



Critical school geography: education for global citizenship.

By John Huckle. The Author, 2020,

436 pages, eBook

<http://john.huckle.org.uk>

John Huckle is a name that is well known around geographical education. He has been a teacher, writer, challenging thinker and textbook author for a number of decades. So, when a new book of his is published, it is a cause for excitement – what will John write now?

This book is the first that I've seen in this form – self-published as a PDF and available free of charge through Huckle's website. It is also a large book – over 430 pages.

But what a book? It begins with a Preface which is so much more than the normal preface in that it lays out Huckle's approach and identifies seven considerations that underlie his approach to what he calls *critical school geography* – critical social theory, critical pedagogy, relevance, curriculum making, internationalism, open source and professional development. In a telling statement, he identifies *radical democracy* as the key theme running through the book. The Preface also puts the book centrally in political debates in the United Kingdom and, while this could be a distraction for us, there is so much in this book of value to geography teachers in the antipodes and everywhere.

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This is followed by an Introduction that puts the book into the context of Huckle's educational and political philosophy. It is impossible to summarise the nature of this discussion. It is laden with challenging ideas for all educators, both in terms of why they are teaching geography and how they are doing it.

This then leads into the central part of the book – nine curriculum units and eight more chapters discussing issues in geography and education. The units and chapters are

interspersed so that each unit follows a discussion and is related to it. The nine curriculum units are: 1. Venezuela's Bolivarian revolution and its impact on healthcare; 2. Spatial divisions of schooling; 3. Happiness and equality – UK and Finland compared; 4. Homelessness: causes and solutions; 5. The future of work; 6. Urban farming in Chicago, Nairobi and Bristol; 7. China's Belt and Road Initiative and its impacts on Xinjiang and East Africa; 8. Becoming a young British Muslim woman: the significance of place; 9. Paying for the transition to sustainable development: the role of international tax reform. The eight chapters following the Introduction as the first of the discussions are 1. Critical geography, critical education; 2. Students, teachers, and the geography of happiness; 3. Knowledge; 4. Critical pedagogy; 5. Nature; 6. Space; 7. Place; and 8. Democracy and citizenship.

The nine curriculum units contain a wealth of ideas for teachers. Each contains a curriculum plan (key ideas, inquiry questions, key understandings, and six curriculum headings – key concepts, key values, key skills, learning outcomes, learning activities, and assessment tasks), Links to UNESCO

guidance for sustainable development, a key feature of Huckle's perspective, preparation steps, possible procedure, activity sheets, and each of these contains extensive resources that provide links to internet websites and other sources.

Each of the eight chapters along with the Introduction are an astonishingly rich source of ideas in education, geography and social understanding that, typically for Huckle, are strongly challenging as they critique so much of present practice. They could stand independently as a statement of Huckle's thinking at this time. But the way each of them is then followed by one of the units, in which many of the ideas expressed are put into practice, provides a strength of direct relevance to what happens in geography classrooms. Despite the apparent abstractness of much of Huckle's thinking, central to all his work is how this will affect the lives of students – how can they be empowered to understand and control their own lives in a future that is both unknown and more challenged by controlling influences?

While Huckle's book is located in the context of British politics and schooling, it is highly relevant to geography teachers everywhere and very much up to date.

Critical school geography, by being so directly accessible to everyone, enables us all to face the challenge of Huckle's thinking.

Bill Stringer

Balwyn North, Victoria