



President's Report

This week a copy of the DETYA report - *The Impact of Educational Research* - arrived on my desk. It has a publication date of December, 2000 but has not been available to the general public in a complete form until recently. The report is almost 700 pages in length, and consists of five separate studies examining different aspects of the interface between research, policies, productivity and practices.

The commissioning of these studies by DETYA occurred soon after the publication of the Tooley and Darby (1998) scathing critique of educational research in the UK. That critique was sparked by David Hargreaves comments that current education research was remote from practice, of poor quality, and wasteful of public monies. In their critique, Tooley and Darby examined published research in a range of quality journals and contended that overall it was flawed by partisanship, by methodological inadequacies, by the adulation of great (predominantly French) thinkers, and by a complete detachment from the practical endeavours of teachers and other professionals. In particular, Tooley and Darby were critical of qualitative researchers and targeted specific people and publications in their critique. Their report provoked a vigorous debate and counter-argument by researchers throughout the UK.

In this context, some of us were apprehensive about the intentions of DETYA when tenders were called for the "Impact" study. We wondered whether this was to be an Australian version of Tooley and Darby. The policy implications of the UK report involved greater concentration of research money in fewer hands - based on the assumption that only certain high quality researchers following certain research practices and paradigms deserved public support. Research was also seen as a process that should directly serve the interests of policy makers and practitioners rather than being a process of critical engagement with policy and practice.

Certainly these negative discourses regarding educational research have been aired in Australia, but it is refreshing and empowering to read the "Impact" report because it provides a range of evidence that our collective endeavour is a high quality process - an outcome we should celebrate and disseminate within our institutions and more generally to the community. So - read report and prepare press releases.

Below I have extracted a few key quotes from the DETYA report. These quotes convey the positive tone of the 5 separate studies that contrast markedly with Tooley and Darby's conclusions. Education research in Australia is seen as relevant to professionals, as necessary in policy development and implementation, as complex and multi-layered, as nested in networks of engagement between practitioners and university-based researchers, and finally as outstanding in terms of its contribution to international scholarship compared to other fields of research endeavour in Australia. Many of you will be interested also in the "Bibliometric analysis" - the last of the five studies - which compares Faculties and Depts. of Education across all States in terms of research outputs and citations. The "league tables" in this study will be the cause of much soul-searching in the coming months and years. Do these data ring true? At UQ we have planned a breakfast of self-congratulation based on our high ranking. If nothing else, the league tables have made our approaching "school review" a rather easy task to prepare for. Complacency..... the slippery slopeetc. It's interesting how "league tables" have the capacity to corrupt when they serve our immediate self-interests. Beyond the fascinating prospect of comparing raw statistics about productivity, what might be a useful purpose for these league tables?

So, back to some key quotes from the Report.

"The links between educational research and schools were clearly evident. The researchers found that almost all the school principals, professional associations of educators, and school system administrators expressed the view that educational research had benefited Australian education" (p5)

"Teachers' decisions were strongly influenced by sources that are themselves directly impacted on by research, specifically initial teacher training, professional reading, the advice of other teachers, professional development courses, and formal postgraduate studies".(p8)

"Australia ranks a creditable fourth out of 35 nations in terms of its publications and citation record over the period 1987-1998. Australia's share of international publications is greater in education than any other major field in this country except for the earth sciences. ... Despite this record, productivity is very uneven between universities".(p10)

"The studies [in the report] demonstrate the inadequacies of conceiving the relationship between educational research and practice as a linear relationship. 'Impact' suggests a clear, identifiable, measurable and direct relationship. This research [the report] contests such a view. Instead, it presents a multi-layered, unpredictable, interacting process of engagement between the researcher and the educator". (p10)

*"The project documents a more positive a
"The inescapable conclusion from this review of Australian educational research is that the vast majority of it is extremely applied. There may be a problem in disseminating this research to the potential audiences that could best use it, but it is simply incorrect to think that the research itself has little inherent practical value." (p661)*

At our next Executive meeting we will be reviewing the whole document in detail. The Executive meeting will be held in Canberra from the 13-14th June. Professor Doug McEachern, who is the new divisional head for the ARC Social Behavioural and Economic Sciences Panel will be speaking to us and a group of education research directors/postgraduate coordinators from around Australia on current policy directions and management issues regarding research funding. I will provide a more detailed account of these events in the next AARE NEWS.
Peter Renshaw.

