

# Aims and Ends in Education Conference – Abstracts

*NZARE Educational Ideas and Educational Policy SIG Hui*

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## **Keynote - Aims as Experience**

*John Freeman-Moir*

*University of Canterbury*

## **Parallel Session Abstracts** (alphabetical based on last names)

### **(1) Humanizing secondary school contexts: Comparisons between Aotearoa and Perú (Latin America)**

*Maria Carolina Nieto Angel, Letitia Fickel, Sonja Macfarlane, & Angus Macfarlane*

*University of Canterbury*

In the context of secondary education, it is often reassuring to hear about ‘sites of effective practice’, in their various forms. These sites, including those that feature in this research project, are a major source of inspiration for the debate on how to ‘promote the best possible realization of humanity as humanity’. Drawing on the concepts of care and restoration, this bi-national study (in progress) reports on the experiences of students and teachers in three schools in Perú (Latin América) and Aotearoa New Zealand. Emerging evidence shows that engaging with alternative ways of understanding and enacting justice at the school level has the potential to reach out to and affect the social fabric of society, as well as the ecosystem. While this might appear to be a big claim, the revelations from this study is reaffirming the principle of early intervention, that is, get them thinking wider when they are younger. Humanization is an educational vision that prioritizes learning that promotes notions of relating to ourselves, with others, and with the planet, through an increased awareness of our mutual connection and interdependence. But, is this new? How does this resonate with traditional and Indigenous cultural worldviews? Noddings (1984, 1992) and Freire (1970, 1998) referred to humanizing education as the purpose which links all levels of education, from preschool to tertiary and beyond. The concept of ‘making links’ is expanded on even further by Berryman and Macfarlane (2011), Fickel (2008) and Margrain and Macfarlane, (2011). These authors contend that linking to the richness of enduring Indigenous knowledge provides sources of inspiration and pathways forward to achieving pedagogies of care. The three secondary school sites in this study are contexts that are enacting philosophies of care, restoration and forgiveness. The ultimate aim of the study is to identify and understand the range of enablers that allow caring communities be embedded and maintained across the broader education sector.

## **(2) Uncomfortable understandings – the myth of disengagement in Māori education.**

***Peggy Burrows***

*University of Canterbury*

This paper explores the dichotomy of the democratic right of all individuals to participate equitably with our education system and the realities of disengagement for some Māori communities. Often discussions around Māori nonparticipation are premised on deficit models of thinking (Pennington 2006), (Valencia, 2012), (Foley 1997) and serve to perpetuate the myth of disinterest (Openshaw 2014). This paper challenges hegemonic (Tuma, Dussel, & Krauel 2000), inherently racist and in the main uncontested pseudo-theoretical perspectives around Māori nonparticipation in education. The paper explores the nature of schooling in New Zealand and questions why for some our schools grant unfettered access to educational opportunities while for others our schools provide significant unseen barriers that preclude equitable access and opportunities. The paper concludes with some questions educationalist should be asking in the 21st century about the ethical implications of contemporary educational policy that perpetuates inequity.

## **(3) The teacher and the transformation of the commonplace**

***Judith Catton***

*University of Canterbury*

The phrase ‘modern learning environment’ is cleverly crafted for positive spin. This phrase only seems benign. In fact it refers to the latest assault upon New Zealand classroom teaching. The phrase ‘modern learning environment’ vaunts a condition where the teachers float, where children variously group themselves, where a buzz of interaction is omnipresent, and where activities leave children for not a single moment alone in their thoughts. Teachers are to possess not the least opportunity to be maverick. They may not for even a minute rebel against the education system. They must be ordinary. They may not be flamboyant or colourful. Teachers must not seek that kind of charge that could win from children a sense of the transformation of the commonplace.

A sharply opposing hope is that some teachers will be extraordinary. I consider a novelist and two philosophers who cultivate just such an opposing hope. Muriel Spark’s *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961) centres on an awkward, maverick teacher. The novel’s central character is charismatic, progressive, extraordinary, and potentially reckless. The novel ranges across themes of authority, truth, ambiguity and moral influence. It bears the influence of two philosophers, Simone Weil and Iris Murdoch. (Weil, Spark and Murdoch were contemporaries; the latter two were friends.) All three deeply scrutinise what thinking is. Their ruminations emphasise attention, by which they are meaning attention of the depth and quality that is required in order truly to learn from life.

