

Are we the 'revolt'?

Are we ahead of our time? By Jeanie Clark

Have you read *Why it's Time for a Class Revolt* (p3)? Let's examine it below. This article made me feel thankful for the home education opportunities that we have, enlightened to see an article like this about mainstream schooling, and encouraged about the choices we've made.

Why it's time for a class revolt

ran across the page in big letters.
The title, with its double meanings, got me wondering ...

- What sort of class:**
- a school group level?
 - a social class?
 - my view that home education is in a 'class of its own' above others?
- What would the revolt be?**
- Students 'rebellng' against their teachers?
 - Home ed families 'rebellng' against the mainstream education option?
 - Home ed families 'rebellng' against traditional learning styles and using 'natural learning' ones?

The subtitle...

Our world is changing rapidly, but Australia persists with a creaking school system

drew me in further...

Ok, this is interesting – **two forces at work**. What a perceptive statement. The rapidly, changing world would be a 'pull' reason to not be in the mainstream education system and the creaking school system a 'push' one.

Where have I stood?

We had 'push' reasons for 'revolting' against the system and starting home education, but as the years have gone on, 'pull' reasons have kept us out of it.

In my experience of home educating parents, it is 'push' reasons that are common. I don't know of parents giving 'a rapidly changing world' as the incentive to opt out of the mainstream education system. Here and now reasons domintate – like bullying and giftedness. Is it a creaking system that is failing our children in some way, pushing us out of it?

My goodness, who could write this?

David Loader and Simon Whatmore.

Never heard of them?
I certainly hadn't.

It's a brave statement as a sub-title, so *The Age* must have some respect for these authors to air their views.

What would have happened if a home educating mum had sent such a statement to *The Age* as a concept for an article?

So what **credentials** do they have?

At the end, we see David is an **educational consultant**, a **former principal** of Methodist Ladies College and author. Simon is a **director** of Strategy and Policy at Harvester Consulting.

David has a strong mainstream, even privileged, teaching background. He has good experience to see problems and solutions. Some teachers and principals may take notice of this.

The future: What we need

This box is worth reviewing for the authors' view of a 21st century education.

I would encourage you to read the article and have a think about your home education and your children.

This article does fit nicely as a support for home education choices. Be encouraged by it, especially on those days when working with children just seems a little bit hard!

Ok, so you see the layout of *Why it's Time for a Class Revolt* and you're pressed for time, what do you read?

I confess that I was so intrigued by the title and sub-title that I read the box next and as I went through it, I started to smile, because I realised that our son already had the education they were saying was needed. I've noted my thoughts on each of the points below and also invited Sue Wight to do the same. I'm an eclectic home educator and I know Sue favours natural learning and I thought it would be valuable for readers to see how the strengths of home education hold true, regardless of the home education style chosen.

Our son is about to begin his 13th and final schooling year. He has been fully home educated for all his schooling, except one VCE subject (taken to experience what others do). He opted to not 'do VCE' and instead began the Science part of an (Open) uni course at the time his peers began their VCE – having researched alternate pathways to uni. He has been complimented by the uni for his mature attitude and commitment

to study – developed through home education. School experience has led him to appreciate more his opportunities and foundation from home education.

Our son was not educated in a creaking school system. This article helped me see that we are ahead of our time; we have already had our class revolt. Our son has benefitted from a new education model – home education – that, intuitively, had new learning initiatives with the 'future we need' features of a 21st century education. It gave him the confidence to choose his own pathway to uni – by online delivery – so typical of rapid changes in our world. His home education has been successful in setting him up to move onwards to his chosen future.

Acknowledgements I would like to thank my wonderful friend who home educated her children before me and inspired me to follow suit, and the home education community, HEN, HEA and especially Sue Wight and *Otherways*, for, though dispersed, this community supports each other in developing an incredible education system, for our children's needs. Finally, I am grateful to David Loader and Simon Whatmore for their insight into education needs, and their bravery in publishing it so publicly, to *The Age* for printing the article and to HEN for reprinting it.

The future: what we need

How well have we provided this sort of education ?

Jeanie

Sue

Personal learning pathways

Yes, right from the start our son's education was tailored to his needs and interests, including developing curriculum especially for him.

Natural learning is, by its nature, individualised. Each person is motivated by interest in different things so personal learning pathways just happen. My job has been to provide opportunities, and encourage/facilitate individual interests.

