Faculty of Education Research News

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER, 2005 – ISSUE 6

PUBLICATION IN PRESTIGIOUS JOURNAL

Congratulations to Mohan Chinnappan on the electronic publication of his article "A Framework for Analysis of Teachers’ Geometric Content Knowledge and Geometric Knowledge for Teaching" published in "Journal of Mathematics Teacher Education". They used mixed methods (case study and quantitative) to examine the relationship between teacher's geometric content knowledge and their knowledge of teaching as activated during a series of lessons.

The journal is probably in the top 5 journals of mathematics education in the world and has about 10% acceptance rate. It looks into issues of mathematics teaching and learning (K-12 and beyond) and has high impact internationally.

APPOINTMENT FOR BEV DEREWIANKA

Bev Derewianka has been elected National President of the Australian Systemic Linguistics Association and Member of the Executive of the International Systemic Linguistics Association. These Associations represent researchers working in the field of applied linguistics, especially from the perspective of how language functions in school and academic contexts. She will be representing Australia at the annual international congresses and the University of Wollongong will be hosting the national conference in 2007.
SUCCESSFUL RESEARCH FUNDING

Grays Pt Public School has a history of pioneering new learning approaches specifically in the area of literacy. During the 1980s the school was involved in the St George Writing project. This innovative project received wide spread acclaim and was the catalyst for a major shift in the teaching of writing within NSW public schools. Twenty years on Grays Pt Public School has another opportunity to lead the development of new techniques for the teaching and learning of writing skills within public schools via a research project entitled: "From marks on a page to characters on a screen". After 18 months of lobbying the principal of Grays Pt Mr. Phil Rouland has finally secured funding for a laptop research project. Under the Federal Government's "Investing in Our Schools Program" the school secured $45 000 for the laptops & a further $23 750 for interactive whiteboards. Now that funding has been secured the research project with the UOW team (Julie Kiggins, Lisa Kervin, Jan Turbill, Brian Cambourne & Ian Olney) will commence in 2006.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATION

Ted Booth will give a refereed paper for ANZCIES 33rd Annual Conference at Coffs Harbour in early December entitled “Inducting pre-service teachers into reflective inquiry and research methods: Contested curriculum and pedagogical spaces”.

Abstract
The location of research methods within the pre-service teacher education curriculum has been a contentious debate within the writer’s Faculty of Education for many years. Concurrently the scope and sequence of the major concepts and skills to be taught in inquiry and research methods and the related pedagogy has also been contentious. This paper attempts to chart some of the dimensions and contentions within these spaces. A self-study methodology is utilised in conjunction with the views of collegial staff and case study data from a cohort of students who have recently completed the subject. The purpose of this paper is to support a professional critique of teaching inquiry and research methods and the development of a statement of enhanced best practice.

RESEARCH STUDENT CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Behnaz Mohajeran, PhD Student will give a paper entitled “Effectiveness” at the International Conference on Education in Singapore on 06.12.2005

Abstract
This paper explores the extent to which the form of school governance (particularly decision-making) has an impact upon the effectiveness of the school with reference to parental involvement, planning and budgeting, professional development of teachers, school facilities and resources, and student outcomes. Particular attention was given to decision-making within the governance arrangements.

The study was based on four case studies of high schools in New South Wales, Australia, but two have been chosen as examples for the purpose of this paper. The cases were a government School and an independent Christian community school. The focus of the research was Principals,
teachers, parents, and students of two schools each with varying governance arrangements. To gain a greater insight into the issues, the researcher collected information by questionnaire, semi-structured interview, and review of school key documents.

This study provided some useful information on the key role of the Principal in school governance and decision-making. Three broad factors impact on the Principal role and the Principal effect on school effectiveness and student achievement although the study like others before it, could not demonstrate a direct on the latter. The research also indicates that a decentralized governance structure can impact positively on all aspects of school effectiveness particularly if it is accompanied by a dynamic leadership style of the Principal.