In particular, Spark, Weil and Murdoch all provide reasons to take pause and reflect critically about the vaunted ‘modern learning environment’ that is being crafted in New Zealand’s schools. My talk will tease out these themes.

#### **(4) Aims of education post-neoliberalism**

*Nesta Devine*

*AUT University*

*Aims, context and theorist*

In general, the aims of education vary according to the context of the times in which they are enunciated and the political position of the enunciator(s).

*Neoliberal aims of education*

Currently the political dominance of neo-liberalism suggests economic aims which are dictated by neo-classical economics. There are two major political theories which inform neo-liberalism, with regard to education, and both of them lay claim to the sanctity of economics (Devine 2004).

The most favoured discourse in NZ currently, *Human capital theory*, is characterized by talk of 'investment'. The aim of human capital theory is to obtain a return on investment, for the individual and the nation-state. The less overt but still influential discourse is that of '*public choice theory*' which propounds that the market will always find the optimal solution, including in education, and that education itself is simply a competitive market for student performance (and parental money). There is no point, in this account, in over-investing in those who are not going to be 'winners'.

*Question*

My question is, what aims of education are going to be appropriate in a world that is not just postindustrial (Block 1990), but post-neo-liberal? This world may be rushing upon us faster than we think: the workingclass resistance to neo-liberalism in its manifestation as austerity for the poor and indulgence for the rich is already visible as major political upheavals: support for Trump, riots in Greece, Brexit... The assumption that a docile population will forever accept the financial, political and social strictures laid on it by the doctrines of finance capitalism may be beginning to shatter. A large part of English resentment has been articulated as dismay with the under-financing of the NHS and of education. For NZ the time of reckoning for the FIRE economy (Kelsey 2015) may be at hand.

*Knowing and Speculating*

Just as we do not know what Trump implies for global politics, or even US domestic politics, or Brexit for Britain and the EU we cannot know what kind of political settlement will succeed the neoliberal mandate, or how deep the inroads of resistance/reform might be. So we cannot *know* what the aims of education for the future might be.

In this paper I will *speculate* a little about what a post-neo-liberal political environment might mean for the aims of education.

## **(5) Academic freedom and the aims of education**

***Maxine Dyer***

*University of Canterbury*

One of Socrates most famous sayings is that ‘the unexamined life is one not worth living.’ Current threats to academic freedom, through the dominance of neoliberal ideals in globalised, marketised universities, gives rise to a need to reconsider these words in relation to the role of the academic in today’s institutions. A long standing right of academics has been autonomy in their teaching and in the choice of what and how to conduct their research. It has also been their responsibility to act as ‘critic and conscience of society’ by engaging in vigorous debate over issues of public concern and over what constitutes valid and beneficial new knowledge. These activities are termed as acting ‘for the public good’ in order to provide benefits to wider society. Of course, the notions of academic freedom, public good, and neoliberal market ideals do not fit comfortably together and this has led to constraints being placed on the way academics exercise their roles in universities. This paper will argue that this tension leads to conflict between the right to academic freedom and the political and economic interests of neoliberal governments. The question is this: Which aspects of freedom should be constrained; those of the market to impose its beliefs and practices on higher education, or the freedom of the academic to engage in an ‘examined life’ in order to fulfil their obligations to society?

## **(6) Back to the future? Aims and ends in 21st century science education policy development**

***Jane Gilbert***

*AUT University*

Current high-level government policy settings have a strong focus on investing in science and science education.<sup>1</sup> The stated purpose of this is to build New Zealand’s capacity to be a “smart country where knowledge and innovation are at the heart of economic growth and social development”.<sup>2</sup>

This paper argues that these policies are misguided. Because they are based on impoverished views of the aims of education and of science, not only will they not “work”, in terms of their stated aims, they are likely to be harmful to New Zealand’s future.

