



UNIVERSITY
OF WOLLONGONG
AUSTRALIA

School of Education

Research Report
2020

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Welcome

Education is a critical foundation for success in life. Our School of Education is a community of scholars who share a common passion – to make a positive difference to the lives of learners and educators. Our researchers seek to inform evidence-based solutions to addresses significant education challenges in Australia and globally. Our studies span from early childhood, to primary and secondary school, and vocational and higher education (including teacher education).

We specialise in researching learning and teaching across disciplines, with a shared commitment to promoting inclusion, excellence, capacity building and wellbeing. We hope you enjoy reading about our research outcomes and about our work in progress.

Professor Sue Bennett
Head of School
University of Wollongong



Introduction

This report showcases our research through a collection of narratives in which each researcher explains in their own voice what drives their research agenda and how it is making a positive difference. Covering the period 2018-2020, it shows how our research work is diverse, applied in nature, and interdisciplinary.

What you will read is the educational issues we are investigating to uncover intellectual questions that underpin practical problems, and how we are doing this with theoretical and methodological rigor. You will also see how we work collaboratively with researchers across the university, nationally and internationally and adopt a range of research approaches.

Our researchers have strong associations with UOW research initiatives, institutes, and facilities such as Early Start, Illawarra Health and Medical Research Institute (IHMRI), and the SMART Infrastructure facility. Collaborative research is also supported through Faculty and Early Start research groups; the following of which are led by

School of Education researchers:

- Centre for Higher Education Research, Innovation and Impact (CHERII)
- Interdisciplinary Discourse Analysis in Education, Arts and Social Sciences (IDEAS)
- Pedagogical Laboratory for Education
- Play, Pedagogy and Curriculum in Contemporary Theory and Practice

In this report you will see how our research aims to have a practical impact on learners (from young children to adults), educators (across educational sectors), families, administrators, policy-makers, and the community.

I feel privileged to work with my colleagues and to share our research work with you.

Associate Professor Shirley Agostinho
Head of Research
University of Wollongong



We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which the University of Wollongong is situated. We pay our respects to Aboriginal elders past and present, who are the knowledge holders and teachers. We acknowledge their continued spiritual and cultural connection to Country. As we share knowledge, teaching, learning and research within this university we also pay respect to the knowledge embedded forever within the Aboriginal custodianship of Country.



Our research strategies

We are committed to research that makes a positive difference through five complementary strategies.

1. Excellent research conducted in partnerships with educators

Partnerships initiated by educators inform our key areas of investigation, ensuring that we are focusing on issues that are most relevant to educators, families, administrators and policy-makers and therefore most likely to have a practical impact. All of these practical problems are underpinned by key intellectual problems of the field, which our work helps to advance. This approach has inspired our research of which some examples include: the teaching of writing in schools, supporting those with lived experience of mental health issues, how to best use technology in education, effective initial teacher education, and supporting early self-regulation development in children.

2. Shaping professional practice by integrating research

We seek to integrate our research into our teaching, and for us this means preparing the future education workforce. Our graduate teachers have a strong foundation in understanding learning and effective teaching practice, incorporating the latest research. Our research-based postgraduate programs support current educators across sectors to extend, refocus and update their knowledge through further study. Our special professional development programs for in-service teachers extends our influence, particularly through our established local network of schools, but also through national reach.

3. Service to professional associations

Our researchers choose to be actively engaged with Australia's peak professional associations. Examples include: Australasian Computers in Learning In Tertiary Education (ASCILITE), the Australian Literacy Educators' Association (ALEA), the Australian Science Teachers' Association (ASTA), the Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (ACHPER), Early Childhood Australia (ECA), Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA), NSW

Australian Council for Educational Leaders (ACEL) and Primary English Teaching Association Australia (PETAA). These bodies enable researchers to tap into multiple national perspectives and develop and consolidate partnerships with policy-makers, teachers and other researchers.

4. Engagement with government policy-making and public discourse

As educational researchers, we have established a strong synergy between excellent research and practice. Our partnerships with early childhood centres, schools and universities inform our key areas of investigation, ensuring that we are focusing on issues that are most relevant to educators, families, administrators and policy-makers. Examples of key research contributions include: i) involvement in, and subsequent impact on, the first major national English curriculum reform in Australia (The Australian Curriculum - English F-10), ii) international consultations on syllabus design and implementation to educational authorities in Singapore, New Zealand and the European Union, iii) development of the Australian 24-hr Movement Guidelines for Children 0-5 years, and the Australian 24-hr Movement Guidelines for Children and Young People, and iv) successful lobbying of the World Health Organization (WHO) to develop Global Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for the Early Years.

5. International outreach

We are acknowledged internationally for our expertise. This reputation has been built through a deliberate strategy of pursuing international trends in educational research and engaging strategic international collaborations. We present our research at key international conferences, such as American Educational Research Australia (AERA), Literacy Researchers Association (LRA), and European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction (EARLI) (just to name a few). We host leading international visiting Professors who are working directly with our researchers and partners, and regularly host specialist international conferences.



Research with purpose

Our research is diverse, but its purpose is focused on a common goal – to have practical impact.

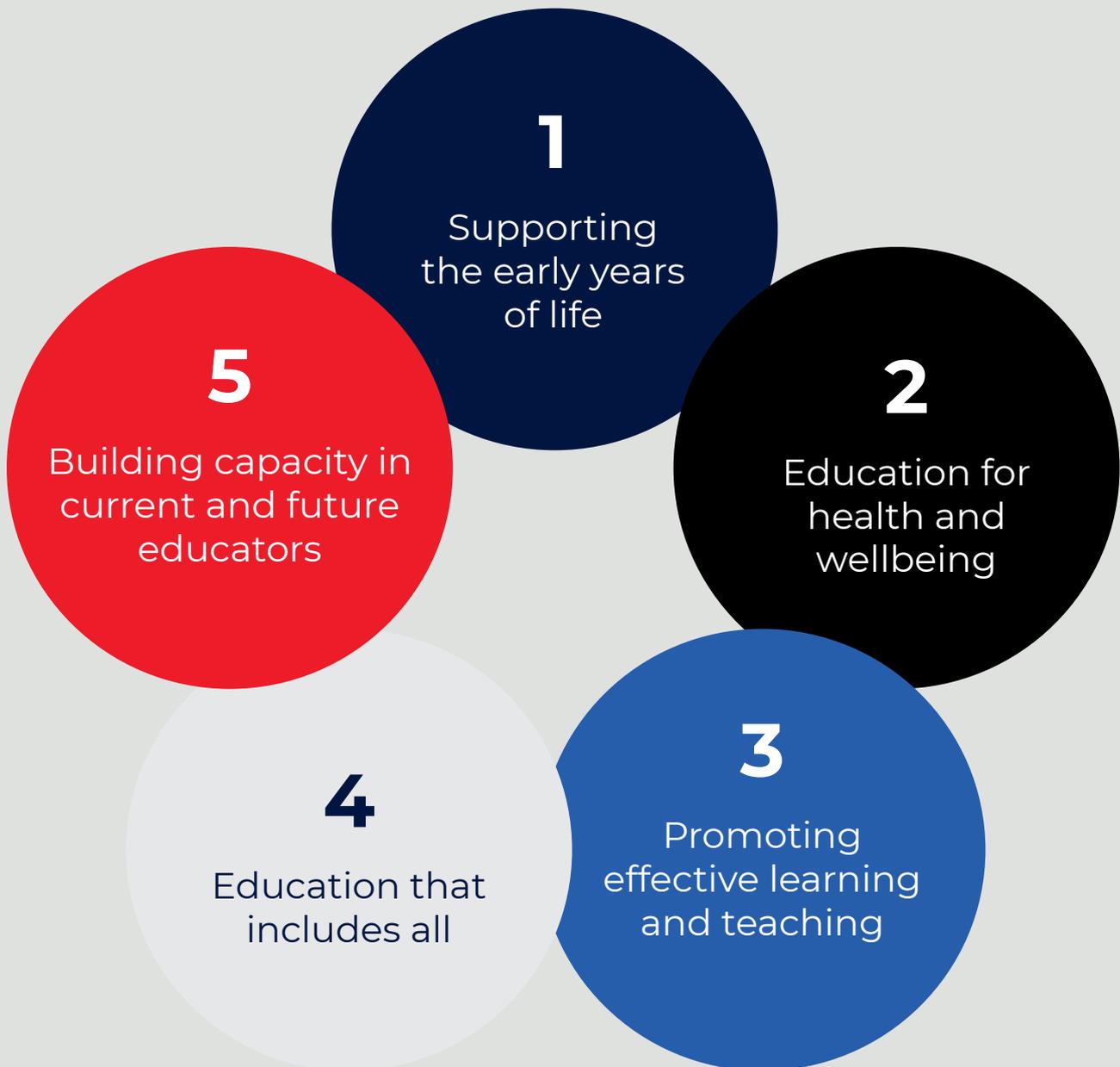
To illustrate the kind of research the School of Education undertakes, we present our work based on five “cross-cutting themes”:

1. **Supporting the early years of life** so that all children can have a happy and healthy childhood and become engaged citizens
2. **Education for health and wellbeing** that optimises the psychological, sociological, physiological and behavioural factors underpinning effective health and physical education in school and community settings
3. **Promoting effective learning and teaching** through evidence-based strategies to support educational design leading to high quality educational outcomes and experiences
4. **Education that includes all** to enable all members of our diverse population to attain similar life outcomes
5. **Building capacity in current and future educators** so that the teaching profession is well-equipped to meet the needs of our changing society

Our researchers conduct collaborative work and thus their work may cover multiple areas.

Here is a snapshot of our current research.

