From the President

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Research Development

ERA and Theory Workshop

The use of ranked journals as a proxy for the quality of research outputs is highly contentious. It's compatible with a 'quick and dirty' approach to national research assessment. In my view, it's better than the system it's replacing (counting the volume of publications irrespective of quality).

Another Successful Theory Workshop

The AARE Theory workshop was recently held at Newcastle and once again was a resounding success. The aim of the workshop is to provide early career researchers and higher degree research students the opportunity to develop their understanding of theories used in educational research.

Member News

Recently Published Books

Travelling towards a mirage? gender, leadership & higher education
Tanya Fitzgerald & Jane Wilkinson

This comparative study of New Zealand and Australian universities maps the current climate in higher education for female academics. It examines whether more than two decades of equity and equality policies and practices have had an impact on the participation of women as leaders and managers in higher education.

Hobart Conference News

The preparations for the AARE conference are gathering momentum. The call for Abstracts closed on 22 May, but the call for full papers for refereeing has been extended until 19 June.

SIG News

AARE Gender, Sexualities & Culture Symposium at the Charles Sturt University, Bathurst - Kristina Gottschall

Recently Awarded Theses

Postgraduate Profile
Zoe Morris
Monash University
My research project investigates teacher professional identity and ethical preparedness in the digital age. In particular, it investigates the growing influence of Social Networking Sites such as Facebook, on student-teacher interactions and teacher professionalism.

Zoe Morris

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From the President

A key development for education research has been the announcement by Minister Kim Carr [Click Here] of critical changes to ERA 2012. These include abandoning journal rankings, increasing the emphasis on expert judgement of journal quality, and more flexibility for universities to code a journal article according to its content rather than the Field of Research (FoR) assigned to the journal. These changes are a response to the pressure from various groups, including AARE, about the negative impact of journal rankings on academic publications and publishing behaviours.

How these changes will play out in detail is yet to be seen but they are a positive step for education research and researchers. It offers greater scope for recognising the regional and applied nature of much education research and for acknowledging the contribution to education of the sizable proportion of our colleagues who publish in journals that the ABS coded as not falling within the education FoR, such as education psychology, history of education, education policy etc. The media release about the changes for ERA 2012 can be accessed here.

Well done to all those who were awarded ARC grants starting in 2011. Education performed strongly in the Discovery round with 19 individuals or teams working in the Education FoR receiving Discovery and Indigenous Researchers Development grants or ARC Fellowships, Future Fellowships, and Professorial and Laureate Fellowships. A sizable number of researchers working on educational issues in other FoRs were also successful. Education also performed strongly in the latest round of ARC Linkage grants announced on the same day as the changes to ERA.

ARC grants make a valuable contribution to knowledge generation but are also intensely and increasingly competitive. AARE is delighted to recognize the achievements of our members and colleagues. Sincere congratulations to all.

I’m very pleased to announce two important appointments to the AARE Executive. Associate Professor Karen Martin (Southern Cross) has graciously accepted the co-opted role as the Indigenous Researcher on the AARE Executive. This is an exciting development for AARE which has had a long-term agenda to build a strong support network of Indigenous researchers and researchers working with Indigenous communities. I’m sure there will be exciting developments to announce in the near future.

I’d also like to welcome Dr Michael Henderson (Monash) to the AARE Executive. Michael has taken on the role of Web Systems Advisor within the Communications portfolio with the primary goal of developing and improving web support systems for the membership, SIGS, content and event management etc.

On other news, in March this year I had an extended meeting with Amthea Ball, the incoming President of AERA, about closer connections and collaborations between AARE/AERA. One proposal from this meeting was for a major cross-Pacific initiative on building communication-lines between education researchers, policy-makers and politicians. I’ll keep the AARE membership posted as developments emerge.