The paper sets out some of the reasons these policies will fail. It argues that their limited view of the present colonises, rather than expands, our possibilities for the future.

Via a brief review of the educational futures literature, the paper proposes a set of aims for future-oriented science education. While they have a different purpose, these aims have a great deal in common with the goals of traditional liberal/humanistic education.

The paper argues that 21st century science education needs to foster, not the “inert”, technical or instrumental forms of knowledge emphasised in current policy, but intellectual agility - the capacity to “keep knowledge alive” in a world of volatility, complexity, uncertainty, ambiguity and diversity.

And, as Alfred North Whitehead argued back in 1929, imagination, creativity, critical thinking, flexibility and so on are the cornerstones on which this agility is built.<sup>3</sup>

## **(7) Dewey and progressive education in New Zealand's aesthetic education**

***Kirsten Locke***

*University of Auckland*

This presentation explores the link between John Dewey's premise that teaching and learning are creative acts, with the emergence of progressive education and its strong links to education through the arts in New Zealand. Taking an historical view that encompasses the first curriculum as set out in the 1877 Education Act, the presentation explores the emergence of a 'modern' form of pedagogy that excited the teaching cohort and began to radically shape New Zealand's compulsory education sector during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Figures such as James Shelley, Susan Isaacs, Clarence Beeby and Peter Fraser loom large throughout the 1937 New Education Fellowship Conference and into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and radical artist teachers such as Sylvia Ashton Warner and Elwyn Richardson enacted the progressive ideals of Dewey in their own artistic approaches to teaching. The purpose of this presentation is not to reify a pre-neoliberal education system, but to remind and perhaps attempt a renewal of the core Deweyan philosophy at work in this golden era of New Zealand's education system where democracy was explicitly linked to freedom of expression in ways that manifested so readily through aesthetic forms of education. With the re-emergence of a Modern Learning Pedagogies and their corollary of Modern Learning Environments, the presentation looks at the way these supposedly 'new' and 'modern' approaches to education have effectively appropriate the language of progressive education whilst emptying the intent of any truly democratic ideals. At issue particularly, is the notion of creativity that so readily attaches itself to new technological innovations and approaches that seem to be far removed from the collective and participatory form of creative and aesthetic expression that was at the heart of Dewey's philosophy. Is there space to reclaim the democratic intention in mass compulsory education in New Zealand, and what role can the arts play in this reclamation? This presentation is an attempt at answering and grappling with these questions through a historical and philosophical lens with the intention of exploring the extent to which our current education system can fully achieve Dewey's vision of participatory democracy.

## **(8) Academic freedom in the unconditional university: a review**

***Simon McLellan***

*University of Canterbury*

On a visit to New Zealand in 1999, Jacques Derrida called for universities "to be granted in principle...unconditional freedom to question and assert...all that is required...concerning the truth" (Derrida, 2005). The paper sees the need to review academic freedom in light of the issues currently being considered by the New Zealand Productivity Commission (2016). One issue is an emerging case for undergraduate teaching to be conducted by research inactive fixed-term teaching-

only staff. An inevitable outcome may be the further separation from universities of research and teaching. Such a move impacts directly on academic freedom, claimed as a privilege to society when academics speak out without reprisal (Salmond, 2016). With the rise in emphasis and desire in universities to prepare students for employment, there is a corresponding reduction in protection afforded to academics seeking to comment in society. Such tension impacts most severely on the role of academics as ‘critic and conscience in society’. The review therefore considers various aspects of constraints on the freedom of academics, and compares the imposition of market beliefs and practices with unconditional freedom that returns the promise of scholarship as a pursuit of truth.

### **(9) Should happiness be the key aim of education?**

***Peter Roberts***

*University of Canterbury*

There is no denying the importance of happiness in many people’s lives. Happiness is often portrayed as a universal ideal – as something we all aspire to achieve. But should happiness be the key aim of education? This presentation argues that it should not. Happiness can be an aim of education but there is also much that can make us unhappy in educational life. I problematise the scientisation and commodification of happiness, question contemporary constructions of ‘optimistic’ and ‘pessimistic’ thought, and draw attention to some of the more uncomfortable, troubling features of a commitment to education.

