



Figure 1: *Pure Spaces Education Theory of Change diagram*

RATIONALE:

In over ten years as a secondary educator in Aotearoa/New Zealand, it has become clear to me that there is a gap in education programmes, both in and out of the classroom, that address social and emotional aspects of learning and connecting this with education for sustainability.

The concept of sustainability has been a part of the NZ curriculum for many years now across multiple learning areas. The following quote is taken from <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz>

“Education for Sustainability seeks to empower students of all ages to take action on issues of concern and interest to them. It describes this process as action competence, and uses all the key competencies, combined with experiences from the learning areas, to make this goal possible.”

The challenge for schools, according to the NZ Curriculum (2007), is to prepare young people who will be creative, energetic and enterprising; contribute to the well-being of New Zealand and seize opportunities offered by new knowledge and technologies to secure a sustainable social, cultural, economic and environmental future for our country.

Amongst many, there are four particular learnings that have inspired me to look at developing a programme to fill this niche.

The first is systems change theory. In an article aimed at changemakers, the authors look at how to “shift the conditions that are holding the social or environmental problem in place.”¹ For real transformative change we need to understand people’s deeply-held beliefs and assumptions, change the narrative at this level and hopefully see **individual change that informs collective behaviour change**.

Secondly, Ken Robinson writes in his book, *Creative Schools* that “education should enable young people to engage with the world **within** them as well as the world **around** them.”² He also states that education is deeply personal. As educators we need to remember that what we are attempting to do is provide opportunities to enrich the hearts and minds of living people.



The next piece of my inspiration puzzle comes from the Barrett Academy for the Advancement of Human Values. Richard Barrett writes extensively about values, transformation and global consciousness. In his 2019 Global Consciousness Report he outlines his methodology for measuring the level of wellbeing experienced by people in different countries. He calls this the Global Consciousness Indicator (GCI).³ Part of the GCI is measuring where individuals sit in terms of Barrett's Seven Levels of Consciousness model⁴. Barrett has based this on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs model and it is a useful lens through which to look at human wellbeing and personal growth. He posits that "transformation occurs when we find the freedom... to be who we are, when we begin to enquire into our true nature. We learn to make our own choices, to develop our own voice... and thereby become the author of our own life".⁵

And finally, Susan David PhD, a psychologist at Harvard Medical School, delves into the benefits of self-awareness and emotional agility. Her research shows me that "understanding our own emotions is exactly what allows us to take action".⁶

These four concepts – systems change at an implicit level, the personal nature of education, personal transformation relating to values and level of global consciousness, emotional agility and self awareness – have led me to develop the above theory of change (figure 1). At the heart of it is the concept of self-efficacy. Based on my research, I believe that if individuals can develop a sense of self-efficacy they will be motivated to change personal norms, influence the changing of social norms, build social capital and develop political efficacy. All of these behaviours could promote pro-environmental outcomes.

Self-efficacy is the belief that you can succeed in a particular situation or accomplish a particular task.⁷ Again, based on my research I posit that if the pathway to self-efficacy is framed with the environment and nature in mind, then individuals could develop an environmental identity and values, or a sense of place, or nature connectedness - or a combination of these. This is the foundation for building self-efficacy as shown in Figure 1.

Pure Spaces Education is an environmental education hub for inspiration and learning resources.

While I began this rationale citing the New Zealand curriculum, the ultimate goal of **Pure Spaces Education** is to be another voice among many to bring awareness of the great need for people to protect their local wildlife and wild places, and to refrain from unsustainable resource use. To get to this ultimate goal people need to have the opportunity to live sustainably and understand what that means in the context of their local area. The other behaviour/action outcome is communities coming together to advocate for their local wildlife and wild places. This is an inter-generational outcome, but young people can also actively participate when they have social capital and political efficacy.

ACTIVITIES:

Access to the **Pure Spaces Education** website which is an environmental education and inspiration hub.

Create and craft a sense of personal wellbeing using a wellbeing toolbox. These tools include self-reflection, storytelling, values, mindfulness, SMART dreams, gratitude, hauora and resilience.

Explore Nature – both your inner spaces and the places around you. Topics include belonging, identity, sense of place, connection (ubuntu), ecosystems, biodiversity, ecosystem services, climate services.

Sustainability is all about empowerment to take informed action – it is possible to live sustain-ABLY. Learn about a strong model of sustainability, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the top ten actions to reduce climate change, the 7Rs of waste management, a circular economy and more.

Be inspired by **blog posts** sharing stories about community, tribe and anam cara (soul friends).

ENDNOTES:

¹ Kania, John, et al. "The Water of Systems Change." FSG, FSG Inc, 10 Sept. 2019, www.fsg.org/publications/water_of_systems_change

² Robinson, Ken, and Lou Aronica. *Creative Schools*. Penguin Books, 2016, pp 51-53

³ <https://www.barrettacademy.com/gci-reports>

⁴ Barrett, Richard. "Stages of Psychological Development." Barrett Academy for the Advancement of Human Values, 2019. <https://www.barrettacademy.com/stages-of-psychological-development>

⁵ Barrett, Richard. "2019 Global Consciousness Report". Barret Academy for the Advancement of Human Values, 2019. <https://www.barrettacademy.com/gci-reports>

⁶ https://www.ted.com/talks/susan_david_the_gift_and_power_of_emotional_courage?rss

⁷ Krasny, Marianne E., *Advancing Environmental Education Practice*, Cornell University Press, 2020, p 140