As part of AARE’s long-term association with AERA, a team of Australian researchers presented a symposium at AERA meeting in New Orleans on the topic of ‘The Ethical Framing Education Research Practice’. The session was chaired by Prof. Jo-Anne Reid (CSU) and the discussant was Prof. Greg Dimitriadis from Buffalo University in the USA. The symposium generated energetic discussion among attendees, so a special thanks to the contributors which included Nicole Mockler (Newcastle), Michael Singh (UWS), Bobby Harreveld (CQU), and Sue Saltmarsh (ACU). A special journal issue of the articles will be forthcoming.

Following AERA, Jo Reid and I attended the meeting of the World Education Research...
Following AERA, Jo Reid and I attended the meeting of the World Education Research Association (WERA). A primary agenda for WERA is the capacity building of education research associations in developing countries. At the meetings, a number of these associations described the benefits flowing from their participation in WERA and the positive impact of increased involvement of international researchers at their local annual conferences.

Finally, I’d like to congratulate the AARE Sociology of Education SIG for its collaboration with Monash and Melbourne universities and the TASA Sociology of Education SIG in organizing an excellent symposium on 27 May at the Monash Conference Centre.

The day included stimulating presentations from a large number of eminent researchers, including keynote addresses by Professor Stephen Ball (Centre for Critical Policy Studies at the Institute of London) and Prof. Greg Dimitriadis (Buffalo University, USA). The topic – ‘Is everything old new again? ‘New’ educational knowledge, sites, professionals and politics’ – stimulated energetic discussion and it was wonderful to see such a large number of education researchers had made space in their busy schedules to engage in critical thinking on this important issue.

All the very best,

Chris Halse
The preparations for the AARE conference are gathering momentum. The call for Abstracts closed on 22 May, but the call for full papers for refereeing has been extended until 19 June. Early Bird registration and presenter registration closes on 29 August.

We have three excellent speakers this year to address the theme ‘Researching Across Boundaries’. These are Professor Miriam Zukas from The University of London and Professor Peter Goodyear from The University of Sydney. The Radford lecture will be delivered by Professor Lyn Yates from The University of Melbourne. More details about the keynotes are available on the conference website.

The conference will be held at the Hotel Grand Chancellor, with breakout rooms at the Woolstore Hotel and the Hobart Function Centre, all of which either overlook or are very close to Hobart Harbour. Accommodation for a range of nearby hotels and apartments can be booked through the conference website.

There will be 23 Special Interest Groups represented at this year’s conference. SIG dinners will take place on Monday and Tuesday night. Choices of social activities, including dinner at one of Tasmania’s leading wineries, for those interested will be on offer for Wednesday night.

The professional conference organizers this year are Conference Design. They should be contacted (info@cdesign.com.au) for all questions concerning the procedures for abstracts and papers, registration and accommodation.

There will be a full program beginning with the President’s Reception on Sunday night and finishing with presentations and invited symposia on Thursday morning (finish time 1.30pm). The Postgraduate and Early Career research Pre-Conference Workshops will be held as usual on Sunday 27 November. Details will be added to the conference webpage as workshops are confirmed.

Looking forward to another successful conference, see you in Hobart

Professor Jan Wright, on behalf of the AARE Conference Standing Committee
Recently Awarded Theses

Hoa Thi Mai Nguyen

Peer Mentoring: Practicum Practices of Pre-service EFL Teachers in Vietnam

Institution: School of Education, The University of Queensland
Supervisors: Professor Richard B. Baldauf Jr and Dr Jayne Keogh

Date Awarded: 15th November 2010.
The author received Dean’s Award for Research Higher Degree Excellence 2010, The University of Queensland