Our research work is based on five cross-cutting themes





**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
SHIRLEY AGOSTINHO**

Shining a light on the sophisticated design work that teachers do

One aspect of my research work is investigating the professional practice of both higher education and school teachers, specifically in the area of educational design. This collaborative research work spans 20 years and is leading to a more sophisticated theoretical understanding about how teachers go about their professional practice of designing learning experiences for their students.

This is important as it is shining a light on the sophisticated design work that teachers do, which is often 'invisible work' done formally and informally and/or intuitively. Our empirical work has uncovered the novel finding that teachers (both higher education and school teachers) demonstrate key characteristics in design thinking in their professional practice and this is informing evidence-based teacher design thinking tools and models we are developing to support teacher design practices.

For example, from our recently completed ARC Discovery project titled "Designing effective learning experiences: Investigating novice and expert teachers' design processes" (research team: Professor Lockyer, UTS, Professor Bennett and myself), we have developed a design model for early career teachers based on evidence about what expert teachers do. This model shows the complex and interwoven decisions teachers make when they are designing and its aim is to support teachers' design thinking processes.

3 5



DR PETER ANDERSEN

Empowering students to become global, responsible, active citizens

My research focuses on investigating the effectiveness of educational programs that are specifically designed to support primary school teachers to empower their students to become global, responsible, active citizens in their schools, communities and family homes. My research adopts a Critical pedagogy approach. Critical pedagogy encourages students to challenge the social, political and economic hegemonic forces that weigh heavily on their lives in order to transform the world into a more just and enlightened place.

Globally, education systems are grappling with the challenge of how to provide students with the knowledge, skills and motivation to lead environmental change in their schools and communities. Critical pedagogy – with its emphasis on empowerment, action-competence and eco-literacy – is well placed to answer that challenge. My research is important because it fills a knowledge gap around how best to support teachers to create programs that are both underpinned by Critical pedagogy and designed to operate within the Australian Curriculum.

Currently, I am collaborating with colleagues from Balgownie Public School and the University of Wollongong's (UOW) Sustainable Buildings Research Centre and School of Management, Operations and Marketing to assess the impact of an environmental education program on the attitudes and behaviours of a group of Stage 3 primary school students. The program bridges key tenets of Critical pedagogy, the Australian Curriculum, and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). Following the analysis of the data, the research team plans to introduce the program to a wider collection of schools in New South Wales.

3 5





DR TIFFANI APPS

Supporting children and young people to develop the necessary skills and knowledge to participate in their digital lives

My research is multidisciplinary drawing on sociological and psychological theory to examine young people's technology practices, digital literacy and self-regulation in everyday and formal learning contexts. The aim is to better support all young people to develop the necessary skills and knowledge to participate in their digital lives.

There are two key components to this research. The first draws on sociological theory to critically engage the ways that young people engage with digital technologies across a range of everyday life and education contexts. One example is a current project titled "Exploring young people's digital futures: an investigation of the transition from school to post school contexts" with colleagues Beckman and Cronin. This work draws on the theory of practice to understand how young people's technology practices are structured and how these technology practices enable and/or constrain the experiences of transition into further study, work and other everyday life contexts.

The findings provide important details about the ways that schools, higher education institutions and industry could better support young people across this complex life stage. The second examines online learning contexts. This collaborative research builds on my work as a research fellow on the ARC Discovery project "University learning in the digital age: Investigating how students learn online" (led by Professor Bennett).

The theoretical aim of this work is to extend cognitive models of self-regulated learning to provide a more nuanced understanding of the role of social context in supporting online and blended learning. This research has informed the design and development of first year university subjects focused on supporting transitions and developing self-regulated learners through high-quality learning designs.

3 4 5



DR AMANDA BAKER

Investigating second language (L2) teachers' cognitions and classroom practices to inform effective L2 pronunciation, speaking and listening pedagogy

My research investigates the dynamic relationships that exist between second language (L2) teachers' cognitions (knowledge, beliefs, perceptions, attitudes) and classroom practices, especially as they relate to L2 pronunciation, speaking and listening pedagogy.

This exploration has involved the examination of how teachers' cognitions and practices develop over time and the degrees to which they are influenced by diverse situational, economic, socio-cultural, early school learning and university learning-related factors, both from a longitudinal perspective or at a particular point in time. This collaborative research, has identified how teachers view and understand their teaching practices and how these cognitions can impact student learning. It also illuminates potential gaps in the teachers' knowledge base of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) pedagogy.

Such empirical research serves to inform both Second Language Teacher Education (SLTE) and English as an Additional Language/Dialect (EAL/D) programs both in Australia and in international contexts. One key outcome of this research is the development of an innovative model, a "Coaching Model to Clear and Fluent Pronunciation". This model guides teachers on how to provide a holistic approach to developing learners' pronunciation skills while simultaneously addressing diverse psychological and other contextual factors that may either enhance or inhibit this development.

With more than 7.5 million migrants living in Australia and the significant number of international students matriculating into Australian universities, this research is important to address the linguistic and emotional needs of L2 learners.

3 5



DR KARLEY BECKMAN

Exploring higher education student approaches to learning online

My research explores children, young people and adult learners' technology practices and the implications for learning. A current focus is higher education student's approaches to learning online. This body of research spans a number of research projects and collaborations with researchers across Australian universities, exploring aspects such as self-regulated learning and approach to engaging in online learning environments, including blended and wholly online.

A shift to online forms of learning has been evidenced across all education sectors including universities world-wide over the past two decades. As a result of the current global pandemic we have seen a rapid move to online forms of teaching and learning, thus making this work even more highly relevant. While, online learning has been touted as a form of learning that allows for flexibility as it collapses time and space, research findings demonstrate that online forms of learning place more burden on students to manage their learning. Two of my recent publications have been about student's varied circumstances and self-regulation skills influence their practices in online learning and ability to manage their learning.

The key driver of this research is to better understand student experiences, which are often invisible to educators in an online learning environment. The aim of this body of research is to better inform online teaching and learning that supports students to manage their learning and is cognisant and responsive to student approaches in online learning environments. Additionally, my research findings have also provided practical implications for students via online teaching and support resources to support them to develop self-awareness of their practices and to develop of self-regulation skills.

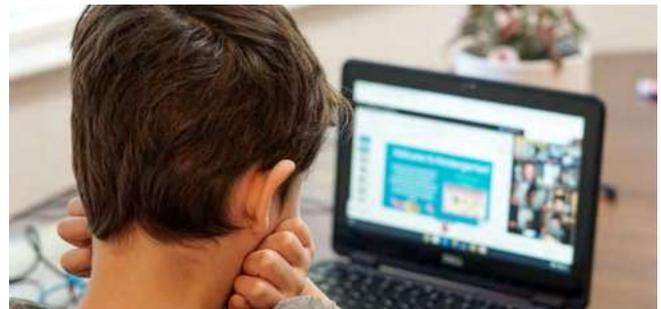


PROFESSOR SUE BENNETT

Living and learning with digital technologies

My research explores how individuals experience technologies across their lives. I draw on psychological and sociological theory, and quantitative and qualitative methodologies to build holistic understandings of learning and living with technology.

I recently led an ARC Discovery project that explored how students manage open-ended, online tasks seeks to better understand how students interpret and manage these types of tasks, which offer differ from familiar forms of assessment. This is important because understanding a task is critical for students to be able to successfully manage their learning and meet assessment requirements. But coming to understand what a task requires can be challenging – particularly when students have freedom to make choices about how they complete an open-ended task.



Across 11 cases in first- and second-year undergraduate education, we collected data about how tasks were described to students, and then how students interpreted the task requirements, how they approached completing the task, and their reflections on the outcomes they achieved. We found that students who focused on explicit features of a task developed shallower understandings of the requirements and less effective study goals than students who developed a richer understanding of a task. We also found that online tasks that allow students to see each other's work can enable students to re-assess and improve their task understanding.

Our findings add detail to theoretical models of self-regulated learning, and have practical implications for designing assessment online. This research is timely with student-centred online learning becoming increasingly important, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic.





DR KELLIE BUCKLEY-WALKER

Investigating classroom assessment practices of primary and secondary school teachers

My research is focussed on investigating classroom assessment practices of primary and secondary school teachers. My interest in classroom-based assessment began while working as a secondary science teacher and has continued with pre-service teachers and in-service teachers to develop their skills in relation to classroom based assessment.

My research involves data literacy of teachers and validity of classroom assessments. This is important area of research as significant decisions are made about student learning and teaching practices based on the evidence obtained from classroom assessments.

A recent study conducted with colleague Lipscombe investigated classroom assessment design practices teacher teams use to ensure that the evidence of student learning (i.e., data) produced are valid for their purposes. We worked with three primary school teacher teams who designed a classroom mathematics assessment. The teacher team meeting(s) were video recorded and each teacher was interviewed prior to, and after the team meetings. It was identified that while many teacher teams used design practices that reflect validity concepts, such as the classroom assessments alignment to curriculum and teaching activities, there are a number of design practices that could be developed to further strengthen the validity of the evidence produced from classroom assessments. One example is pilot testing assessments items, this 'testing' could be done with a small number of students with a range of abilities or with a whole class as formative assessment. This study is a step towards developing guidelines for teachers to enable them to develop classroom assessments that produce valid evidence of student learning.

3 5



DR SAHAR BOKOSMATY

Understanding how to reduce unnecessary load associated with methods that decrease students' performances and hinder their learning

I am a Mathematics Educator who is interested in the understanding of human cognition, and one aspect of her work aims to reduce unnecessary load associated with methods that decrease students' performances and hinder their learning. Other aspects deal with examining what the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) is testing, specifically, investigating the extent to which domain-general cognitive processes are involved in the assessment of domain-specific literacy and numeracy competencies, as evaluated by standardised educational assessments.

