

Backgrounder

Sydney Summit March 25-26, 2019 Advancing the influence and impact of educational research in the public interest 2019-2022

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The Invitation

An emerging body of scholarship sees the current global contexts of educational development and reform as an unprecedented moment in history. Across the social and human sciences, there is a growing consensus that the onset of the Anthropocene could be the “crisis to end all crises”.¹ Whether or not this view is universally shared, there is little doubt that educational policy making and research must address the catalysts for deep change such as political, economic and technological shifts that call into question our current priorities within our often isolating institutional and organizational boundaries.

This document outlines a proposal to establish a global network of researchers and forward-thinking educational leaders committed to initially engaging two strategic questions:

1. *What are the most important strategic considerations for the teaching profession and educational researchers that could renew public education in our emergent futures?*
2. *In these contexts, how might scholars, teacher leaders and their organizations, collaborate in advancing educational research that in the public interest?*

The following goals, proposed deliverables and background provides the rationale for the work ahead to 2022.

Goals

- An invitational series of summit meetings beginning March, 2019, running to 2022 focussed on addressing key educational policy issues that are shaping emergent futures of public education in our various jurisdictions and globally;
- The summit meetings would be hosted by university and/or teacher organizations aimed at knowledge sharing and mobilization among researchers, community advocates and leaders in the profession;
- Each summit meeting would focus on a particular theme (i.e. the impact of AI; neuroplasticity, international large-scale assessments; the blurring lines between private and public interests in educational development; the de-professionalization of teaching and school leadership);
- The summits would be supported by an online platform that would facilitate the exchange of research and the development of publications and policy briefs;
- The summits reflect a commitment to advance research that builds the capacity for responsive leadership and policy development in the public interest both among individuals and organizations.

¹ Reyes, V. C. (2018). *Educational Research in the Age of Anthropocene*. Hershey, PA: Information Science Reference.

- At the end of the summit, interested participants will be invited to contribute to a green, or discussion, paper that summarises the key questions and contributions of the summit. This output could act as a stimulus for further discussion, and possibly action, for organisations and could also be shared publicly if considered appropriate.

Key Deliverables and Anticipated Impacts:

For organizations and researchers alike, membership in the collaborative network and global summits will provide the following:

1. An ongoing review and sharing of research relevant to the strategic interests of teacher organizations and research institutions;
2. Provide teacher organizations with the opportunity to identify priorities for research that will enhance their ability to advocate for positive educational policies and reform;
3. Identify the degree to which educational policies are shaped and informed by educational research, including assessment of the impacts of New Public Management;
4. Build the research capacity of teacher organizations and institutions including raising public awareness of their current efforts;
5. Enhance the ability of teacher organizations and institutions to influence policy development among key players such as ministries of education, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development among others;
6. Offer opportunities to respond to emerging developments in critical areas such as the growth of commercialization, leading positive educational change, the impacts of artificial intelligence, international large-scale assessments and accountability.

Background

A recent review of the historical and contemporary commitments of teacher organizations underscores the challenge of addressing both the amalgam of internal operational needs and member expectations while engaging the volatile and complex political, economic and technological changes that continue to impact public education globally.² Even the most generous review of the 396 education and teacher organizations in the 171 countries and territories affiliated with Education International (EI) would suggest that ongoing efforts to sustain strategic futures-thinking amidst a myriad of urgent priorities presents considerable operational and strategic challenges. These were the conclusions arrived at over three years of conversations among researchers and teacher leaders, culminating most recently in the 2018 *Twin Peaks Research Summit* centered around the question: *What will be public about public education in 2030?* in Banff, Alberta.³ As the *Twin Peaks* summits have highlighted since their inception, our increasingly complex and brittle human systems and organizations calls for a new kind of courage and leadership. Our universities, schools and teacher organizations are nested within an imminent

² See John McCollow. Education, Change, and Development, Educational Politics and Policy, Globalization, Economics, and Education, Education and Society. Online Publication Date: Sept 2017
DOI:0.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.20.

³ Alberta Teachers' Association. 2018. *Twin Peaks—What might be public about a public school education in 2030?* Program and proceedings. Participants included teacher federation leaders and scholars from Canada, Australia, New Zealand, United States, Iceland, Norway, Belgium and Finland.
<https://www.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/Publications/Research/COOR-1162%20Twin%20Peaks%20Research%20Summit%202018%20report.pdf>

global environmental collapse, calling upon researchers, policy-makers and the profession, working across our institutional and geographic boundaries, to engage globally with the questions that address the precarious future of public education.⁴ As we move forward the summit conversations will also be informed by a growing international interest in futures thinking evinced by UNESCO⁵ and the compelling cautionary note that, “whoever gets to name the future, owns the future” (Niedzviecki).⁶

The complexities of working both in the short and long-term, within and outside of the organizational boundaries of teacher organizations remain the strategic challenge for teacher organizations in terms of their relationship with the educational research community. Despite these challenges, while the current commitment to strategic thinking among teacher organizations is highly variegated, teacher unions have had a long-standing commitment to a conception of education as a “public good.”⁷ This core commitment offers an important asset and point of departure for moving the academic community and teacher organizations into strategic partnerships for research concerned with tectonic shifts in key areas such as growing commercialization, artificial intelligence, the neurological sciences, increasing inequity and looming environmental collapse.

Next Steps - Spring 2019 to January 2020 - Global Research Collaborations in the Public Interest

Based on initial informal exploratory conversations, three potential host sites have been identified to move these conversations forward:

- March 25-26, 2019 (Sydney, Australia) - New South Wales Teacher Federation to host an informal meeting of prospective partners and individuals committed to the work) with assistance from and Queensland Teacher Federations with QUT;
- September, 2019 - (England) Manchester Metropolitan University (proposed);
- Spring 2020 - (Norway) Union of Education Norway (proposed);

The initial Sydney summit will be a relatively small invitational meeting of 20 individuals committed to mapping out the opportunities and challenges ahead. Consideration of these opportunities and challenges would be followed with the identification of initial actions to sustain the work ahead. Initial costs for the year one seminar would include hosting and facilities for two-days. Participants would be responsible for travel and accommodations. To reduce costs some of the summit meetings would be hosted in conjunction with other events participants are likely to attend (national or international events such as AERA; EERA, AARE; teacher federation meetings).

⁴ Jagodzinski, J., ed. (2017). *The Precarious Future of Education: Risk and Uncertainty in Ecology, Curriculum, Learning, and Technology*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. This important collection of scholarly interventions was the focal point for the 2017 Twin Peaks summit held in Banff, April, 2017. Highlights of the summit are included in the Twin Peaks 2018 proceedings cf. 2.

⁵ See Riel Miller (ed. 2018). *Transforming the Future—Anticipation in the 21st Century*. New York: Routledge & UNESCO.

⁶ Niedzviecki coined this invocation drawn from the question “Who owns the future?” related to the work on futures thinking first popularized by Jared Lanier. See Maslin, J. 2013. “Fighting Words Against Big Data ‘Who Owns the Future?’” New York Times, May 5. <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/06/books/who-owns-the-future-by-jaron-lanier.html>.

⁷ L. Casey, Review symposium: Teachers unions and public education. *Perspectives on Politics* (March 2012), 10(1), March 2012), 126.