

## 2010 AARE Workshop: The utility of theory (theories) in educational research'

### Online Registration

In 2010 AARE will again offer the very popular theory workshop *The utility of theory (theories) in educational research* for research students and early career researchers. This year the workshop will be held at Charles Sturt University, Bathurst, from 13 -15 May. The workshop will start on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> May, 5pm with a welcome and a panel of presenters talking about the use of theory in their scholarly work. Friday 14<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> May will continue with workshops, a panel presentation comparing the use of different theories with data, and opportunities to consult with presenters. The workshop will conclude at 4pm on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> May.

The aims of the workshop are to provide:

- A broad understanding of how theory(ies) might be used in the research process, from the identification of theory-based research problems, the formulation of research questions, the choice of methodology, the development of an analytical framework and the interpretation and explanation of findings.
- An understanding of the broad landscape of theories available for educational research; their relationship with each other; similarities and differences; commensurabilities and in-commensurabilities; and,
- An in-depth familiarity with two or three theories selected by participants from a list of several theories / theorists.

### The Workshops and Presenters

We have a fantastic group of leading theoreticians in the field of educational research to present this year. They include: **Jill Blackmore, Russell Cross, Michael Gard, Stephen Kemmis, Bob Lingard, Martin Mills, Clare O'Farrell, Mary Lou Rasmussen, Michael Singh.**

Descriptions of the workshop that will be presented are below. Once participants have selected and been allocated to workshops, the presenters will send out some references for prior reading.

#### Theorising and researching policy (Professor Jill Blackmore, Monash University)

This workshop seeks to develop for you a way of thinking about policy as a disciplinary study and a set of social practices. The workshop is divided into two parts:

- (i) Theorising policy.
- (ii) Researching policy.

The workshop defines policy as an 'authoritative allocation of values' (Taylor et al 1997). It addresses this core notion through a consideration of how policy can be theorized, how the nature of policy and policy studies has changed with postmodern society and globalisation, and finally, how you can work as 'deliberative practitioners', as policy makers, by drawing on a range of theoretical perspectives. The workshop has value for those seeking to understand meta changes wrought by globalisation as well as the way in which micro reform is produced as policy articulates in organisations. The focus on policy provides an

important context and ‘thinking tool’ in Bourdieu’s sense on how one can mobilise different theories ‘usefully’.

Socio-Cultural Theory (Dr Russell Cross, University of Melbourne)

Although best recognised for his concept of the “zone of proximal development” (or ZPD), Vygotsky’s broader sociocultural theory of the mind is becoming increasingly influential in how we frame, understand, and investigate the social and cultural nature of schooling within educational research more generally. This workshop will focus on social and cultural mediation – a core concept within Vygotskian sociocultural theory – and introduce cultural-historic activity theory as a framework for researching human activity from such a perspective. We will consider the implications of sociocultural perspective/activity theory for doing educational research, and provide examples of research using S/AT frameworks.

Theory and Qualitative Research (Associate Professor Michael Gard, Charles Sturt University)

This workshop is for people who want to know about the historical development and the theoretical underpinnings that inform the creation and analysis of qualitative data. Why does the concept of qualitative data exist? For what kinds of research questions was this kind of data invented to answer? How, really, does it differ from other kinds of data? What assumptions do we - sometimes unconsciously - make when we decide to work with qualitative data? Above all, this workshop is designed to help and provoke participants into problematising and re-thinking research practices many of us take for granted.

Professional Practice Theory (Professor Stephen Kemmis, Charles Sturt University)

There are profound difficulties in understanding the notion of ‘practice’, so ubiquitous as to have no clear meaning. In recent years, there have been advances in practice theory, however, going beyond the activity theory of Yrjo Engeström and the actor network theory of Bruno Latour, on one side, and the neo-Aristotelian practice theory of Alasdair MacIntyre, on another. Practice theorist Theodore Schatzki suggests that there has been a ‘practice turn’ in contemporary social theory, comparable to the ‘linguistic turn’ of the mid-twentieth century. Schatzki’s practice theory offers a way of understanding how practices are “the site of the social” in which human sociality comes into existence. He shows how these sites are ‘pre-figured’ in particular orders and arrangements of ‘sayings’ and ‘doings’ that enable and constrain the ways in which people act in practices. Stephen Kemmis has been using and building on Schatzki, developing theories of ‘practice architectures’ and ‘ecologies of practice’, and will introduce these recent ideas along with Schatzki’s practice theory. These kinds of practice theories offer new ways of understanding education and educational issues.