This is important work as my research aims to assess whether there is a correlation between the students' NAPLAN results and their working memory. Data from this research will lead to developing methods to free students' working memory for better performances in NAPLAN.

My previous research has resulted in suggested methods for teaching Mathematics, specifically geometry. Two secondary schools in the Illawarra have successfully implemented the proposed teaching geometry through the step-guidance approach as a result of her research.

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The overall findings have contributed to the improvement of the preparation of pre-service and in-service L2 instructors in postgraduate teacher education.

DR MICHAEL BURRI





DR MICHAEL BURRI

Exploring the complicated process of second language (L2) teacher learning

My research focuses on the complicated process of second language (L2) teacher learning. A current project is examining the longitudinal development of L2 teachers' practices and cognitions (e.g., beliefs, attitudes, knowledge) about English pronunciation. Three research phases have been conducted over a period of eight years to explore teachers' long-term trajectories and factors that impact them. Longitudinal research of L2 teacher learning is relatively scarce, and the development of L2 teachers' practices and cognitions over a prolonged period of time is not well understood. This study is, therefore, making an important contribution by providing a detailed understanding of L2 teachers transitioning from a teacher education program to novice onto more experienced stages of their careers.

Findings from the first phase have led to the establishment of a new framework for student teachers learning to teach pronunciation. Based on insights gained in the second and third phases of the study, the framework has been reconceptualised to more accurately reflect the longitudinal nature of learning to teach pronunciation. The overall findings have contributed to the improvement of the preparation of pre-service and in-service L2 instructors in postgraduate teacher education, including our own TESOL program at the University of Wollongong.

The impact and importance of my research has been recognised through the TESOL Award for an Outstanding Paper on Non-native English-speaking Teacher Issues (2015), the School of Education Outstanding Thesis Award (2017), and the MAK Halliday Prize for Outstanding Research in Applied Linguistics (2019). This award-winning project has led me to plan a new study with the aim of exploring in-service L2 teachers' engagement with and use of neuroscientific principles in the classroom.

3 5

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
HONGLIN CHEN

Understanding how native English speaking and second language students, in school and tertiary contexts, can raise their literacy and language achievements

My research to date has focused on advancing understanding of how all students, native English speaking and second language, in school and tertiary contexts, can raise their literacy and language achievements. The program of research traverses three interconnected areas in language and literacy education: literacy and language development; teacher knowledge and practice; and curriculum development and enactment. This work has been supported by ARC and industry supported grants generating in excess of \$1.5M.

Through conceptual and empirical work, my research has generated novel insights into how best to enable school-age children to become confident, autonomous, and agentive writers of the future. The theoretical contribution of my work has been extended through a timely edited book entitled: "Developing writers across the primary and secondary years". This book provides an interdisciplinary approach to addressing a critical literacy need for the teaching of writing across different stages of writing development. This is pertinent work given the increasing concerns about standards of achievement in writing by school age children.

My research in language and literacy has had major policy and practical impacts. My ARC Discovery project titled "Understanding the development, interpretation and implementation of disciplinary knowledge", with Harris (Uni SA), Derewianka, Kervin, McKenzie and Turbill, shaped and informed the development of the first national Australian Curriculum: English. My current work focuses specifically on working with teachers as co-researchers to develop pedagogical innovations that can develop transferable and enabling thinking skills – integral to successful writing and deepening knowledge through the years of secondary schooling.

3 4 5



DR DYLAN CLIFF

Understanding children’s movement behaviours for optimal health

My research focuses on understanding children’s movement behaviours, including physical activity, sedentary behaviours, digital technology use and sleep. My research aims to: 1) improve movement behaviour measurement, 2) improve understanding of the health and developmental outcomes of movement behaviours, 3) develop interventions to improve movement behaviours, and 4) translate evidence into policy and practice.

My recent Australian Research Council (ARC) and National Heart Foundation funded studies have enhanced the objective measurement of movement behaviours in children using wearable monitors and artificial intelligence. My ARC DECRA fellowship enhanced understanding of the influence of physical activity and digital technology use on young children’s cognitive and psychosocial development. I currently lead a team of international researchers on an ARC Discovery Project which aims to develop the largest international database of young children’s movement behaviours - the Sleep and Activity Database for the Early Years (SADEY) - to better understand their combined influence on health and development.



I am also Chief Investigator on the ARC Centre of Excellence for the Digital Child, contributing expertise to a research program focused on understanding how technology use impacts the development of a Healthy Child. My research has made important contributions to policy and practice. I have contributed to the design and evaluation of more than 12 movement behaviour interventions to enhance the lives of thousands of children. Likewise, as a leadership group

member I have led evidence reviews that have informed the development of the Australian Department of Health’s 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for the Early Years (birth-5 years) and for Children and Young People (5-17 years).



DR LYN CRONIN

Exploring young children’s learning and development in early childhood settings and into the first years of primary school

My research focuses on young children’s learning and development in the context of early childhood settings and into the first years of primary school. I am particularly interested in research that examines critical perspectives of the relationships between and among play, pedagogy and curriculum, and how advancements in technology can contribute to children’s learning environments, their play and response to curriculum. My PhD research examined children’s transition from early childhood contexts to the first year of primary school. This was important research as it captured the children’s unique perspectives at this time and offered insight into ways educators across contexts can support children to have a successful start to formal education. A successful transition to school is identified as a major factor in children’s academic and social success, not only at that time but extending throughout their schooling years and beyond.

My research has expanded to other areas and encompasses the exploration of technology practices as young people make major transitions between life phases, school and post school contexts. My most recent research project, funded by an internal Early Career Research Grant and undertaken with colleagues, aims to capture the complexity of young people’s technology practice as they transition from secondary school to further study, work or other everyday life contexts. The research encompasses individual and contextual factors that shape technology practices across this period and; practices that support students’ transition to their new contexts.





**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
ROSE DIXON**

Exploring how young people with a disability can benefit from the use of a multisensory space

My research work is focused on my commitment to and expertise in Inclusive and Special Education in education and community settings. A specific area of interest is exploring how young people with a disability can benefit from the use of a multisensory space. A recent project I am involved with aimed to better understand how a multisensory environment (MSE) can be implemented in a community setting so that it is available to all individuals, families of children with disabilities and their siblings.

This is important research work because MSE's have become increasingly popular, and show promise in a number of areas to enhance quality of life and provide safe and enjoyable leisure experiences for a range of people and their families. But, the research literature is so diverse that it is difficult to reach consensus as to both the benefits or the most effective implementation of these environments.

This research is providing multiple benefits to the community. The MSE developed by this project was the first accessible and community-based MSE in the Illawarra. The voices and needs of members of the community informed the development of an accessible and inclusive sensory space. This has also empowered community members to participate in research and build strong collaborative relationships with UOW.

This SENSE spaces project was awarded the Vice-Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Community Engagement in the Team Category in 2020. The multi-disciplinary award winning team consists of Holly Tootell, Pippa Burns, Grant Ellmers, Sue Slowikowski, Rose Dixon, Sim Lau and Andrea Garner.

4



DR SUE DUCHESNE

Supporting pre-service teachers' experience in higher education

One focus of my research is support of students' experience in higher education. I investigate a range of everyday and targeted practices that engage students and staff together, for example staff members' everyday practices identified by students as contributing to their success; and the BRiTE (Building Resilience in Teacher Education) modules that have been strategically integrated into the Bachelor of Education Early Years degree to build pre-service teachers' resilience. These practices are explored in relation to challenges students may experience in their life and study at university. My recent projects include building resilience in pre-service teachers, what students from our regional campuses experience as contributing factors for success, and how a 'Students as Partners' approach, which has been implemented over the last three years on UOW's regional campuses, has supported students experiencing various challenges.

This work is important in framing student support as a holistic endeavour, contributed to by students and academics as well as support staff, and by everyday practices as well as programs.

The research has implications for practice of all in higher education. It positions all members of the higher education community as contributors to students' success in their studies and beyond. For example, a current project investigating contributions to student success on regional campuses has shown the benefits of maintaining student success as the target of all staff's activity with students. This work can contribute to design of inclusion and diversity programs at universities.

3 5





DR ELISABETH DUURSMA

Understanding fathers’ impact on their children’s language development

My research focuses on: 1) father involvement and 2) young children’s language and literacy development. I am particularly interested in how paternal book-reading impacts children’s language and literacy development. I have recently completed two research projects, with colleague Associate Professor Herbert (School of Psychology), that examines father engagement with their children. The first project, titled ‘Father engagement with their children during shared book-reading’, looked at how fathers engage their 3-year-olds during a book-reading interaction, and how children respond. As there is little known about fathers and shared book reading, this study informs us about what fathers are doing during book reading and how it can impact children’s language development. The second project, examined how fathers engage with their children at home. Titled ‘Father engagement in parenting during the COVID-19 pandemic’, we asked 53 fathers about their experiences of spending more time with their children during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings provide important insight into fathers’ roles within families in regards to household tasks, as well as child care, and whether these have changed as a result of the pandemic.

Most of the research on parenting has focused on mothers, but we know very little about fathers. However, fathers make significant contributions to children’s development, therefore it is important to study what fathers do when interacting with their children and how this impacts child outcomes. A practical implication from my work is that services working with families can better target fathers (as most focus on mothers). A recent example is my involvement in parenting guide of services by Early Start specifically provided for fathers in the Illawarra.

1 3



ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR MICHELLE EADY

Exploring and harnessing strengths in communities that help us to become better educators

My research interest is engrained in the tenets of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), sharing my expertise, research and reviews of current developments in teaching and learning globally amongst my peers, current primary school teachers, preservice teachers and community partners. My research and expertise revolve around exploring and harnessing strengths in communities that help us to become better educators, whether primary school teachers, university academics, or community experts.