Abstract

The use of peers as a source of support and learning appears to be uncommon in pre-service practicum teacher education in general and in EFL teacher education in particular. During their practicum experiences, pre-service teachers develop their professional practices through their mentoring relationships with their school-based mentors. However, it might also be useful for pre-service teachers to have an additional educational component that would support their professional practice and facilitate learning from one another through a formal peer mentoring process. This study used a mixed methods approach to investigate the impact of a formal peer mentoring intervention on pre-service EFL teachers’ professional practice and their perceptions of the support received from their peers. Questionnaire data was used to assess the professional practice of the peer-mentored participants and to collect their perceptions of the support received from peers, comparing these results to a group of non-peer mentored EFL pre-service teachers. Focus group interview data were also collected and thematically analysed to better understand the process of peer mentoring, its possible contributions to the development of the participants’ professional practice, and the support received from peers. The results indicated that, in general, formally peer mentored pre-service EFL teachers made significant improvements in their professional practice as compared to their non-formally peer mentored colleagues. Mentees also perceived a higher level of support from peers than the non-peer mentored group. Data from the focus group interviews supported these findings by highlighting the similarities and differences in the participants’ peer mentoring experiences as well as some critical factors that contributed to the effective implementation of peer mentoring. The research suggests the need to integrate formal peer mentoring into pre-service EFL teachers’ practicum experience as an effective and affordable formal strategy to support pre-service teachers with difficulties faced during their practicum.
Recently awarded your thesis? Yes

Recently awarded your thesis?

The AARE community would like postgraduate students and beginning early career researchers to share the details of their recently awarded thesis.

Please email to the ECR Member kgottschall@csu.edu.au the following details:

Your full name
Name of institution
Name of your supervisor(s)
Thesis title
200-word abstract
Awarded date details
Post Graduate Profile

Ms Zoe Morris
PhD candidate, Monash University
Winner of the inaugural AARE ACDE Postgraduate & Early Career Researcher Poster Award, 2010.

Email: zoe.morris@monash.edu
Website: http://users.monash.edu.au/~hwatt/students/Morris.htm

When learning about the scientist practitioner model in undergraduate psychology, I never thought that I would effectively end up working as one! Since completing a Master of Educational Psychology in early 2008, I have been fortunate to work as an Educational Psychologist in DEECD schools, as a Research Assistant on the exciting FIT-Choice project (www.fitchoice.org) and as a Sessional Academic lecturing in aspects of adolescent learning and development such as mental health and special learning needs at Monash University.

In 2010, I was awarded an Australian Postgraduate Award and commenced a PhD. My research project investigates teacher professional identity and ethical preparedness in the digital age. In particular, it investigates the growing influence of Social Networking Sites such as Facebook, on student-teacher interactions and teacher professionalism. This project has grown from my personal interest in preservice ethical training across different helping professions (e.g. teaching, medicine and psychology). Pilot study results suggest that preservice teachers in their final years of study endorsed the importance of professionalism, yet were dissatisfied with the amount of ethical training received in their degree. I am hoping that my research will inform more effective training for professionals in the digital era.

In 2010, I presented my pilot findings at the International Congress of Applied Psychology (ICAP), and at AARE where I was delighted to win the inaugural AARE ACDE Postgraduate & Early Career Researcher Poster Award. This year, I am excited to have been accepted to present at the European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction (EARLI) biennial conference in Exeter, U.K. and the Australasian Human Development Association (AHDA) in N.Z. I have also applied to present at AARE 2011. I am very interested to meet with other researchers who share related research interests.

What’s your story?
The AARE community would like to hear your story and share postgraduate
student’s research and related experiences through the AARE newsletter and website.
Please write your 200 word bio that includes details about yourself, your work and your preferred contact modes. Then email your 200 word bio and a photo of yourself to the Postgraduate Student Member
carmel.patterson@uts.edu.au
There can be little doubt that universities benefit from diversity in their student and staff population. Yet why do women remain under-represented in senior academic leadership roles and in key positions along the academic career ladder? Why do women not advance at a rate proportional to that of their male peers? How do institutional policy and policy discourses influence decisions in regard to who occupies senior roles? In this book the authors use the metaphor of a mirage to map the current climate in higher education and examine whether equity and equality policies and practices have had an impact on the participation of women as leaders and managers in higher education.

In higher education, gender equality and educational leadership are often discussed, but the participation of women as leaders and managers in institutions of higher education remains limited. The authors offer a comparative approach to examining and understanding how gender and educational leadership are played out in various institutions of higher education.

This book will be of interest to those working in the fields of educational leadership, gender studies, and higher education as researchers, teachers, postgraduate students and practitioners. The authors offer a comparative approach to examining and understanding how gender and educational leadership are played out in various institutions of higher education.
ERA
AARE has been active in relation to two aspects of ERA – the journal ranking exercise and broader consultations over research assessment methodology.

