



## Editorial

Heila Lotz-Sisitka & Rob O'Donoghue, Rhodes University, South Africa  
Ian Robottom, Deakin University, Australia

The year 2007 is a significant year for environmental education. It marks 30 years since the first internationally agreed principles of environmental education were developed at Tbilisi, commonly known as the Tbilisi Principles. It is also the year in which human beings apparently are finally 'waking up' to the fact that human-induced environmental change is causing impacts which are infinitely complex and difficult to resolve. This year, through various highly publicised and politicised events, people have begun to recognise that it is getting hot on planet Earth, and that the associated social, economic and environmental costs are profoundly disturbing. The Stern Review and the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change both firmly indicated that human-induced environmental change will threaten human economies and security in ways that are unprecedented in human history.

Southern Africa, where this special edition of the EEASA Journal is being produced to coincide with the 25th anniversary of the existence of the Environmental Education Association of Southern Africa, and the hosting of the 4th World Environmental Education Congress, is one of the areas most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. More than 70% of the people in southern Africa live in rural areas, and depend directly on natural resources for their livelihood and food security, making environment (and environmental education processes) a central concern in development discussions in the region. Patterns of global inequality are pronounced in the region, which has some of the poorest countries in the world. Out of its 25-year history, EEASA and its members, along with colleagues around the world, continue to seek ways of educating and empowering people to successfully participate in resolving environmental issues and create more sustainable and socially just living patterns. In drawing attention to our constant need to learn how to improve our understandings of environmental education and learning as the world around us changes, the World Environmental Education Congress organising committee chose to profile the question of 'Learning in a Changing World', by making this the theme of the Congress.

This edition of the EEASA Journal is dedicated to this theme. We invited Ian Robottom, a colleague from Australia, to co-edit the journal with us, within a process where members of the Scientific Committee of the 2007 World Environmental Education Congress (WEEC) were invited to submit 'Think Pieces' on the theme of the WEEC 2007. We asked them to include consideration of the 30-year history of environmental education in their Think Pieces. The resulting Think Pieces reflect an interesting mix of review, research and thoughtful questioning, constituting an intriguing set of papers to contemplate alongside the many other offerings that will be available at the World Environmental Education Congress.

This Editorial contains a brief introduction to the 13 Think Pieces, the four Feature Articles and a Viewpoint paper which make up this special edition of the EEASA Journal. As editor of the journal, Heila was encouraged to consider these contributions in relation to the WEEC 2007 theme and programme in an opening Think Piece. This opening Think Piece seeks to probe how we, as a global community of practice, can make sense of each other's contributions, and how we might consider engaging in dialogical processes with the published thoughts of others (such as those contained in this journal) and in the context of the World Environmental Education Congress. In doing this, it draws attention to the underlying purposes and possibilities contained in much of our writing, and the purpose and possibilities embedded in hosting large-scale global gatherings such as the WEEC 2007. It would seem that there is a need for seeking out dialogue with others in our field, given that the WEEC 2007 has attracted people from over 70 countries around the world who wish to meet and talk about their research and work in environmental education. This is also evident in the engaged response we received to the invitation to submit Think Pieces to this edition of the EEASA Journal.

The first section of the journal is dedicated to the Think Pieces that were accepted for publication, as they open possibilities for enhancing and deepening debates at the WEEC 2007. They are diverse in focus and content, but together form an interesting capital for dialogue, research and development in the field of environmental education. The first Think Piece by Samuel Ayonghe and Sani Amawa asks how environmental education is responding to the ever more present question of human adaptability to rapid environmental change. In a sense all the other Think Pieces and Feature Articles in the journal could be constituted as possible 'answers' to this piercing global question if they are to stand the test of time. The next two Think Pieces by Mario Salomone and Stephen Sterling provide us with the rich experience and thoughts of two practitioners who have 'been around', working in the field of environmental education for over 30 years, and, interestingly, both ask profound questions about the relationship between environmental education thinking and deep-seated cultural change, and both argue for radical re-orientations in educational thought and practice. Then there are a number of Think Pieces that focus on the complex and ever-vexing question of how people learn, and how we as environmental educators have been theorising, and can possibly come to theorise and interpret learning processes. Leading the discussion are the insights of Arjen Wals, developed out of the research process associated with editing a new book called *Social Learning towards a Sustainable World* (Wals, 2007) in a Think Piece which maps out an argument for social learning processes that might extend our reflexivity as we 'fumble towards sustainability'. On a similar theme, Paul Hart, with characteristic depth of insight and thoroughness, explores what we are learning about social learning processes, probing questions of relational politics and identity in processes of reflexive agency. Joe Heimlich and Martin Storksdieck argue that we need to change our thinking about learning in a changing world, through their paper mapping out developments in thinking in the context of free choice learning. Lesely Le Grange and Chris Reddy reflect on the changing environment(s) that form the focus of environmental learning processes, and the changing learning environment(s) that people find themselves in, also drawing attention to the changing cultural context of learning. Michael Jackson, through his explicit interest in post-colonial forms of education, also addresses the issue of learning cultures, and argues strongly for

transformative learning processes.

Mapping out some of the changing politics associated with current shifts in the field of environmental education, brought about through the recent rise to prominence of sustainable development discourse, are two separate but closely related Think Pieces by Ian Robottom and Edgar González-Gaudio. The final two Think Pieces raise more explicit ethics-oriented questions for the field of environmental education. Bob Jickling's Think Piece probes the changes in research orientations in the field of environmental education over the past 30 years, leaving us with the critical question on how the prominence of (more explicit) normative questions might further shape environmental education research. Peter Blaze Corcoran and Philip Osano, through their narrative experience of working with the Earth Charter, raise the ethical question of intergenerational equity in a contemporary world environment which is plagued by extreme inequalities.

The second section of the journal contains four Feature Articles. For this edition of the journal we limited the number of Feature Articles due to the interesting response we received to the Think Piece invitation to reflect perspective and issues in contemporary debate. The four Feature Articles were selected for the way in which they add value to and extend the conversations in the Think Pieces. They provide useful insight into how research informs our thinking and *vice versa*. The first Feature Article, by Cecilia Lundholm, critically probes the intersecting construction of environmental learning processes when different disciplinary traditions meet. The second Feature Article, by Rob O'Donoghue, provides a critical historical analysis of what he calls 'outline schemes' or conceptual explanations that have emerged (largely through his earlier work) in southern Africa to guide learning interactions in environmental education. The paper shows an ever-deepening understanding of sociocultural learning processes in contexts of risk. The third Feature Article, by Charles Chikunda, questions the structural underpinnings of education systems, and the way in which educational philosophies in use in Zimbabwe exclude community involvement in education processes, thus constraining efforts to re-orient education towards sustainability. The fourth Feature Article, by Mphemelang Kethoilwe, critically considers teachers' responses to the introduction of environmental education policy in a national education system. Through exploring power-knowledge relations in Botswana's education system, he explains teachers' normalisation strategies as they encounter new (complex) policy discourse.

The last section of the journal contains only one Viewpoint paper. This paper by Martin Clement is, however, equally integral to the 'whole picture' that the contributions to this journal paint. It highlights the significance of place meanings, identity and cultural landscape issues in the context of a small project in the Durban Botanical Gardens. As Durban is the host city to the World Environmental Education Congress, we felt it fitting to close the journal with this thoughtful and beautifully constructed Viewpoint paper on how our understandings of culture, identity and place meanings might influence the construction of education and interpretation practices.

*Heila Lotz-Sisitka & Rob O'Donoghue, Rhodes University, South Africa*  
*Ian Robottom, Deakin University, Australia*