An example of my work that directly impacts on children’s understanding is my role as the lead of a Global Challenges project: Dementia knowledge, Art, Research and Education (DARE). This project connects a multidisciplinary university research team with community artists, dementia support groups and local community primary schools. Project DARE brings together university experts, school teachers and local community artists to help children to understand more about people with dementia in their communities. This project resulted in two community art exhibits of children’s representations of their own memory before and after a lesson about dementia. Project DARE was awarded the Vice-Chancellor’s Interdisciplinary Research Excellence Award in 2019, which recognises high quality and truly interdisciplinary research.

In the example of project DARE, we hope to support school teachers to find ways to combine innovative teaching techniques on some difficult but important topics to help children build relationships with others in the community. Project DARE has been designed to support school teacher to find ways to learn through creative and meaningful pedagogies. This celebration of creativity, understanding and acceptance gained in the process of this project will guide the children involved to be more compassionate and knowledgeable members of society.

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Fathers make significant contributions to children's development, therefore it is important to study what fathers do when interacting with their children and how this impacts child outcomes.

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DR ELISABETH DUURSMAN



DR GREG FORREST

Transfer of learning – applying concepts to contexts in physical education

My research focuses on transfer of learning in Physical Education (PE), specifically a Concept to Context Approach, based on the work of a key researcher in the field of learning transfer, Marc J DeVries, called the Grammar of Games (GoG). The approach argues PE is underpinned by four key concepts (Strategy and Tactics, Decision Making, Movement Skill / Action and Communication / Concentration). Developing a deep understanding of the four concepts enhances transfer of learning in all PE contexts. In a recent study involving undergraduates in PE Teacher Education degree, those using the approach demonstrated improved observation and understanding of a specific sport, even though they did not study, observe or play the sport during their degree.

Current PE practice, programs and initiatives are all based on ToL theories from the early to mid-20th century. There has been little to no investigation or challenge into this approach, despite more current research challenging underlying assumptions.

PE interventions have typically been grounded in how transfer in PE is traditionally understood. However, engagement in physically active pursuits and movement, which have a significant impact on the overall well-being of society has continued to decline since the mid 1990s. My research is providing new understandings of transfer in PE, which has the potential to improve overall health and educational outcomes of the community.



DR MARK FRASER

Critical reflection as a form of professional learning

A research area of deep interest to me is the concept of critical reflection and its place in teacher education. My latest publication titled “Regenerating the teacher in a reflective space: Rethinking the capstone experience at the graduate level” explores how the concept of critical reflection was used to design a capstone subject in our Master of Education program. My work is leading towards a refined theoretical understanding of the relationship between the role of critical reflection in the professional learning process of experienced language teachers.

My work provides the reflective space for our students to make meaning of their experiences relative to the content they are learning through their courses. My research is demonstrating that greater attention paid to the process of reflecting on experiences that are meaningful to our students deepens their understanding of their professional practices and professional identity development. My work is building on our current understanding of the value of critical reflection in teacher education as both a cognitive process and a genre of writing that demonstrates this developmental process publicly. I use my research findings to shape the subjects that I coordinate at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. For example, I use critical reflection to help students meaningfully make connections within their learning experiences and to focus on the value of their teacher education experiences for their ongoing development to becoming teachers.





DR PAUL GARDINER

Developing students' creative capacities and creative confidence

Inspired by a desire to effectively prepare students to meet the uncertain and complex future, my research examines the insights creativity theory and creative pedagogies offer secondary and higher education contexts, across all disciplines. My research focusses on understanding how teachers can teach for, with and about creativity, to cultivate teaching and learning strategies and environments that generate deep knowledge but also develop students' creative capacities and creative confidence. I am part of a research team examining creativity in a range of disciplines to identify common dynamics and unique processes and products.

My most recent article, 'Learning to think together: Creativity, collaboration and epistemic control', in the journal *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, explores the benefits of diversity and collaboration in interdisciplinary creative problem solving. I present a framework to facilitate creative collaboration in diverse knowledge settings. The framework scaffolds collaboration between diverse ways of knowing to increase the potential for students to generate creative and comprehensive responses to complex problems, both within education contexts and in their future roles.

As an Arts education specialist, I also examine the insights that creative practice in the arts can offer other disciplines, both in metacognitive processes and creative practice and the lessons this can provide for creative learning in general. My previous research examined the experiences of teaching and learning with, for and about creativity in drama, specifically playwriting, exploring best practice for students and teachers. The findings of this research, including examples for teachers, is documented in my 2019 book 'Teaching playwriting: Creativity in practice'.

3 5



DR HELEN GEORGIU

Uncovering the reasons why teaching and learning Science can be difficult

I am conducting research in the area of science education. My work uses theories of knowledge to make teaching and learning practices more explicit. This is important work, as Science has always been a subject where students encounter significant difficulties, and most recently, student achievement and interest in science has been in decline.



My research aims to uncover some of the reasons behind these difficulties, and help develop ways to overcome them. For example, in a recently completed ARC Discovery project, titled: 'The Quality of Learning as Students Create Digital Explanations of Science', looking at student generated digital products as assessments, I have characterised how complex scientific concepts were communicated. This characterisation helped generate a suite of teaching and assessment resources designed to help students develop the sophisticated knowledge and digital literacy skills necessary to construct these products.

3 5



ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR SARAH HOWARD

Helping teachers use digital technologies to support what they value

My research looks at technology-related educational change, but specifically how we can better understand and support change in classroom practice. The driving question of my research is: How can we help preservice teachers, in-service teachers and school leadership use digital technologies to support what they value? In recent years, much of my research has looked at developing better data collection tools to capture data that is more representational of digital technology use and classroom practice, such as continuous video observational and computer log data. To do this, I develop participatory research designs, based on collaborations with artificial intelligence and data scientists, along with classroom teachers and school leadership.

This research is needed in the field because we continue to struggle to capture the effect and impact of digital technologies on teaching and learning. Part of this results from incomplete data on digital technology integration. My research aims to capture data that is meaningful and closely tied to teaching, which can provide a better picture of learning processes. The practical outcome of this is a better understanding of how digital technologies are best used in teaching and learning, which supports technology-related teacher change and school leadership decision making around technology investment.

3 5



ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR STEVEN HOWARD

Early Years Toolbox – providing high-quality information about each child’s abilities and needs, to inform ongoing and individualised planning and practice

My research concerns early child development; for instance, how to easily, accurately and playfully pinpoint young children’s progress and needs in foundational areas of development (e.g., self-regulation), and leverage these insights to support children’s continued growth. One outcome of this research is the creation of the iPad-based Early Years Toolbox (www.eytoolbox.com.au)—collaborating with Associate Professor Neilsen-Hewett, Professor de Rosnay and Professor Melhuish—used in educational and research contexts internationally.

The EYT approach to early assessment shifts the concentration of expertise and tools held by a limited base of professionals, to instead empower those who have the greatest opportunity to shift children’s trajectories (e.g., educators). Our research has shown that EYT tools yield valid, reliable, sensitive and actionable information when used by pre-school educators after only a brief induction. For children, these feel like playful activities. For educators, they provide immediate and high-quality information about each child’s abilities and needs, to inform ongoing and individualised planning and practice. EYT has a philosophy of barrier-free access for any who could benefit, in contrast to existing proprietary and commercial tools.

EYT assessments have now been accessed by >11,000 users across more than 50 countries and 5 continents, and have been translated into more than a dozen languages. EYT has been used with more than 12,000 children in Australia, and even greater numbers abroad, with mounting evidence of its positive impact for educators, children and families around the world.

1 3 5



**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
PAULINE JONES**

Researching language and its role in educational success and social life

I research language and its role in educational success and social life, including citizenship and intergenerational justice. I co-convene (with Dr Shoshana Dreyfus) the Interdisciplinary Discourse Analysis in the Arts, Education and Social Sciences ([IDEAS](#)) research group at UOW.

With colleagues and doctoral students, I use educational linguistics/semiotics to study contemporary literacy demands of school and university; e.g. literacy transitions and disciplinary literacies in English, Science and History (Transforming literacy outcomes, DEEWR/UOW; Toward Excellence: Creativity in the curriculum disciplines, UOW/ASSH Near Miss), dialogue in f2f and online learning (OLT-FOLD), and student-generated digital explanations in Science (ARC DPI60102926). The latter has led to new collaborations around literacies for climate action and digital engagement. This research has added to understandings of the dialogic basis of learning, the literacy demands faced by students across the years (incl. multimodal texts), teachers' knowledge about language/literacies and their capacity to deliver disciplinary literacies.

I have been commissioned by government (e.g. NSW DoE, Australian Aid/AusAID) to develop professional learning programs for teachers of English and TESOL, and regularly contribute to curriculum and policy development (e.g. National Literacy Learning Progressions v3) and curriculum reviews (e.g. Inquiry into the NSW School Curriculum). As President of the Primary English Teaching Association ([PETAA](#)), I lead a professional learning and publication program that provides teachers with access to current research from local and international scholars (e.g. [Augmented Reality project](#)). Our recent initiative, [The Language of Climate Change Science](#) - a collaboration with scientists, technologists and science educators - will strengthen teachers' capacity with respect to teaching the literacy of climate science in years K to 8.

3 5



DR RACHEL JONES

Optimising the health and wellbeing of young children

For the past decade, I have had a strong interest in optimising the health and wellbeing of young children. Specifically, I am interested in promoting healthy lifestyles for young children through parental engagement and through early learning settings. My research focuses on core health behaviours such as physical activity and healthy eating. In more recent years her research has focused on optimising the delivery of professional development for early childhood educators in the area of physical activity.