Globalization and Education (Professor Bob Lingard, University of Queensland)

This session focuses on theorizing and researching globalization and its impact in education, particularly but not exclusively on education policy. The approaches of theorists such as Appadurai, Taylor, Burawoy and Bourdieu will be dealt with. Additionally, there will be consideration of the significance of globalization for research methodologies within the social sciences, including in education generally and specifically in education policy research.

Foucault (Dr Clare O’Farrell, Queensland University of Technology)

The ideas of Michel Foucault have found considerable favour across a wide range of disciplines in recent years. In the educational field his theories on power, the disciplinary

society, social surveillance and the way people construct themselves as ethical subjects have all been used to gain new insights into a variety of pedagogical practices as well as into the operation of educational institutions and their relation to the rest of the social body. In this interactive seminar we will be working closely with 3 or 4 key texts by Foucault in order to tease out some of the complexities of his thought and to explore ways in which his ideas can be used as tools to conduct research in education.

Theorizing social justice and education (Professor Martin Mills, University of Queensland)

This workshop will consider key issues in the relationship between social justice and education. In particular it will focus on the implications of the debates surrounding the politics of (re)distribution and the politics of difference/recognition. Of concern here are the works of Nancy Fraser and her 1990s debates with Iris Marion Young and the more recent exchange between Fraser and Alex Honneth. Recent work by Nancy Fraser considering issues to do with social justice and globalization will also be considered. Throughout this workshop consideration will be given to claims that in debates on social justice and education, concerns about economic inequalities have been displaced by a concern with identities and difference.

Judith Butler (Dr MaryLou Rasmussen, Monash University)

This workshop will critically engage with the ways that Judith Butler's work is taken up in Education and in other fields of research. Here I am particularly interested in how Butler's thought might be used in informing educational research methodology related to studies of sexuality and gender. We will discuss the possibilities and limitations of Butlerian analysis via recent engagements with interlocutors such as Rosi Braidotti and Saba Mahmood. We will also consider Butler's contribution to Gender studies in education alongside the work of Raewyn Connell. The aim of the workshop is to consider Butler's work in detail in order to understand how different strategies for thinking about gender and sexuality influence the way research is conceptualized in the field of education.

Bourdieu (Professor Michael Singh, University of Western Sydney)

This workshop will begin with a discussion of developing an initial conceptual framework based on Bourdieu's ideas, and suggest the need for revising this framework based on the analysis of the evidence. It will illustrate the use of selected concepts from the work of Bourdieu (e.g honour, epistemic and empirical individual) as well as showing how these can be questioned.

## **Registration**

To assist with the programming of the workshop, participants are asked to indicate their first three preferences for workshops, in order of priority, on the online registration form. Participants will be allocated to two workshops, hopefully on the basis of their first two preferences, although we may need to go to the third preferences. Opportunities will also be provided for one-on-one meetings with a researcher.

Places are limited and preference will be given firstly to AARE members

A registration fee of \$150.00 (plus GST) for AARE members and \$200 (plus GST) for non-members will apply to cover the cost of the venue and the travel and accommodation of the presenters, who generously donate their time. Morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea are covered in the registration fee. Venues for dinner will be identified each evening which participants may choose to attend at their own cost. For booking purposes you will be asked to indicate on the online registration form whether you plan to join us for dinner in town on the opening night of the workshop on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> May, 2010.

Participants will need to arrange their own travel and accommodation. Limited accommodation is available on a first in first served basis at the Charles Sturt University Campus Professional Development Centre motel at a cost of \$95.00/night for a single room with breakfast and \$105/night for a double room with breakfast. A range of other accommodation is available in the town.

To book accommodation at the CSU motel please call directly on 02 6338 6900 or download a booking form from the website at [http://www.csu.edu.au/division/studserv/events/bathurst/cpd\\_rates.html](http://www.csu.edu.au/division/studserv/events/bathurst/cpd_rates.html) and fax to 02 6338 6950.

Look forward to seeing you there

Joanne Orlando (*Workshop Convenor*)

If you have any further questions please contact me on [j.orlando@uws.edu.au](mailto:j.orlando@uws.edu.au)