



Preface to *Learning from Tasmania*

Jürgen Rudolph^A

^A Head of Research & Senior Lecturer, Kaplan Higher Education, Singapore; Editor-in-chief, *Journal of Applied Learning & Teaching*

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37074/jalt.2020.3.s1.1>

I am absolutely delighted to write a brief preface to celebrate the occasion of a new special issue, entitled *Learning from Tasmania*. This is JALT's second special issue (and seventh issue in total). This special issue has its origins in last November's vibrant *Teaching Matters* conference at the University of Tasmania that I was honoured to attend. Our journal's co-operation with guest-editors Joey Crawford, Bill Baker and Mitch Parsell is an example of global networking and co-operation amongst like-minded educationists. It is in this context that we are pleased to have witnessed more than 100 contributions from around 140 contributors from 19 countries in the first two years of the journal.

To me, there are three angles why this is an important and indeed special issue of JALT. From a personal perspective, JALT's and my own connections with Tasmania are manifold. A few years ago, my dear old friend Ooi Can-Seng was appointed Professor in Cultural and Heritage Tourism at the University of Tasmania. This was a welcome excuse for my first visit to Tasmania, and my family enjoyed his unrivalled hospitality in late 2018. A tangible result of that visit was an excellent contribution on the Children's University to a previous issue of JALT (Shelley et al., 2019). We were also fortunate to interview John Biggs (of constructive alignment and SOLO taxonomy fame), yet another Tasmanian (Biggs et al., 2019). In May 2019, I met Bill Baker from the University of Tasmania at the EDU2019 conference in Athens, organised by our friends from the Communication Institute of Greece. Somehow, these publications and encounters put the journal on the mental map of the organisers of *Teaching Matters*. In the meantime, Joey Crawford and Kerryn Butler-Henderson (both from University of Tasmania) have collaborated with me and others on what was perhaps the first peer-reviewed article on Covid-19 and higher education (Crawford et al., 2020). Moreover, we are honoured to have four Editorial Board members from UTAS.

There is also a historical perspective to why I perceive this special issue as important. Tasmania has a cruel colonial history, especially in the early decades of the 19th century, characterised by penal colonies and the genocide of Aboriginal ethnic groups. It is also geographically peripheral. Today, Tasmania is a place of breath-taking

natural beauty. UTAS, in particular, is a renowned public research and sandstone university, ranked in the top 10 of Australia's research universities and in the top two per cent of universities worldwide. The tides have turned, and it is now indeed time to learn from Tasmania.

Finally, the most important reason to read this special issue is of course its excellent 14 articles. The contents are expertly described in the guest editors' thoughtful Introduction, "Learning from Tasmania: Designing a distinctive student learning experience". I invite you to discover the contributions from a wide variety of academic disciplines within the three themes identified by the guest editors – learning design, digital learning, and student experience – and to learn from Tasmania.

Profuse thanks are due to the guest editors, whose consummate professionalism made them an absolute pleasure to work with, as well as to the hard-working peer reviewers. It is hoped that the Tasmanian connection of the *Journal of Applied Learning & Teaching* will lead to future collaborations and such international co-creations will continue to improve our understanding of how learning and teaching in higher education can be further improved.

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