This research is important because early childhood is a critical time for child development. Optimising and prioritising behaviours, such as physical activity and healthy eating, from a young age directly influences children's health, wellbeing and academic trajectories. My research continually reassesses best-practice, evidence-based implementation and evaluations of real-world interventions.



Recent examples of such interventions include research funded by: 1) a Translational Research Grant Scheme grant (funded by NSW Health). This study is investigating the efficacy on an online healthy lifestyle program (Time2bHealthy, developed by Jones) in real world settings; 2) a Department of Education and Training (Victoria) grant which is investigating the impact of a professional development program focusing on the physical domain of child developmental; and 3) a Health and Medical Research Fund (Hong Kong) grant which will develop 24 hour movement guidelines for preschool children in Hong Kong.

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My research is aimed at working with students, teachers, leaders and systems to better understand how school leaders can be effective, supported and developed.

DR KYLIE LIPSCOMBE



PROFESSOR LISA KERVIN

Exploring children's literate practices, children's digital literacies and enhancing literacy pedagogies through teacher professional development

My research is focused on three inter-related threads: 1) children's literate practices 2) children's digital literacies and 3) enhancing literacy pedagogies through teacher professional development. I am exploring each of these areas with ARC funding and in collaboration with national and international experts. DP190101033 (Improving classroom writing by enhancing reflective decisions and practice with Ryan, Barton and Myhill) enables me to work in classrooms with educators as we look to capture original insights about children's perspectives about learning to write and the impact of their learning contexts. The inclusion of technology in children's lives and the opportunities and considerations these present to their digital literacy practices is both a timely and necessary area for investigation. DP190101256 (Quality in adult-child interactions during digital experiences with Verenikina, Howard and Siraj) provides opportunity to examine interactions between adult-child and child-child when mediated by technology and how these may best support children's literacy development.

All of my work has a professional development component as I look to the translation of findings for educators; aiming to achieve balance between practically-oriented and theoretically-driven studies. In 2020, I have embarked on a commercial project with Parramatta Catholic Education (with Mantei, Neilsen-Hewett, Howard, Cronin, Hutton, Parker) to look to how we may be able to shape learning environments and pedagogies to be more playful to build oracy skills in some of their most vulnerable communities.

1 3 5



DR PAUL KIDSON

Exploring the lived experience of School principals

Leading educational communities is a complex and challenging task. My research is focused on exploring the lived experience of principals as they: navigate contestable policy spaces, respond constructively to local and societal challenges, and develop themselves for professional and personal sustainability. This is important work because we need to better understand leaders' experiences and challenges in order to identify how they can be best supported.

Three current projects underway are : 1) Structural reform of schooling for more equitable outcomes (in association with the Gonski Institute), 2) Principals' use of social media , with colleagues Apps and Beckman, and 3) Personal Theory of Leadership, with colleagues Lipscombe and Tindall-Ford. The latter project, draws from digital stories of students enrolled in the MEd (Educational Leadership) degree (who are school principals, senior or middle leaders) and we are examining these artefacts for theoretical insights about educational leadership formation and identity.

The impact from this research is already starting to flow, as shown in the following examples: 1) from the funding and policy research, I have been appointed as a reference advisor on schools to the Sydney Policy Lab and the Learning Creates Australia Social Policy Lab; 2) from the social media research, a number of principals have undertaken review of their school policies, and we are now expanding into research with NSW Department of Education principals, and 3) from the Personal Theory of Leadership, many of our students report renewed interest in their leadership as a consequence of developing their personal narrative. I have also been appointed to the panel selecting the next CEO for the NSW School Leadership Institute.

3 5



DR GAI LINDSAY

Supporting educators to implement high quality visual arts pedagogy with young children

My research focuses on how educator’s visual arts self-efficacy, beliefs and pedagogical content knowledge influences visual arts pedagogy in early childhood contexts. While visual arts materials and processes are prevalent in early childhood settings, early childhood educators lack confidence and knowledge to implement meaningful visual arts learning experiences with children. This needs to be addressed as it is every child’s right to engage in cultural and artistic life and to learn through holistic, arts-integrated curricula.

The practical implications of this research are far reaching and multifaceted. I have established a number of key international collaborations in the Middle East and Vietnam that are delivering and exploring the impact of virtual and in-person research informed professional development and training with the aim to support educators to implement high quality visual arts pedagogy with young children. During COVID-19 restrictions, these research and consultancy projects have expanded to include the development and evaluation of a series of parent webinars, as part of the “Parenting in the Pandemic and Beyond” project in the Abu Dhabi region; a project that provides inspiration for quality parent/child arts engagement in the home. In the Australian context, I am regularly invited to share my research to inspire the pedagogy and practice with Australian and international early childhood educators. Reaching a broad international audience, my blog (www.ecartoz.com) offers practical, research informed pedagogical inspirations for quality visual arts practice. Online collaborations with an international art in early childhood special interest group is fostering connections for future collaborative research and conference planning, and the production of a visual arts textbook for early childhood contexts.



DR KYLIE LIPSCOMBE

Working with students, teachers, leaders and systems to better understand how school leaders can be effective, supported and developed

My research is aimed at working with students, teachers, leaders and systems to better understand how school leaders can be effective, supported and developed. As an experienced school and system leader, and now Associate Program Director of Educational Leadership, I am focussed on working in partnership with the Professoresion in research associated with leadership development, middle leadership, teacher collaboration and school-university partnerships.

I am currently making significant contributions to principal and middle leadership development in two major projects within the largest educational organisation in the southern hemisphere, the NSW Department of Education (DoE). As academic lead, she is responsible for the co-design and evaluation of the Aspiring Principal Leadership Program. In this role I have researched the design and delivery of state-wide leadership frameworks and evaluated the impacts of the program to principal preparation and development. My second project focuses on middle leadership responsibilities, impacts and professional development opportunities in NSW public schools. This research is the largest global project in school middle leadership to date. Over the course of these two major projects, my colleagues and I have provided important recommendations to inform leadership initiatives and policies and have designed frameworks and professional learning to support leadership in schools and school systems.

In addition to these major projects, my research also focuses on student voice as a resource for understanding middle leadership, system leadership and how school systems engage leaders in system improvement, and how experiences and influences are used to develop personal theories of educational leadership.





**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
JESSICA MANTEI**

Working towards equitable outcomes for language and literacy learners through quality teacher pedagogies in contemporary educational settings

My research seeks to understand how children and their educators experience language and literacy learning in contemporary schools and prior-to-school settings. Collaborations developed over 10 years of research have developed new understandings about literacy pedagogies that develop skills within the contexts for which they are required, about learning experiences that afford critical and creative thinking, and about the alignment of digital technologies alongside traditional texts.

This research is necessary because contemporary educators, particularly those who work with young children, continue to experience pressure to adopt pedagogies that prioritise 'fundamental' concepts of what it means to be literate (e.g. spelling and phonics), while also teaching skills and strategies for working with digital texts. Isolating skills from their contexts is not only time consuming to teach, but it also makes it harder for learners to apply the skills later on.

Our research looks to develop pedagogies that combine the development of skills and knowledge within the contexts they are used. One example from our research group, Play, Pedagogy and Curriculum in Contemporary Theory and Practice led by Professor Kervin is the development of a pedagogical framework for the design and delivery of Virtual Excursions. This powerful outreach work not only offers children in early years educational settings access to the UOW Discovery Space, but Virtual Excursions also build their oral language, comprehension and content knowledge within the context of play. Further, the excursions offer important professional learning as we share the framework and support educators to develop their own play-based pedagogies for teaching literacy.

1 3 5



DR ERIKA MATRUGLIO

Understanding differences in literacy practices in different subjects or disciplines

My research responds to the need to understand differential successes that students have in reading and writing for learning and high-stakes assessments as they progress through the years of schooling. I am particularly concerned with understanding differences in literacy practices in different subjects or disciplines and with helping to support teachers to teach students, with the ultimate goal of improving literacy and academic outcomes for students.

Since 2009, I have been involved in several interdisciplinary research teams involving applied linguists and sociologists of education investigating pedagogy which supports cumulative knowledge-building and literacy development in the secondary school context. This program of research has led to important theoretical development in both Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) Theory and Legitimation Code Theory (LCT). Applying SFL has led to a better understanding of the language requirements for communicating disciplinary knowledge in high-stakes examination and a reformulation of linguistic understandings of contextual dependency and condensation of meaning. Applying LCT has led to better understanding of the ways that students can build cumulative knowledge and advanced literacy by moving between concrete particulars as examples or illustrations and more abstract, condensed generalisations as core rules, principles and concepts in their subjects. These theoretical advancements are leading to further scholarship and empirical studies in diverse areas, including interdisciplinary learning, school pedagogy, vocational education, rehabilitation of prisoners and academic learning.

My program of research is making a lasting impact in the schools involved, resulting in sustained changes in the teachers' approaches to teaching writing. It has also led not only to altered attitudes towards teaching writing, but also improved student outcomes in their abilities to write for exams.

3 5



DR MYRTO-FOTEINI MAVILIDI

Designing school-based physical activity interventions to enhance cognitive, learning, and psychosocial outcomes

My research focuses on designing school-based physical activity interventions in children and adolescents to enhance cognitive, learning, and psychosocial outcomes. In addition to physical benefits, physical activity can improve educational outcomes (e.g., on-task behaviour, executive function, academic achievement, attitudes towards learning), as well as well-being, mood, and inherent motivation. However, the underlying mechanisms of physical activity as well as what quantitative (i.e., duration, intensity, dose) and qualitative (e.g., cognitive demand, task novelty/complexity) physical activity characteristics lead to optimal cognitive and learning performance are not yet clear.