URL – www.aare.edu.au/news35/pr3501.htm

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AARE SIGs: www.aare.edu.au/sigs/aaresig.htm

Plans are well underway to establish an Early Childhood Special Interest Group (SIG). If you would like to propose a new SIG, or re-activate an existing SIG please contact me. Funding of up to \$300 per annum is available to support the activities of each SIG. Please see the **Special Interest Group** section of the web site for the proposal forms you need to complete to a) form a new SIG, b) re-register an existing SIG, or c) request funding for your SIG.

Jennifer Sumsion

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Postgraduate Postings: www.aare.edu.au/pgrad/35pgrad.htm

It seems like there are a number of important policy directions with impacts on how the future of research will be conducted at universities, and along with these changes the role of postgraduates within universities seems equally uncertain. I feel that we need to coordinate a coherent position from a postgraduate perspective from which to respond to these changes, and encourage any thoughts or opinions so that you feel would be useful to respond with. Please see my full comments on the website and contact me to take this further.

Shaun Rawolle

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Researcher's Response Rates Low

About 90 responses have so far been received to AARE Membership Survey -- a rather disappointing response rate given there are about 1000 members. They are still dribbling in but we'll have to close it soon. Watch out for a report in a future issue of the NEWS. AARE has also received copies of April 2001 BERA newsletter (*Research Intelligence*, No 75) and *International Test Commission Newsletter* Dec 2000.

Debra Cunningham

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Research Training: www.aare.edu.au/research/index.htm

Policies and procedures for obtaining funds from AARE to host your own research training activities have now been approved by the Executive and can be accessed at the following Web address: www.aare.edu.au/research/index.htm. While the level of funding will not normally exceed \$2000, Research Training Workshops provide a great opportunity for engaging in a local or regional activity, perhaps involving a visiting scholar or addressing a particular need.

I'm pleased to report that the **Educational Research Leaders' Forum** at the University of Canberra on June 13, 2001, is now organised. Deans (and related others) should have received a letter inviting them to nominate a suitable representative or two to attend this important meeting. Please contact your own Dean if you are particularly interested. Professor Doug McEachern, the recently appointed ARC Program Manager for Social Behavioural and Economic Sciences, will be the keynote speaker. Bradley Smith, Higher Education Policy Adviser to the Australian Democrats, has also indicated that he should be able to attend, and senior administrators within DETYA and within universities will also provide input. We hope that this event will provide an important

opportunity for collective consideration of recent changes to national research and research training policy and that all education faculties/schools/divisions will be able to send at least one representative to this meeting. There will be no charge to participants and morning tea and lunch will be provided. Any travel or accommodation costs will need to be funded by the institution concerned. See www.aare.edu.au/execproj/erlf.htm

Finally, a reminder to all members about the **Pre-conference Workshop on Academic Publishing** to be held in Fremantle prior to the Annual Conference. See the conference brochure OR ON-LINE www.aare.edu.au/execproj/erf.htm for details.

Jennifer Gore

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The Doctoral Thesis Prize call for nominations: www.aare.edu.au/docthes/index.htm

Deans will have received a call through the AARE office this month for nominations for the prestigious AARE Doctoral Thesis Prize. If you missed the information please contact me through any of the avenues listed below. The judging panel will advise the AARE President of the its decision during the first week of October. We look forward to receiving a nomination from your institution.

Annette Patterson

URL – www.aare.edu.au/news35/docthes.htm

Contact - annette.patterson@jcu.edu.au

Recent Doctoral Theses in Education: www.aare.edu.au/docthes/index.htm

This number of the newsletter features five doctoral thesis abstracts: two EdDs and three PhDs by Michael Aulsebrook (Monash), Greg Murphy (Monash), Paul de Lange (Monash), Gail FitzSimons (Monash) and Sue Shore (University of Newcastle). Please send details of doctoral theses (completed within the last six months) from your institution via email to t.gale@cqu.edu.au.

Trevor Gale

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All India Association for Educational Research

AIAER is an affiliated association of AARE. We have recently received their journal Vol 12 Nos 3 & 4 December 2000. If any member would like it and the details of their conference and papers it contains, please ask AARE Office. See also www.iaer.com for details of the association and conference.