Academic coach

Yes, that's me. I'm an academic coach

Yes in the sense of a mentor/partner. I'm on hand for academic advice when requested and I facilitate learning.

Personal Technology

Yes, low tech to begin with and gradually building on this to an independent level, now choosing the digital technology he needs.

Yes. My sons are proficient in modern technologies they see as useful but don't get carried away with gadgets as many young people do.

Measurement for growth

Yes most of the time. We keep full records of activities, which show growth in much more detail than a school report. However we have also felt the need for some comparison testing to let us 'see' how he fits into his age group – especially checking on expected standards. We used competitions for this, like AMC.

Measurement hasn't been a big priority for us. I have kept records 'just in case' they were required and have found that looking back over these during times of doubt, provides reassurance of growth. So, yes, I guess I've 'measured for growth' incidentally. My sons measured their own progress in various ways when they set themselves a task.

Creation as the goal

Yes, activities in learning are 'products'. They mostly come about by negotiation and the development of ideas. Sometimes, a skill is the goal, unnegotiated! Marking of Maths for right or wrong is not for 'marks' but for indicating if a concept (goal) has been well enough understood.

There have never been any marks here so all work produced has been to meet my sons' own needs and goals – not something required of them. They've produced novellas, magazines, newspapers, board games, Powerpoint shows, movies and so on – all to their own agenda.



	Jeanie	Sue
Student behaviour	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, how much more easily this is done at home, where the behaviors are in the context of what is appropriate in the family or community, and not the construct of a large group of similar aged people. The 1:1 ratio also aids behaviour to be seen and improved in situ.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I believe that a large part of home education is parenting. With four people living and learning in our home most days, we learnt to be considerate of each other, negotiate and problem-solve rather than having imposed rules. I think this happens far more naturally in a family setting than in school where crowd control is an issue.
A local and global scope	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, what can be more local than where you really live as the starting place for learning? There are so many wider scale programs that we took part in that were available because our time structure was not segmented like in a school.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Our home is a place of learning, we learn in the community via clubs etc. and the internet provides a global community – learning directly from scientists’ own websites rather than textbooks or the state curriculum, for example.
Live/study in unfamiliar surroundings	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, every camp, every trip, being a part of multi-aged community groups, and having time to learn on the job in new groups. We have often felt privileged that home education allows us to go places in a small group to see something better or to be a part of real groups, like a member of group of mostly over 60s.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Our family like home time so we haven’t taken every opportunity we could have in this regard. However, home ed. has exposed us to unfamiliar surroundings and new experiences, put us in contact with different lifestyles and taken us to exhibitions, museums, festivals etc. – far more variety than a school.
Learning overseen by family	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, clearly overseen by family. There have been so many people interested in, and supportive of, what our home education experience is, that the community is overseeing us in a passive way too.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, no doubt about this one! Our learning has been largely self-directed with very little interference from anyone.
Life long learning	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education can happen any time of the day, on any day of the week, on any week in a year... and if you choose to not be in learning activities during school times, that means you will be doing them when schools aren’t. And that model has worked very well, as our son chose to start Open Uni for his Year 11 and to do the four study periods – i.e. education continuous for a year, including January.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, learning is our way of life, not something imposed on us. You just can’t switch it on and off. Stopping learning would be like ceasing to breathe. So, yes, we are life-long learners.
Recognition of achievements	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, our home education includes activities in the community like sport clubs and being on a planning committee for a camp. These have community recognition.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, in a quiet sort of way. My guys don’t really look for recognition – they do what they do because they feel the need to. They are quite surprised when they are recognised for something.
Government funding	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Oh how I wish, but this is beyond our control! Home education is not free. Mums (mostly) must give up work (and hence financial preparation for senior years) to home educate ... unless you can find a home-based job, and then you work much harder than schooling mums! What we do, could be considered to be lots of new learning initiatives being tried, most with great success, and little fan-fare, but ...	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> We accepted the full responsibility for our children’s education knowing that there was no funding. I tend to think that funding only comes with a whole lot of requirements. I wouldn’t give up our independence for money. The benefits of home education are huge and...
Regardless of the lack of funding, and the costs, it is all worth it.		

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Jeanie is a long-term home educator from Warrackabeal and regular *Otherways* contributor.

Additional comments by Sue Wight, long-term home educator of three sons and editor of *Otherways*.