My research explores how teachers can incorporate physical activity without compromising academic outcomes. My studies provide guidance to teachers towards successful implementation, scalability and dissemination of lessons plans aligned with the existing curricula. In addition, teachers are offered different possibilities and alternatives for physical activity participation throughout the school day. For instance, classroom-based physical activities (e.g., active lessons or active breaks) are appropriate, engaging, can be modified and applied in all school settings, from pre-school to high school students, involving diverse learning domains (e.g., language, mathematics, science, etc).

The impact and significance of my research has been recognised through the 2020 UOW Vice Chancellor Postdoctoral Research Fellowship, to conduct my own project on integrating physical activity during learning in preschool children. In addition, I participate with colleagues from the University of Newcastle (research team: Dr Riley, Professor Lubans, Dr Valkenbergs, Dr Barker, UON, Professor Hillman, Northeastern University, Dr Schmidt, University of Bern) in a project involving cognitively engaging physical activity in the form of activity breaks during mathematics classrooms in adolescents, supported by Hunter Medical Research Institute (2019).

1 3 5



DR ANTHONY MCKNIGHT

How and why teachers and students connect to Country to enhance educational practice and healing of self

My research is about identifying how and why teachers, students, academics and people connect to Country to enhance educational practice and healing of self. Country is Aboriginal people's knowledge system and my research is about working with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to form a relationship with Country to implement and embed holistic Country centred approaches to teaching and taking care of Country and self. The research with its Country inspired and informed methodologies contributes to decolonising and re-culturalising educational systems and practices.

The research is important as it researches educationalist's and community members relationships with Aboriginal knowledge with the focus of placing spirit into education systems and practice. This spiritual component is paramount if we are seeking our students to be holistic learnings, to heal colonial damage and restrictions, and to take care of the entity (Country) that provides us with everything we need to survive.

The practical contribution is enhancing people's understanding and skills of Aboriginal educational practice and knowledge system to close the gap between Western and Country's knowledge systems. Simply put, the research



Country is Aboriginal people's knowledge system and my research is about working with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to form a relationship with Country to implement and embed holistic Country centred approaches to teaching.

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DR ANTHONY MCKNIGHT

not only helps people to take care of Country, which is taking care of self (healing) but it provides all students and society with an opportunity to understand the Country(s) they live on, and enhance teacher practice.



DR JACINTA MCNAMARA

Understanding students' transition experiences into and through higher education

My research concerns students who enter higher education from diverse backgrounds. Widening participation at universities has meant that many more students are now enrolled in study, however, there is much unknown about these students' transition experiences into and through higher education, particularly through alternative pathways. My research has highlighted that successful students reappraise and reimagine their self-identity, inclusive of possible future selves, and that for many adult learners, re-engaging with education can be a transformative experience. Additionally, my involvement in the Enabling Excellence Through Equity 2019 Conference outlined emerging research and practice in the field of providing opportunities for students from disadvantaged and marginalised groups to participate more effectively in higher education.

Improved university access alone is not sufficient to ensure that all students complete their degrees and attrition rates of those from diverse backgrounds are typically lower than for other students. Research in this field aims to improve understanding of access and equity and recommend how to implement changes in the sector.

This research is important because educators need to be more cognisant of the lived experiences of students and develop more effective pedagogies and practices. Government and university policies and procedures need to be more adaptive to the lives of contemporary students.





**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
CATHRINE NEILSEN-HEWETT**

Promoting quality early childhood education and care environments, integrated service delivery, and enhancing access to early childhood education and health services

I took a leading role in the design and successful execution of a world-first Fostering Effective Early Learning (FEEL) study to implement and evaluate the effectiveness of evidence-based, in-service professional development for improving quality of curricula and interactions in early childhood education and care (ECEC) services. The insights derived from the FEEL study potentiated ongoing work in multiple areas including support for Victoria's Our Place Practice and Evaluation Strategy; integrated service development projects across metropolitan, regional and rural areas of NSW; and the generation of tools to support educators' appraisal of children's development, via the Early Years Toolbox (with Howard, de Rosnay and Melhuish).

This body of work has played an important role in advancing the understanding of early childhood pedagogy and most significantly, how evidence-based approaches to workforce development can enhance educator practice and ultimately support children's development. My most recent work focuses on supporting children and families from vulnerable backgrounds and attests to the often untapped potentialities of the early childhood system in shifting children's developmental trajectories

I have co-led the successful completion of five large-scale early childhood pedagogical projects across three Australian states, in over 400 early childhood educational services, and with more than 4000 children. This translational research has real-world impact enhancing outcomes for children and increasing the quality of teaching among early childhood educators. As a consequence of participating in these studies, participating ECEC services have improved their regulatory National Quality Standard ratings (93% of participating centres have shown improvements in statutory requirements) with a number of services attaining the national recognition of Centre of Excellence.

1 3 5



**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
WENDY NIELSEN**

Understanding how university students learn when creating digital explanations of Science

I have enduring interests in a number of areas including doctoral education, teacher education, supervising teacher knowledge and learning science with technology. A particular research focus is how to make sense of student-generated digital explanations in terms of the science that students actually learn while creating these artefacts. Creating a digital explanation has been implemented as an assessable task for many years in the School of Education. In a recently completed ARC Discovery project I led, entitled "The Quality of Learning as Students Create Digital Explanations of Science", the team collected over 100 of these digital explanation artefacts and developed analytic tools to examine the artefacts to understand what the construction processes mean for student understanding. This is fruitful work to understand how these complex assessment tasks can contribute to student learning outcomes, and how teachers can design and assess such assessment tasks.

This research has led to new collaborations with colleagues in nursing and forensic genetics interested in developing such tasks as replacements for presentations or supplements to technical report writing. My own contribution to these collaborations has been to offer intellectual input to conceptualising new research projects but also to help teaching teams shape assessment tasks so that they focus on pertinent science content and science communications outcomes within the context of the wider degree program or content in the particular subject. My work remains mostly in tertiary science learning contexts, but there is a natural extension into school science and I am actively developing contacts with high school teachers to also advance this work.

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DR GABRIELLE O'FLYNN

Examining meanings and experiences of health and wellbeing

Critically examining meanings and experiences of health and wellbeing is the core of my research. My work contributes to, and pushes the boundaries of, critical health research in health and physical education (HPE). Critical health research interrogates problematic and narrow meanings of health, health inequalities, and how health meanings and experiences are shaped by social norms such as gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and age. It aims to open up meanings of health that are more inclusive and to define health as complex and contingent.

Recent research with colleagues Wright (a leading critical health expert) and Welch, focuses on how pre-service teachers define the place of critical inquiry in health education. Findings demonstrate the absence of a socio-critically informed critical inquiry approach in the preservice teachers' talk about health education. Critical inquiry pedagogies in HPE invite students to question the 'taken for granted', to examine health inequalities and to investigate health as shaped by many factors outside of the individual. This has practical implications for designing health education teacher programmes, as it points to the need for development and engagement of critical inquiry approaches in teacher education programs.

My work also exposes the absence of environmental health perspectives in secondary and primary school teachers' understandings of health education. Environmental health is a complex and shifting notion that relates to the health of the environment and to the importance of interactions with/in natural environments for personal, social, community and environmental health and wellbeing. My collaborative work, with Wright and Taylor, is fundamental to shifting notions of health in school health education to include the 'more than human' connections and considerations in health education.



SENIOR PROFESSOR TONY OKELY

Development of international policy - *Global Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for the Early Years*

My research focuses on physical activity and sedentary behaviour in children. I led the team that developed and recently updated the Australian 24-hr Movement Guidelines for Children 0-5 years, and the Australian 24-hr Movement Guidelines for Children and Young People. I was part of the Guideline Development Group for the WHO Global guidelines on physical activity, sedentary and sleep behaviours in children under 5 years of age, South African 24-hr Movement Guidelines for Birth to 5 Years, and UK Physical Activity Guidelines for children under 5.

I am recognised internationally for my leadership in the area of physical activity in children, in particular for my work in the development of national and international guidelines. I am one of three international researchers who successfully lobbied the World Health Organization (WHO) to develop Global Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for the Early Years (they had no guidelines for this age group). This is important, especially for low- and middle-income countries that do not have the resources to develop guidelines for their own country. This resulted in an invitation to be on the Guideline Development Panel for the WHO Guidelines for physical activity, sedentary and sleep behaviour for children less than 5 years of age. These guidelines were released in 2017.



My research contribution has extended into surveillance of compliance with the Guidelines for physical activity, sedentary behaviour and sleep in the early years. I am leading an International Surveillance Study, with representatives from the WHO, UK, Canada, Papua New Guinea, South Africa, China, India, Morocco, and Brazil, to monitor compliance with the WHO Guidelines across 38 countries.

1 2



DR DANA PERLMAN

Empowering learners to be self-motivated using a self-determined pedagogy

My research is focussed on examining aspects of pedagogical quality across a variety of teaching and learning settings. Using a Self-Determination Theory lens, my work has led to an increased understanding of how the interplay between educator and learner influences the educational direction across educational domains that include K-12 schools, teacher-education and healthcare training programs within the United States and Australia.

Over 15 years of research work has provided insight into specific pedagogical principles that can enhance the quality of teaching and learning. Specifically, my research has illustrated that diverse educational goals can be applied across different teaching and learning settings when using a self-determined pedagogy. My work has allowed educators to examine the delivery of their instruction to facilitate enhanced motivation within their learners without the need to create, modify and/or change the content of their subject areas.

From over 70 publications and numerous professional development exercises, I have been instrumental in developing programs such a "Recovery Camp" and the newly implemented "Being Self-Determined" program. These programs have contributed to enhancing the quality of life and supporting the personal recovery journey for people with a lived experience of mental illness.