### **(10) Exploring models of tertiary education through others’ eyes and words: reading submissions to the Productivity Commission’s review**

***Kerry Shephard***

*University of Otago*

In 2016, New Zealand’s government asked New Zealand’s Productivity Commission to conduct an enquiry into new models of tertiary education, with a focus on “... *how trends, especially in technology, tuition costs, skill demand, demography and internationalisation may drive changes in business models and delivery models in the tertiary sector*”. The public consultation on the resulting issues paper attracted 98 submissions, many from institutions within the tertiary education sector, representing large numbers of ‘stakeholders’ in the sector. These provide fascinating insights into a diversity of perspectives on the roles, nature and possible futures of tertiary education in New Zealand and their interpretation is at the core of this preliminary research presentation.

After a brief description of the Productivity Commission’s issues paper, this presentation goes on to describe an inductive thematic analysis of the submissions, identifying in particular areas of interest that have substantial qualitative presence that may in turn suggests the need for more detailed quantitative research, particularly with respect to ‘technology, tuition costs, skill demand, demography and internationalisation’. The analysis starts by addressing the researcher’s emotional

responses to the submissions and limitations of the submissions as researchable data. Within the richness of the data represented within the submissions it is possible to discern three substantial themes that reoccur within a significant proportion of the submissions and appear to be logically represented within them.

The three themes relate to:

- competition within the sector, incorporating willingness and ability to compete and concomitant complexity;
- trust, incorporating expectations of being trusted to provide high-quality educational support for all learners as well as, to varying degrees, an expectation that the outcomes of this high quality educational support should be trusted rather than measured; and
- the purpose of the educational endeavour being considered and whether or not different parts of the sector emphasise different purposes.

**(11) The tensions of academic work and identities in managerialist times: Promoting democracy and social equity whilst meeting the increasing demands of accountability – can it be achieved?**

***Richard Smith***

*Te Whara Wananga o Awanuirarangi*

As an academic in the Humanities and Social Sciences, especially in the discipline of Education how does one engage in meaningful and substantive ways with notions of democracy in higher education? What are the roles and responsibilities of higher education leaders and academic staff to promote, model, and live socially responsive identities acting in their role as critic and conscience of society? Whilst enshrined in legislation as the domain of the eight universities, what are the distinctive roles that Māori higher education institutions such as wānanga can contribute to these discourses? How does one publicly negotiate these positions in the face of the managerialist higher education accountabilities in terms of the requirements of one's institution to be: (i) a highly productive researcher (especially for PBRF purposes); (ii) an excellent teacher/supervisor with exemplary teaching evaluations; (iii) a model corporate citizen in terms of one's 'service' (both internal and external to the employing organisation); and (iv) an efficient and compliant bureaucrat in terms of fulfilling one's administration duties? There is a tight-rope to walk in trying to manage one's career aspirations in the facing of increased compliance and accountability at the institutional level, as well as at the national and international as the globalisation of knowledge and academia becomes increasingly intensified. These philosophical questions are presented here to be unpacked and discussed as part of this presentation.

This presentation outlines some of the experiences I have had in three country domains, Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia and Singapore, in which I provide an 'insider's' view of being an academic attempting to be a provocative public intellectual in the face of rather draconian measures of surveillance to actively discourage dissent. The narratives however as not all doom and gloom, as

Dewey and other theorists especially those promoting notions of Utopian possibilities need not forgotten or lightly dismissed as the future is shaped by ideas and ideals, not only economic rationality considerations.