The use of ranked journals as a proxy for the quality of research outputs is highly contentious. It’s compatible with a 'quick and dirty' approach to national research assessment. In my view, it's better than the system it’s replacing (counting the volume of publications irrespective of quality). But the cost it imposes on academia increases, the more animated we get about specific rankings. It is possible to waste thousands of hours of what might otherwise be productive research time in trying to perfect the rankings of journals. AARE has tried to avoid wasting members’ time, by advising a targeted approach – led mainly by the SIGs. We have worked closely with other educational research organisations in doing this: notably AVETRA (vocational education), HERDSA (higher education) and ascilite (educational technology). Our goal has been to try to focus efforts on the relatively small number of journals that (a) are important to significant numbers of members and (b) stand out as being particularly badly classified and/or badly ranked. I don't want to underplay the impact on members of some of the travesties of ranking and classification (Fields of Research or FoR codings) that we saw in the 2010 list. It's particularly frustrating in specialised areas where educational researchers' views are subordinated to those of other disciplines (e.g. in Psychology or Philosophy). And such frustrations are compounded when we see the ERA journal rankings infiltrating areas of academic practice for which they were not designed – whether in ARC grant applications or university promotions processes. Their inadequacies are tolerable when they are part of a rough and ready evaluation process that is trying to characterise an aggregate of research achievement. When they are used to judge the fates of individuals, it is a different matter.

This month’s budget papers show that rethinking some aspects of the ERA methodology is one of ARC’s top four priorities for the coming year, with a remit described as a: “review of the ERA 2010 process, through targeted and broad sector-wide reviews. These include reviews of the measures used to assess quality of research, such as applied measures, the ERA evaluation process more broadly, and the discipline and discipline groups examined”¹. AARE submitted a response to ARC’s ERA consultation in March, explaining (again) how the ABS FoR codes make it difficult to use ERA to map and manage educational research². We also rehearsed the argument for a shift from peer-review to citations analysis, as soon as the bibliographic data suppliers are able to offer reasonable coverage of educational research outlets.
There will be some strongly voiced arguments from the university sector about minimising change between ERAs 2010 and 2012 – partly to protect the comparability of results, but also to keep compliance costs down. ARC has indicated that some of the feedback it has been receiving may influence research assessment processes after the 2012 exercise. So while we may not see much change in 2012, it's important to keep arguing for improvements that might be feasible in the longer term.

If the federal government (of whatever colour) does persist with national research quality assessment after 2012, we ought to discuss ways in which the data it produces can be of more use for educational research management processes. The latest issue of BERA’s Research Intelligence magazine (#114) shows what can be learned through careful analysis of RAE outcomes data, supplemented by targeted surveys. Much of the RAE 2001 and 2008 data is in the public domain, allowing detailed questions to be asked about the shape of UK educational research and about the environments in which it takes place. After ERA2010, we are little wiser about Australian educational research – about whether we have distinctive strengths, as a nation, or whether some important sub-fields of educational research merit focused investment. In part, we need a discussion about whether ERA should continue as a relatively cheap but not particularly reliable or informative process – a tolerable substitute for the existing quantitative, input-focussed, metrics-based system of apportioning research block-funding – or whether we actually want something that can inform research strategy.

**Research Development**

Colleagues in ARDEN and on AARE Exec have been working on a number of research development initiatives in the past year, some of which are now coming to fruition. I’ll mention just two.

AARE members will know of the terrific success of the annual ‘Theory’ workshops – the most recent has just taken place at the University of Newcastle, under the guidance of Joanne Orlando. Exec has decided to supplement these workshops with some one-day, advanced research methodology workshops, to be run (in the first instance) in a number of the capital cities. Michael Gard has been leading an ARDEN task group whose remit has included some market research to help us identify areas of unmet need with respect to advanced research methods training. (We have assumed that introductory-level methods courses are already being provided by education research staff around the country, and that AARE can best add value by catalysing collaborative provision of more specialised events.) In the next few weeks we’ll be inviting expressions of interest from colleagues who would like to oversee the design and/or facilitate in the delivery of some pilot workshops – to be run later this year, probably focussed on some advanced aspects of qualitative research (judging by the market research data).