2 3 5



DR LYNN SHERIDAN

Examining the role of non-academic attributes of teachers and other professionals in regard to success, retention and career satisfaction

My research focuses on the role of non-academic attributes of teachers and other professionals in regard to success, retention and career satisfaction. My work with teachers in this international research agenda is contributing to more nuance understandings on the role attributes, such as, resilience, adaptability, and emotional management can play in the everyday work of professionals.

This research is important as it is contributing to the development of research-based assessment tools and methods (for example, situational judgment test (SJT) methodology) to assist in the identification and development of non-academic attributes most important for work success. Other empirical research in this area is focusing on extending theory on the phenomenon of resilience and adaptability of professionals (teachers & nurses), within local contexts.

My research is contributing to identifying and developing malleable social/psychological attributes beyond conventional content discipline academic metrics, through the use of situational based learning (SBL) scenarios that provide assessment of specific attributes. An example of this is current trials of SBL with expert feedback and reflection opportunities used to assist in the development ('teacher readiness') of final year teacher candidates. In addition, my research in this area is also expanding the understanding of socially contextualised nature of attributes such as, resilience and adaptability of teachers and nurses within their workplace (hospitals and schools). The aim is to benefit the well-being of frontline workers, which is closely tied to their ability to adapt to workplace challenges, particularly during crisis (e.g. COVID-19) (UOW cross faculty Global Challenges grant 2019-20).

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My empirical work looks to uncover ways to encourage teachers and primary school students to see mathematics as a creative and inquisitive pursuit.

DR ELISE THURTELL





DR REBECCA STANLEY

Exploring the importance of cultural connectedness in enhancing health-related behaviour and educational outcomes among Indigenous children

My research agenda is motivated by my belief that every child should have the opportunity for a healthy start to life, which includes feeling connected and knowing who they are, where they come from and engaging in behaviours that promote good health. Working collaboratively with UOW colleagues and the Shoalhaven Aboriginal communities, I'm exploring the importance of cultural connectedness in enhancing health-related behaviour and educational outcomes among Indigenous children. This research is highlighting that culture and connection to Country is central to the health of Indigenous children. Through developing strong relationships and learning and engaging with culture, children develop better physical, social, emotional and spiritual health, which then has a ripple effect on their engagement at school, home and within the community.



Our team (including McKnight, Probst, Okely, Cullunghutti Aboriginal Child and Family Service, the Shoalhaven Indigenous community) has developed, implemented and evaluated an afterschool cultural program aimed at strengthening children's connection to culture and promoting healthy lifestyle behaviours. This program has had major impacts on the children, Aboriginal mentors and communities. It has directly increased the children's sense of cultural connectedness and belonging, and improved

their engagement at school, home and in key health behaviours. Parents have provided positive feedback and teachers have reported increases in children's confidence during class time and stronger, more positive connections with their students.

This research has been recognised by additional funding being awarded to further develop and deliver the program in more communities. Our research is contributing to nourishing a storyline around reculturalisation of health and educational practices and theories and challenging dominant Western approaches to understanding and promoting health among Indigenous communities.

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DR ELISE THURTELL

Encouraging teachers and students to see mathematics as a creative and inquisitive pursuit

My work focuses on improving the quality of mathematics education for both primary school children and pre-service primary teachers. I am passionate about advocating and advancing evidence-based best practice in teaching and learning mathematics with a view to challenging the traditional views and beliefs about mathematics.

My empirical work looks to uncover ways to encourage teachers and primary school students to see mathematics as a creative and inquisitive pursuit. My doctoral dissertation explored the complexities of pre-service teachers' developing knowledge for teaching mathematics. The findings of her thesis contributed a conceptual framework as a lens through which to consider aspects of pre-service teachers' mathematical knowledge.

This line of research highlights how important it is to understand how teachers learn and teach mathematics. If mathematics is viewed as collections of rules and procedures to be adopted, rote learning is promoted and teaching approaches tend to reflect traditional teacher-centred practice. However, research indicates mathematics is best learned through student-led inquiry with a view to building sophistication in student reasoning. My work has implications for teacher education programs and contributes to the theoretical discourse around what is needed for quality teaching in mathematics.

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**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
SHARON TINDALL-FORD**

Improving the learning experiences and outcomes for students, pre-service teachers, teachers and school leaders

My research spans a range of educational areas, from investigating ways to enhance student learning through optimising instructions using a Cognitive Load Theory (CLT) lens, to understanding educational policy to practice within teacher education, teacher learning and school leadership. While the research foci are diverse, the common element of my research, is to improve the learning experiences and outcomes for those central to education- students, pre-service teachers, teachers and school leaders.

My CLT research has resulted in novel classroom instructional practices that enhance student learning, and research in initial teacher education (ITE) informs the learning experiences within ITE programs that best lead to pre-service teachers' readiness for the teaching profession. My current research is focused on educational policy, school leadership and teacher learning.

Currently in Australia there is a national school agenda to improve schools and student learning outcomes. Often it is school middle leaders who are the instructional leaders in schools whom facilitate local school-based professional development initiatives with the aim to enhance teacher classroom practices and student learning.

A current collaborative project with local schools investigates the practices of middle leaders that positively and effectively influence teachers' classroom teaching and, consequently, student learning.





DR KAREN TONGE

Investigating the influence of quality interactions and environments on children's and educators' physical activity

My research focus, based on my recently completed PhD is the health and wellbeing of children and educators in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). Central to this research is investigating the influence of quality interactions and environments on children's and educators' physical activity. I have over 20 years experience in Early Childhood which provides strong connections and an understanding of the field for this research.

My PhD research project has shown that many children are not meeting recommended guidelines for physical activity while in ECEC, and similarly, while in ECEC educators spend most of their day in sedentary behaviours. This is one of the first studies that has measured educator physical activity in ECEC. The research has demonstrated that there is a relationship between children's and educators' physical activity levels and that there are modifiable aspects of ECEC environments that have the potential to promote physical activity.

Physical activity is critical for the health and wellbeing of educators and children, and so understanding factors that influence the physical activity of educators and children in ECEC is important. Findings from our research suggest that modifiable aspects of ECEC pedagogy and practice, such as free flowing routines, more time spent in outdoor environments and designing environments that reduce educator and children's sedentary behaviours have the potential to influence the health and wellbeing of children and educators.

1 2 5



Children's play is being re-shaped by the use of digital tablets - the newly emerged phenomenon which we coined "digital play".

DR IRINA VERENIKINA



DR IRINA VERENIKINA

Exploring children's imaginative play

One area of my research is concerned with children's imaginative play and its transformation within the rapidly changing landscape of our modern, technologically driven society. Over the past decade my research focus is on the use of mobile digital technologies such as iPads in young children's play. This is a long-term collaborative research with Professor Kervin.

Young children's imaginative play has been widely acknowledged as a major force of their development with play-based pedagogy traditionally used to enrich young children's learning experiences. However, over the past decade it has been noted that children's play is being re-shaped by the use of digital tablets - the newly emerged phenomenon which we coined "digital play". Our research is concerned with conceptualisation of this phenomenon to identify its distinctive characteristics that are conducive to enhancing children's development in the early years.

By utilising theoretically based criteria, and considering the perspectives of children and their families, Professor Kervin and I have developed a number of principles for developmentally sound use of digital tablet technologies in children's digital play. This work was funded by our recently completed ARC Discovery Project, titled "Conceptualising digital play: The role of tablet technologies in the development of imaginative play of young children" (2015 – 2018). One of our unforeseen discoveries from this project highlighted the role of adult-child interaction as a crucial factor to ensure the developmental value of digital play is observed. This discovery shaped a new direction for our research which resulted in a successful ARC DP led by Professor Kervin (2019-2022) (Chief Investigators Irina Verenikina and Steven Howard, in collaboration with colleagues from QUT and Oxford).

1 3 5



DR EMMA WALTER

Improving everyday social and cognitive functioning to ultimately increase an individual’s resilience to stresses and difficulties of everyday life

My research is in the area of psychology. My PhD investigated the relationships between schizotypy, stress and cognition. Schizotypy is a personality trait present in the general population which is expressed as oddities or impairments in cognitive (unusual perceptions), social/emotional (inappropriate affect, lack of close friends), and behavioural systems (strange speech and behaviour). I investigated two broad factors commonly involved in the psychosis continuum (stress and cognitive performance) which may provide insight into points of differentiation or targets for intervention to improve general functioning and contribute to prevention of psychosis transition. Findings showed that there is increased reactivity and sensitivity to stress in those with high levels of schizotypy and under high amounts of stress, the ability to deploy cognitive resources to achieve a task is impaired in individuals regardless of schizotypy.

I have developed a passion for understanding individual differences (such as personality and psychopathology) and cognitive research with a focus on psychological and daily functioning. The practical benefits of my research have been identifying potential targets for intervention (for example working memory) to improve everyday functioning, and ultimately increase individual's resilience to stresses and difficulties of everyday life. My aim is to develop a program of research which focuses on understanding the complex nature of social and cognitive functioning in everyday life and identifying the mechanisms which may underlie impaired functioning in these areas. This is important work because functional capacity has immediate implications for social, emotional, occupational outcomes such as developing friendships and romantic relationships, successful communication, gaining and maintaining employment and independent living, all of which are crucial to happiness, wellbeing, and quality of life.

