknowledging how we feel as we move forward, because, as he notes, action is based on head and heart. Further emphasizing movement away from patriarchy without naming it, Hicks specifies speaking, listening, not judging, and sharing as helpful ground rules for accessing emotions in order to understand self and others. Introducing the notion of patriarchal dominance to the *Companion's* target audiences whom in daily life may never be exposed to this worldview has great potential for increased understanding of how we got here. Additionally, it may serve to further validate the more feminine approach Hicks calls for in moving towards stability, especially considering the current global political environment.

Along with the science of how we created the situation and the usual coverage of impacts of climate change there is a strong emphasis on the educational value and importance of telling new stories. Towards this end Hicks offers over a dozen case studies as practical examples of what the transition towards sustainability looks like. These include; *Carbon Conversations Program*, *Carbon Footprint Reduction for Individuals*, *Food for Life*, *Eco-Schools* and *Some Transition Network Principles*. It is fantastic to see the words transformation, empowerment, confidence, wellbeing, teamwork, leadership, empathy and cross-generational agency used throughout the text.

Also noteworthy is the use of graphs, statistics, photographs and imagery throughout which enables better understanding of historical context and future concepts. More images would have been even better! Of particular note is the graph on page 126 where Hicks provides a succinct look at *Climate change connections*. Figures are not labelled, instead a listing appears after *Sources* and before Hick's *Twenty Best Reads* sections, at the end of the publication.

Although written from and for a UK perspective *A Climate Change Companion* offers benefit to all of us individually as we teach and lead by example. Certainly the knowing and understanding will bring increased benefit to the sustainability of the wider system as we journey towards our liveable futures. Let's face it, we really are interested in saving our life styles, not the planet, as it seems she and other aspects of the natural world would be better off without us.

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