Lina Markauskaite has been leading a second ARDEN task group, investigating opportunities for the use of e-research methods in education. The draft report of this task group has now been submitted and will be mounted on the AARE website soon. Lina and Alison Lee hope to run an e-research symposium at the Hobart conference, to help build interest in the area. The federal government is currently constructing plans for the next main phase of investment in national research infrastructure[^3], and e-research is one area in which it is important for AARE to have an informed view.
1 [Click Here for Report]
2 See AARE News #62 for the background on the FoR codes.
In commenting on the portrait of Australian research painted by ERA2010, Margaret Sheil, Chief Executive of the Australian Research Council, said:

In April, The Gender, Sexuality and Culture SiG held a symposium at Charles Sturt University (CSU), Bathurst. The two-day event was funded by the AARE SiG Grant (worth $3,000), which co-convenors Dr Claire Charles (Deakin University) and Kristina Gottschall (Charles Sturt University) applied for through a competitive process.

What emerged from these two days of debate and discussion around the historical perspectives, current concerns, and possible futures of the field/s of gender, sexualities and cultural studies in education, was a re-imagining of the domain of ‘gender and education’ and a re-thinking of some of the field/s’ entrenched theoretical and methodological approaches.

Leading researchers in the field, Dr Mary Lou Rasmussen from Monash University and Dr Andrew Hickey from the University of Southern Queensland, led participants through various provocations broadly focused on the reimagining the field/s in the Australian context and beyond. Focusing on eight key articles from the field/s that were read by all participants beforehand, round-table discussions generated collective and creative questioning of our own, and our field/s’, entrenched ways of thinking and doing.

It was noted by all that such opportunities for face-to-face dialogue between scholars cannot be underestimated in terms of challenging one’s own thinking and boosting morale – particularly important in this time of heavy work-loads and pressures to ‘publish or perish’, which can so often deplete energies and ideas.

Thank you to our presenters, Mary Lou and Andrew for giving your time and making your way to Bathurst. [Go rural unis!] Thanks must also be extended to CSU for providing the venue free of charge, which made all the difference to being able to bring these key researchers to Bathurst. Also a special thanks to AARE for fostering our research community in this way.

Look out for some of the results of this symposium at the AARE Conference this year in Tasmania [Click Here]

Think you would like to organise something similar for your SiG? Email for
Another Successful Workshop on Theory

The AARE Theory workshop was recently held at Newcastle and once again was a resounding success.

The aim of the workshop is to provide early career researchers and higher degree research students the opportunity to develop their understanding of theories used in educational research. Workshop choices this year included: Foucault, Socio-cultural and Activity theory, Theory in Qualitative research, Bourdieu, Professional Practice theory, World-Systems Analysis theory, Sociocultural Theory of Motivation, Phenomenography, and Poststructuralist theory.

The workshop has been very well received in the four years it has been running and once again places filled quickly. The workshop was fully registered with 50 participants less than a week after registrations opened. The participants came from around Australia. They stated that this conference was one of the few professional learning forums that provided intense theory work. It provided the opportunity to learn more about a theory they were working with in their research as well as the opportunity to become more familiar with other theories they were interested in learning about but had little or no knowledge of.

The theory workshop is part of AARE’s focus on professional learning for novice researchers. It will be held again in 2012, the place and date are still to be confirmed.

This year’s theory workshop would not have been the success it was without the support of the University of Newcastle, who generously funded the place and sustenance for learning. A big thank you to our presenters who volunteered their time and enthusiasm: Stephen Kemmis, Michael Gard, Michael Singh, Richard Walker, Russell Cross, Clare O’Farrell, Christine Bruce, Tom Griffiths and Eva Bendix-Peterson,

By Joanne Orlando (AARE Theory Workshop convenor)