Ali Reza Ghaleei, PhD Student, will also give a paper entitled “The roles that principals play in professional learning of teachers” at the International Conference on Education in Singapore on 06.12.2005

Abstract

The study outlined in this paper is a research project that was designed to investigate, what is the principal’s role in teacher professional learning and its relationship with professional learning policy and teachers’ professional learning? The focus of the research was principals, teachers, and all member of the School Professional Learning Team in three New South Wales public primary schools, in the Wollongong area. Case study methodology used to investigate the principal’s management approach, the policy requirements, and characteristics of teacher professional learning. The research data was collected by questionnaire, semi-structured interview, and document review. An analysis of this data identified areas where the principals implement professional learning policy in the schools. The results of this study provide information for schools on organizational structures and management practices to be established that can lead to better outcomes for teachers and ultimately the students they teach. The findings of this study indicated that both the principals and teachers had welcomed the implementation of state-wide Professional Learning Policy. The professional learning was highly valued by both teachers and school administrators. The schools, even in the initial phases of implementing NSW DET Professional Learning Policy, gave considerable thought to planning and other management practices. Professional learning has been seen as the best possible way to enhance the quality of teachers through providing new knowledge and skills.

Fiona Mueller presented a paper at the biennial conference of the National Association of Single-Sex Public Education (NASSPE) held on 8-10 October in Cincinnati, Ohio, USA. The conference theme was ‘Best Practices for Single-Sex Education.’ The paper, titled Single-sex public education: the Australian experience, drew on the author’s current doctoral research as well as her teaching background in boys’ and girls’ schools. Knowing that the audience would be largely American and European, the presentation was set within a comparison of the single-sex public school provision in Australia and the United States. Title IX of the 1972 US Education Act has been interpreted as prohibiting the establishment of any single-sex public school unless an identical facility for the other gender can also be made available. At present there are 42 fully single-sex public schools across the United States, with about 150 other schools offering some form of single-sex education within a coeducational setting. While several of the former are over 100 years old, the majority have been
created since 2000, when the Bush administration encouraged reconsideration of the legal issues relating to the single-sex school option.

Many conference participants expressed surprise at the extent of the single-sex option in Australian school systems as well as at the fact that there are no legal impediments to this. The paper focused most closely on New South Wales, which has the most significant single-sex public high school provision. These schools were described in light of the author’s research findings, with a particular emphasis on the fact that while nine of the schools are academically selective, the majority have reinvented themselves from ‘first generation’ vocational schools to full high schools that are indistinguishable from their coeducational public school counterparts.

American supporters of single-sex education include those who maintain that single-sex education can effectively address the needs of low-income, minority children living in urban areas. There is a strong perception that boys in single-parent households who lack male role models and girls whose potential is limited by the socio-economic characteristics of their neighbourhoods may benefit from education delivered in gender-specific environments. Some speakers reflected on the capacity of single-sex schools to encourage students to participate in subjects and activities that typically are not chosen as readily in the coeducational environment. A keynote address and other sessions emphasised the need for teachers and school leaders to consider the biological, environmental and cultural factors that can influence the way in which boys and girls learn.

Discussion also centred on the deep philosophical and ideological divisions expressed by educators in many Western countries. In the United States, and to some extent in Australia, there is evidence of a concern that any resurgence of the single-sex option means an inevitable return to discriminatory practices. The author’s own research in the NSW schools was used to counter this, citing the many oversubscribed boys’ and girls’ schools at which academic achievement is consistently high. The point was made that the parents of these students either value the single-sex option in its own right or do not consider it a reason to choose against a school that is otherwise appealing. Conference attendees were especially interested in the focus on the marketing strategies adopted by these Australian schools and the semiology that characterises their publicity material.