## **(12) Adaptive coping with stress as a worthy aim in education**

***Valerie Sotardi***

*University of Canterbury*

Fruitful discussions about modern schooling, classroom research, and educational policy could be improved by taking into consideration a central, philosophical question: What are the aims and ends of education? Historically, this question has been confronted by a host of different perspectives; for instance, it has been posited that the aims and ends of education are to maintain harmony within daily civic life (Plato and Aristotle), to promote artistic expression (Goethe), or to develop scientific advancements (Descartes and Locke). According to Dewey, the purpose of an education is fundamentally to encourage “the best possible realization of humanity as humanity” (Dewey, 1916, Ch. 7). This end state may be exemplified by his pedagogical aims, namely that a core function of being a teacher is to guide children through everyday challenges while providing them with opportunities to solve important, relevant problems. Specifically, Dewey defended that individual thinking and growth call for “experiences which will furnish [the learner with] resources for coping with the difficulty at hand” (Dewey, 1916; Ch. 12). Schools therefore share a mutual responsibility not only in terms of creating educational experiences that promote content mastery but also those which model effective coping strategies for social challenges. Such aims were—and still are—fundamental to the successful ends of education. So, how might this be achieved? In recent decades, psychological research has emphasised the importance of helping children learn to cope with stressful situations at school, as the adoption of ineffective strategies may lead to academic setbacks, social difficulties, and mental health concerns. If the ends of an education are truly to realise “humanity as humanity,” then young people must receive guidance in developing adaptive (i.e., effective and socially appropriate) ways of coping in their everyday lives at school. This presentation will integrate philosophical and psychological perspectives regarding the aims and ends of education. Its discussion will highlight adaptive coping with stress as an important responsibility for individuals as well as society. Although coping has been addressed by philosophers and psychologists alike, the implementation of programmes that support adaptive coping strategies has largely been overlooked in schools, classrooms, and the children within them.

## **(13) Peace education research in New Zealand**

***Katerina Standish***

*University of Otago*

Mainstream education can act as a transmission belt – a cultural institution that assigns ideals and values that both drive and echo social standards. Education ‘aims’ or objectives become recognizable signposts in national culture as standards, subjects and pedagogies change overtime.

As each new generation is 'educated' it is necessary to survey which values and ideals mainstream education communicate. This study analyzed New Zealand's early childhood, primary, and secondary school curricular statements to unearth the 'aims' of New Zealand mainstream education by locating passages that indicate the presence or absence of three elements common in peace education programs: recognition of violence; addressing conflict nonviolently; and creating the conditions of positive peace. The methodologies used in this mixed methods study include directive and summative content analysis. This analysis found that the curricular statements of New Zealand have made progress to educate students toward peace and non-violence and that in general, the early childhood curricular statement incorporates a greater amount of pro-peace content than the primary and secondary curriculum statements. Opportunities exist to strengthen peace education content in future New Zealand curricular statements.

#### **(14) Beyond economic growth and rational, liberal humanism – the posthuman and ecological education in the Anthropocene.**

***Robert Stratford***

*University of Waikato*

Contemporary tertiary education in Global North countries like New Zealand is caught in a habitual focus on employment and the need for ever expanding forms of economic growth. While ideas like environmental sustainability attempt to negotiate with the monster of economic growth, the world is entering a new age of environmental, social and intellectual devastation – the Anthropocene epoch. Although liberal ideas about education can be used to consider the important democratic and aesthetic purposes of education, this paper argues that tertiary education requires models that are not just required to maintain humanity, but the entire planet. Such models must deeply question not only narrow economic approaches to education, but also simplistic forms of liberal and rational humanism too. In place of such notions it is argued that we need to have a more active and situation or ecological understanding of education, one which focuses on developing greater connections between people, society and nature and producing a posthuman ecological citizenry.

#### **(15) Living a good life as an end of education**

***Christoph Teschers***

*University of Canterbury*

R. S. Peters and John Dewey both argued that there would be no final end of education. However, where Peters claimed that education in itself would be the sole end of education, and education would and should not have any other end, Dewey acknowledged that one could imagine "the best possible realization of humanity as humanity" as a possible end of education beyond education in itself. In addition, Dewey explained that there are many different aims within education – meant here especially as the education system – and that these aims have to be negotiated by each generation anew. In this presentation, the term "education" and its multiple uses will be discussed, and the relations between an end of education (understood similarly to the German notion of

Bildung) and aims of education (understood as the education system or schooling) will be explored. This presentation will close with an argument that Peters' claim of education being an end in itself and Dewey's notion of the best possible realisation of humanity as humanity would both align well with an holistic educational approach aiming towards empowering students to be able to live a good and beautiful life under the circumstances they are living in.