Peter Jeffery

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AARE and ICT [an update]: www.aare.edu.au/execproj/ict.htm

The functional specifications for the research reference website have been sent to Ice Media who have begun building the user interface and database. ICT project staff have been working on collecting and evaluating research material for the database and entering it into a Word document ready for uploading to EOL. There will be about 30 research projects or so for testing the user interface. Later the project will reference a large quantity of research relevant to schools.

Peter Jeffery

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Ethics and Educational Research: www.aare.edu.au/ethics/index.htm

During the past ten years the research community has made significant progress in terms of the requirements of ethics clearances. We are clearly more aware of ethics as a research issue in terms of our own investigations and those of our students. AARE has been instrumental in alerting members to the range of procedures operating in different states and has published very useful material on this issue. Despite these gains there appear to be some enduring problems. Anecdotally at least, members have been reporting difficulties in obtaining clearances in time to meet research schedules matching clearance requirements between Universities and departments accommodating to the familiar situation of some with and some without the consent forms. In particular the whole notion of 'informed consent' has become the target of considerable discussion and debate. There has been some suggestion that 'informed consent' is a legalistic sleight of hand whereby 'informed' means simply aware that a conversation is being recorded but not necessarily what may be done with it. It would appear there is a need for some broad discussion of some of these issues. To start off the Newsletter will in coming months operate as an Agony Aunt and attempt to counsel members with ethical concerns. Please write in with your ethics stories and we'll gain a clearer picture of the amount of dissatisfaction with current arrangements and then your association will be better placed to do something about it.

Judith Gill

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AARE 2001 Conference: www.aare.edu.au/conf/index.htm

The AARE 2001 annual conference in Fremantle this year will be truly international. Abstracts have been submitted by researchers in Australia, Brunei, Canada, England, Europe, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, New Zealand, Phillipines, Singapore, South Africa, Thailand and USA. We have 621 abstracts to date.

The pre-conference workshop on "Publishing for doctoral candidates and early careers researchers" (Sunday 2 December, 1pm-5pm) will provide valuable ideas for participants wishing to fast track their research findings into print. Further details about this workshop, and any other pre-conference workshops that may be organised, will be provided later on AARE website.

Many thanks to ACER for again undertaking to cover the cost of our conference satchels. There is plenty of room in these satchels for materials on publications, courses, organisations etc, so if you would like a promotional brochure or leaflet included please contact our conference treasurer Professor Steve Houghton by e-mail (shoughto@ecel.uwa.edu.au), phone (08 9380 2391).

Information about accommodation in Fremantle, Perth and the whole of WA can be found at this website (www.staywa.net.au). Those planning to stay in WA before and/or after the conference might find the following website useful (www.westernaustralia.net). Also, it is possible to get a feel for what Fremantle is like in December by visiting the University of Notre Dame tourist website (www.nd.edu.au/ndtourist.shtml).
Rod Chadbourne

URL – www.aare.edu.au/news35/conf.htm

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Betty Watts Award: www.aare.edu.au/bwatts/index.htm

There is still time for researchers working on indigenous education to apply for the Betty Watts Award. For details contact Bob Lingard at University of Queensland. The Award will be presented at AARE 2001 Conference - Fremantle. For full details of the Award see AARE website.
Peter Jeffery

URL – www.aare.edu.au/news35/bwatts.htm

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Student Travel Awards 2001

Quite a large number [approx. 20] applications have been received for Student Travel Awards to 2001 Conference. Applications have now closed. AARE Executive at its forthcoming meeting in Canberra will have to decide the winners. This year students from overseas have applied for grants.
AARE Office

URL – www.aare.edu.au/news35/studtrav.htm

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AARE Website Statistics: www.aare.edu.au/stats/index.htm

The latest statistics again prove that AARE website is one of the most valuable available to academics and students. We do not aim to reach public web surfers but rather to provide a research papers database for academic colleagues. Please note that the responsibility for academic quality is that of the authors who own the copyright on their papers.
Peter Jeffery

URL – www.aare.edu.au/news35/stats.htm

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The E-commerce facility for AARE 2001 Conference [Fremantle] is working very well.

Easy for members and easy for AARE.

Please use the E-commerce facility for all credit card payments. It is secure.