Lynne Barrington, Doctoral candidate, gave a conference presentation entitled “Craft & epistemological issues in ‘writing up’ reflexive qualitative research” at the: Qualitative Research as Interpretive Practice (QRIP) Conference 2005 ‘Voice, Identity & Reflexivity’ on 22-23 September, 2005 in Albury, NSW

Abstract
‘Writing up’ my doctoral research entitled ‘Re-imagining the university: a personal and professional journey into the nature of the written word’ has involved crafting representations of my experience and self at different times of my life, and the creation of interweaving narrative pasts, presents and futures. Drawing on Kermode’s (1966; 2000) ‘The sense of an ending’, Ricoeur’s (1984-1988) magisterial three volume study on the relationships of narrative to time, which gives lengthy philosophical exploration of many of Kermode’s literary insights, and Jay Griffith’s (2000) delightful and stimulating exploration of time in ‘Pip pip: A sideways look at time’, I will present a detailed look at a number of writing conundrums I have been faced with, and the solutions I have worked out, informing a discussion.
**Jann Roberts,** MEd (Research) student and **Jan Herrington** will present at the ASCILITE conference from 5-7 December from their paper entitled “**Interactive television: Educational use in the new millennium**”.

**Abstract**
Interactive television (ITV) has a great deal of potential for facilitating interactive, collaborative, constructivist, situated, and authentic learning. Many teachers, however, are not familiar with the features of ITV, or how it could impact on teaching and learning in Australia. Inherent in its adoption, there are a number of issues which need to be addressed, including the lack of research into current generation ITV, the lack of availability of pedagogically-sound, research-driven guidelines for ITV use, and the existing attitudes towards ITV. This paper describes some of the theoretical and practical issues surrounding the use of ITV in the classrooms and concludes with a description of preliminary research.

**Rob Peterson**, candidate for MEd (Research) returned last month from a trip to Bulgarian for data collection and Canada to present at a conference. Rob’s project involves the establishment of a web-based community of practice for special education practitioners and researchers in Bulgaria. His papers, Developing an Internet-based community for special education in Bulgaria and The state of the art of design-based research, were accepted at the Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE), E-Learn World Conference on E-Learning in Corporate, Government, Healthcare, and Higher Education in Vancouver, BC, Canada. While away, Rob also visited an elementary school in the United States for three days to interview teachers and administrators about the practice of special education.
CONFERENCES

7th QUALITY IN POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH CONFERENCE:

Knowledge Creation in Testing Times - 20-21 April 2006 Adelaide, South Australia

The Quality in Postgraduate Research conferences provide an opportunity to debate the latest policies affecting postgraduate education; to exchange views on current research and good practice in the field; and to link special staff and student interest groups. Policy makers, supervisors, postgraduate administrators, educational researchers, postgraduate students and academic developers attend the conferences. For the purposes of the conference, postgraduate research refers to higher degrees which have a substantial amount of research as a major component.

The proceedings of the previous six Quality in Postgraduate Research Conferences, 1994-2004, are available at http://www.qpr.edu.au/. This archive is a valuable resource for prospective presenters.

Keynote speakers

Keynote Speaker 9.30am Thursday 21 April 2006: "Globalisation and its impact on research"
"education" Professor Maresi Nerad, Director of the US Centre for Innovation and Research in Graduate Education (CIRGE)

Keynote Speaker 9.00am Friday 22 April 2006: "The future of research education in the Research Quality Framework" Professor Ian Chubb AO Vice-Chancellor of the Australian National University, member of the Expert Panel for the Australian Research Quality Framework.

Further information is available at:  http://www.qpr.edu.au/2006/

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY – IMB COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

The IMB Community Foundation is calling for applications for community projects to be funded in 2006. This year the Directors of the IMB have allocated $500,000 to the Foundation to support community projects.

OBJECTIVES
The Foundation supports projects that reflect its objectives, which include enhancing the economic diversification and development of communities, promoting mutual and self-help philosophies and enhancing the economic self sufficiency of communities.

INFORMATION SEMINAR
The Research Services Office is holding an information seminar for applicants as follows:

Time: 10.30am to 12.00pm
Date: Friday, 9 December 2005
Venue: 35.G45

All interested applicants are encouraged to attend the seminar which will include a presentation by Stuart Waters from the IMB Community Foundation.

Please confirm your attendance to Sue Dellit sdellit@uow.edu.au by 7 December 2005.

DUE DATE
All applicants must submit a two page Letter of Request for funding to the IMB Community Foundation by 20 January 2006.

FURTHER INFORMATION
Further information can be found at www.imb.com.au