



Editorial: When is a Heuristic Device...Just a Heuristic Device?

New Zealand Journal of Teachers' Work, Volume 15, Issue 1, 1-2, 2018

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I was asked recently to contribute to a 'sustainability café' in the student zone of my university. A number of academics sat at tables carefully arranged to be hospitable, with welcoming and mildly provocative signs. My theme was 'Education for a possible future', which I thought was a clever allusion both to the notion that without better and more effective education on sustaining our planet (not our various economies) there might be no future, but also to the idea that even *with* appropriate education a variety of future scenarios are possible, some perhaps depending on the nature and extent of that education, and also that, whatever the future—and it may be dark—education and educators should be preparing themselves and their students to engage with it.

Not one student came. Education was not alone in being unpatronised: Food technology, science, business—we all ended up talking to each other or to non-student passers-by. So my fore-thinking about what we in education *are* doing; about what we *might* do; and what we *should* do – went unheard.

I was left, however, reflecting on the relationship between school projects, public education campaigns, the education possibilities, and the needs of the planet. In view of the projected consequences of failure to control greenhouse gases; which will eventually ensure the failure of current relationships between climate, air and the oxygenation of the oceans (Caesar et al, 2018)—public education campaigns like the current ones driving the abandonment of single-use plastic bags and straws seem futile. They are not, of course. They have their own place, and above all they are heuristic devices, illustrations of how to take care of the planet. Hopefully they inculcate in the young an attitude which, spread wide enough, will produce a sustained care for the environment.

Education at the school and even at the public campaign level cannot by itself effect a rescue, however: education works too slowly, is too piecemeal, and without strong and universal community support is not likely to make much difference. An example of such failure is the discovery that ozone-destroying CFCs (<https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-44738952>) are still being made in China: China has embraced all too effectively the lesson of the invisible hand—the bizarre notion popularised by Adam Smith that local and individualised profit leads to national and presumably global 'wealth'.

So we need a form of education that is global, affects policy makers, alters the preconceptions of economists, and disrupts the business-as-usual aftermath of two centuries of careless industrialisation. Indeed it seems that the biosphere itself is providing precisely that form of education in the form of heat waves, extreme storms, rising ocean levels and melting ice. Perhaps a new

Dust Bowl in the United States of America will have a similar political effect to the last one—of changing the tenor of government.

Rejecting polystyrene containers, single use plastic and plastic straws are good, virtuous deeds in themselves and a good way of teaching principles. As heuristic devices they are fine. But let us not fool ourselves that they will save the planet or our species, let alone other species. There is only so much a heuristic can do.

NESTA DEVINE

New Zealand Journal of Teachers' Work: A New Look

Readers will notice some changes. The journal is now under the umbrella of [Tuwhera, an open access portal](#) managed by the Auckland University of Technology Library. The underlying OJS software has been updated, providing an improved user experience, and more professional editorial tools. Furthermore, articles now have DOI numbers. Over the coming months, the back issues, dating to Vol. 1, Issue 1, will be archived on this site, so look out for those 'golden oldies'!

A significant additional change is the rebirth of [a new-look Editorial Board](#). It consists of colleagues from seven of New Zealand's eight universities, and two Australian Board members. This support is an acknowledgement of NZJTW as an important journal contributing to the New Zealand education milieu by providing a critical perspective on *teachers'* work, increasingly marginalised in modern education. This Board is also a signal to potential authors that NZJTW processes adhere to high standards of scholarship.

A new section is launched in this issue, namely *NZJTW Forum*. This is an editorially reviewed section providing scope for contributors to respond to previously published articles, or to open up discussion on an issue of interest to teachers and readers. Ideally, this section will feature two–three articles, and this issue is an example of the model in use.

Thank you to the contributors to this issue for your patience, and thank you to the many reviewers who continue to do good work on behalf of this journal. This is a free, open access journal providing a critical perspective on teachers' work—so please, spread the word: we need a regular flow of contributions, but we also need to bring this journal to teachers (and academics, policy makers, Education Review Office reviewers...), so please, pass it on!

REFERENCES

- Caesar, L. S. Rahmstorf, A. Robinson, G. Feulner, V. Saba (2018). Observed fingerprint of a weakening Atlantic Ocean overturning circulation. *Nature* 556, 191–196

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