

# ***Education for Sustainable Development:***

*Debating principles, promise and  
practice*

Bob Jickling



# Education for Sustainable Development: Snoozing to Catastrophe

- We have a problem
- There are the usual afflictions: Climate change, environmental degradation...
- Also, there is the on-going failure of most education systems to respond adequately

# Some assessments...

- David Orr: we seem to excel at producing ever more clever vandals of the earth
- Kris Gutiérrez: her most persistent concern is our inability to intervene productively, at least in any sustained and transformative way, in the academic lives of so many youth today
- Stefan Bengtsson: “sustainable development doesn’t seem to have gained much traction in education in the ways its policies and practices aimed for”
  - Also: the same might be said of environmental education.

# A Persistent Problem: Asserted Preeminence of education for sustainable development

- Eco-Feminism
- The Deep Ecology of Arne Næss

# 2030 Agenda: Built Upon 17 Sustainable Development Goals And at least Two Clichés

- 17 Goals to transform our world
- That there is somehow a vision for quality education

# Unpacking the Clichés

- There is no acknowledgement about the difficulties of doing anything remotely transformational...
- It is simply a hollow assertion...

# Unpacking the Clichés

- Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning
  - About access and equity
  - No discussion about what might constitute quality education
  - The so called “new vision” for education offers no critique of the dominant cultural worldview

# Further Unpacking...

- Irina Bokova: “we must fundamentally change the way we think about education and its role in human well-being and global development.”
- For her, educators have a responsibility to foster the right type of skills, attitudes and behaviour that will lead to sustainable and inclusive growth.



# Really???

- First, how is this new?
- Second, it's next to useless. Zygmunt Bauman essentially mocks this approach ... a delusional vision of educational
  - doubtful that social realities can be changed by simply attempting to instill in learners new kinds of motives, developing different propensities, and training them in deploying new skills
  - It is a habitual, and tired answer, to rectifying the wrong kind of behaviour.
  - Doubtful that this approach offers the kind of traction required to dislodge the status quo.

# Going Forward...

- Stop snoozing...
- Ask yourself—honestly—whether what you are doing is likely to be disrupting the status quo... ? return to this question often..

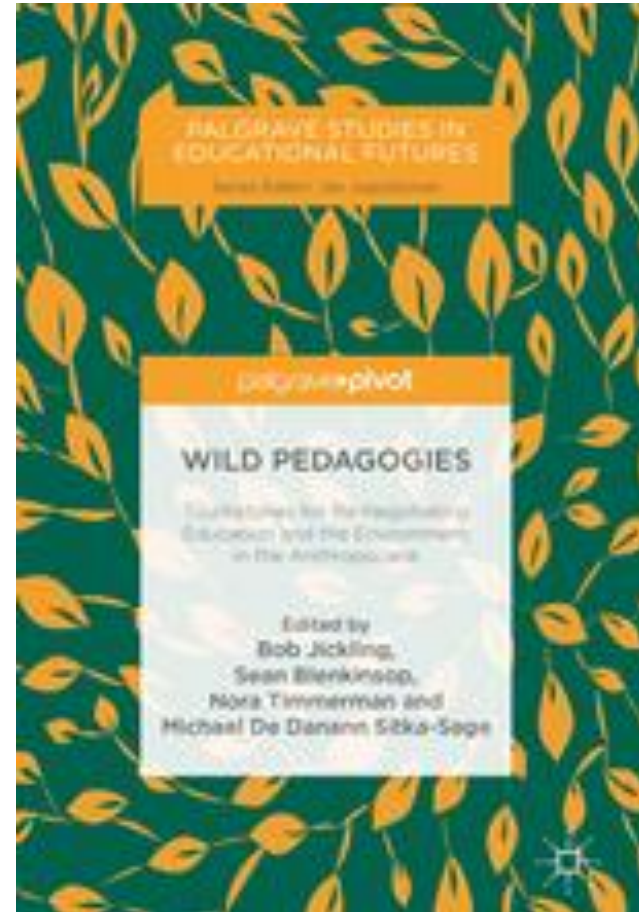
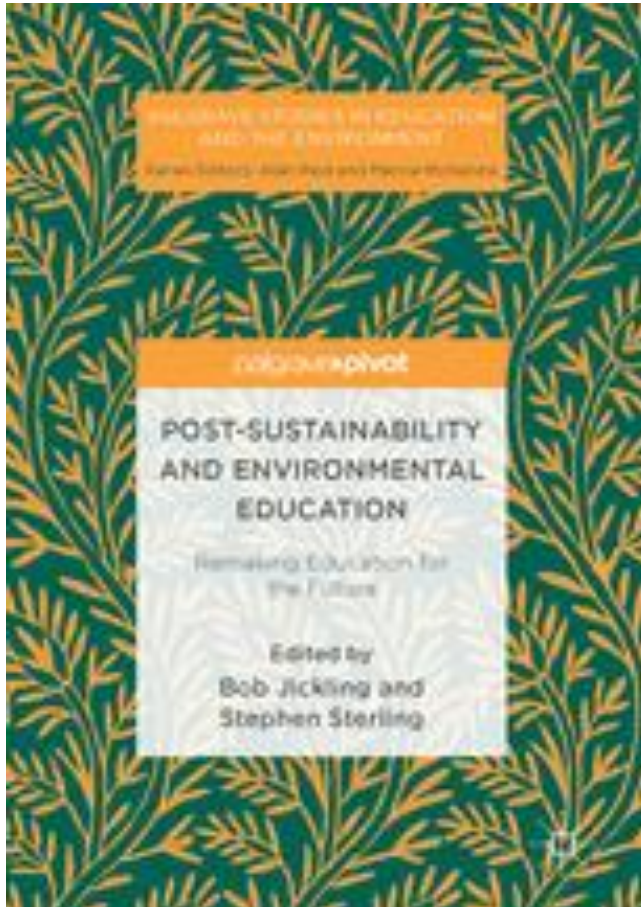
# Going Forward...

- What would it take for education to be fundamentally and radically transformative...
  - Experiences that are visceral, intimate, sensuous, emotional, empathetic, relational, slow
  - Noticed recently that Stefan Bengtson has called for learnings that foster nearness and compassion
  - Struck by how closely this resonates with my interpretation of Arne Næss
  - Generous Scholarship...

# Going Forward...

- What other root questions need to be taken seriously...
- At least two possibilities arise from the previous two examples:
  - First, they suggest a need to learn ourselves into a new kind of relationships with the world—hence the open up ontological question (caution required)
  - Second, they circle back to an old ecofeminist argument for a new kind of rationality—that allowed room for feelings and emotions
  - Beyond “petty rationality” ...
  - Struck by how closely this resonates with my interpretation of Arne Næss
  - Generous Scholarship...

# Going Forward...



Palgrave Macmillan

# Words Matter...

- Women
- Minorities
- LGBTQ communities
- Non-humans
- The land we stand on, the places we care for, the things we love