2



DR JANE WARREN

Inclusion of children with disabilities in Early Childhood Education and Care centres, and the wider community

My ongoing and overall research focus is the inclusion of children with disabilities – in both Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) centres and the wider community. One research project I am currently working on is an international collaboration with a colleague from Montana State University that examines how inclusive the Discovery Space (UOW) and Museum of the Rockies (MSU) (both Children’s Discovery Centres/Museums on university campuses) are for children with disabilities. We are looking at inclusivity from the perspective of both parents of children with disabilities, staff at the centres and children with disabilities themselves. Both the Discovery Space (DS) and Museum of the Rockies (MoR) have been offering virtual experiences during this year due to COVID-19, so our project will involve analysing the virtual programs using a jointly developed research tool which uses principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

This research will make both an intellectual and practical contribution. Firstly, by sharing findings with both facilities/programs, future experiences can be more inclusive, and the potential exists to support staff at these facilities to increase their skills, capacity and knowledge about inclusion. Secondly, the phase of the research within both facilities will include the perspective of both parents

of children with disabilities, and children with disabilities themselves. Including the voices of people with disabilities and those closely aligned with them is essential in ensuring their voices contribute to development of more inclusive strategies. Overall, the aim is to increase the suitability of these facilities and educational programs to cater for a more diverse representation of the community.

1 4



DR NOELEN WEATHERBY-FELL

Developing professional resilience

A key focus of my research is the development of professional resilience. I have been involved in the development and evaluation of an intervention designed to develop pre-service teachers' capacity to build resilience, known as BRiTE (Building Resilience in Teacher Education) since 2012. BRiTE provides teacher educators with a curriculum resource (a series of online modules) that is aligned with the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) and the Australian National Curriculum. Ongoing research involves interviewing students about how the BRiTE modules have assisted them. A recent study, conducted with colleagues Neilsen-Hewett and Duchesne, examined the ways in which BRiTE has been integrated across our Bachelor of Education - The Early Years program.

This is important work because helping pre-service teachers to explore strategies to respond to challenges in the supportive learning environment of pre-service learning is important to build strength and resilience for teachers' careers; particularly in relation to issues of retention in the profession. There is growing evidence to the need for a stronger focus on pre-service teacher resilience as a core component of university education. Further, it is acknowledged that the mental wellbeing of university students, both nationally and internationally is well below that of the general population of young people.

BRiTE is widely used across multiple universities by pre-service teachers, teachers and a range of stakeholders (e.g., currently 14,000 registered users). As the teaching profession in Australia continues to be challenged by increasing societal expectations, our intention is to produce capable, competent, reflective and resilient teachers, willing and able to take on the challenges of 'real-world' employment.

5

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
AMANDA WEBSTER

Creating inclusive environments through inclusive research design

My research focuses on creating inclusive environments that support autistic and neurodivergent individuals to exercise agency in their lives. This means providing them with the assumptions and opportunities to set their own goals, plan their own actions, solve problems, and advocate for support they need to achieve their goals.

Traditional approaches focus on research that situates autistic and neurodivergent individuals as recipients of research focusing on addressing the limitations and needs others perceive for them rather than on creating services and supports they feel are most needed. In contrast, my work is engaging with autistic and neurodivergent individuals and their families to co-produce research that has meaningful impact for them both now and in the future. This involves utilising innovative methods that engage autistic individuals, families and service providers in co-construction of strategies that embrace the messiness of real-life environments. For example, I'm currently conducting research with a parent to explore experiences of parents in navigating services and supports for their children. In another study, I'm working with a group of autistic individuals, parents and service providers to trial an environmental audit that will assist autistic individuals to examine future environments and advocate for the supports they need to be successful in these environments.

This has enabled a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences of autistic communities and the people who support them. A resource, which includes lessons, student workbooks and an assessment tool, is currently being trialled in schools. I'm working on a website to provide key information and resources on promotion of inclusion and self-determination for autistic individuals, parents, school staff and service providers across Australia.

3 4 5



Higher Degree Research completions

Our PhD students conduct cutting edge educational research to advance understanding about key educational challenges.

They pursue issues they are passionate about, and produce findings to guide future research and help to change practice. Here, we proudly showcase some of our recent graduates and their research work.

“ Completing a PhD has provided a skillset that I draw on regularly, such as synthesising information from various sources, collecting and analysing data and defending an argument or line of thought.

DR DEBRA BOURNE



DR MYRTO-FOTEINI MAVILIDI
INTERNATIONAL PHD GRADUATE

Thesis title: Effects of integrating movements into the learning task on pre-school children's cognition and learning

Principal Supervisor: Professor Paul Chandler

Co-supervisors: Senior Professor Anthony Okely and Professor Fred Paas

The major part of teaching in most educational settings (e.g. pre-school, primary, high school, and university) is sedentary with little to no opportunities for movement. However, especially for young children, their natural tendencies are to move around and they find it hard to sit still for a long time.

The aim of Dr Myrto Mavilidi's doctoral thesis was to examine whether integrating physical activities into the learning process would enhance children's learning outcomes and increase their physical activity levels.

Four experimental studies including different learning domains (i.e., foreign language, geography, maths, science) were developed in which preschool children were involved in physical activity relevant to the learning task (e.g., hopping like a kangaroo to learn about Oceania), physical activity not-relevant to the learning task (e.g., running), or a sedentary control (i.e., repeat words). Children were also fitted with accelerometers to measure their intensity levels of physical activity.

The findings demonstrated that children had higher learning outcomes and physical activity levels when physical activity was combined with learning. In addition, children considered this method as the most enjoyable and preferable way of learning.

Dr Mavilidi's research showed that active learning can be easily applied to preschools promoting cognitive and academic benefits in young children. She is expanding this research work as part of her UOW Vice Chancellor Postdoctoral Research Fellowship awarded in 2020.



DR ANTHONY MCKNIGHT
DOMESTIC PHD GRADUATE

Thesis title: Singing Up Country in Academia: Teacher education academics and pre-service teachers' experience with Yuin Country

Principal Supervisor: Professor Jan Wright

Co-supervisor: Professor Valerie Harwood

Aboriginal knowledge can be stated as the knowledge(s) that is of this Country(ies), in which non-Aboriginal people have little experience, knowledge or practical skills of deep engagement. To respectfully shift teachers into a decolonised space in education a reculturalisation experience is required to fill the space when colonial practice is reduced.

Dr Anthony McKnight's thesis primarily examines the learning journey and knowledge shifts in a number of academics and pre-service teachers when they engaged in an ancient education system. The seeing of the text of the land (Aboriginal knowledge) was unpacked through a Country centred storying and methodology to re-examine and decolonise respectfully, referred to in the literature as the 'in-between third space'. To achieve this, he devised an approach that was connecting, not only contesting, to guide the non-Aboriginal participants in find a space of recognising similarities. Re-thinking the colonial binary of separation, represented by a slash (/), Country demonstrated a binary of connectedness, a umbilical cord (~) of similarities to rethink and feel how to see knowledge through a Country centred approach.

This research is being used to re-think how Aboriginal perspectives can be embedded in school curriculum and wellbeing. For example, the storying and County centred methodology was utilised in a project Stronger culture, healthier lifestyles: a pilot after school cultural activity program for Aboriginal Children, which took a number of steps towards decolonising research with Aboriginal communities.



DR GAI LINDSAY
DOMESTIC PHD GRADUATE

Thesis title: Art is Experience: An Exploration of the Visual Arts Beliefs and Pedagogy of Australian Early Childhood Educators

Principal Supervisor: Professor Ian Brown
Co-supervisor: Associate Professor Julie Kiggins

Dr Gai Lindsay's research identified that although children's right to engage in visual arts learning is broadly acknowledged and arts related activities are routinely offered in early childhood settings, early childhood educators express low levels of confidence and knowledge to support quality visual arts pedagogy. The findings from the research showed that both vocational and tertiary training contexts had not altered their pre-existing and limiting visual arts self-efficacy beliefs, resulting in pedagogical confusion and potentially compromising children's learning experiences.

Drawing upon the synthesis of John Dewey's philosophies of democracy, education and art and the core values of praxis in Reggio Emilia, Dr Lindsay developed a continuum of early childhood arts education to support educators to interrogate their visual arts pedagogy and curriculum design.

Having worked as an early childhood teacher and director for more than 20 years before embarking on postgraduate research, Dr Lindsay's core goal is to inspire and provoke quality early childhood visual arts pedagogy in both early childhood and pre-service training sectors. This has led to current research projects with educators in Vietnam and the Middle East. Dr Lindsay's research-based, practitioner focussed blog and journal articles are regularly accessed, with regular invitations to contribute to conferences, professional development webinars and resource development both nationally and internationally.



DR WIDHIYANTO
INTERNATIONAL PHD GRADUATE

Thesis title: Argument in academic writing: A case study of the construction of quality arguments in undergraduate dissertations.

Principal Supervisor: Associate Professor Pauline Jones
Co-supervisors: Associate Professor Honglin Chen, Professor Beverly Derewianka, and Dr Meeta Chatterjee-Padmanabhan

Dr Widhiyanto's thesis investigated the nature of argumentation in undergraduate theses. In order to better understand the challenges of such tasks for non-background speakers of English, he studied a dissertation written by an Indonesian student writer studying English as a foreign language (EFL) in an English department at an Indonesian university alongside an Honours thesis written by a high-attaining Australian student. Taking a linguistic approach, his study focused on how the student writers organised meanings to achieve their communicative purposes at the macro-level of whole text; at the meso-level of chapter, section and paragraph; and at the micro-level of sentence and below. He found that the two students' texts were similar at the macro-level but differed significantly in how they were structured at the meso-level, and further at the microlevel particularly with respect to how writers position themselves with respect to other voices in the field. These findings have implications for the teaching of academic genre in EFL contexts.

Since graduating, Widhiyanto has been promoted to Head of the English Department at Semarang State University, Indonesia. He draws on his research to support staff as they develop research-based approaches to academic writing programs. He has published eight journal articles in 2019/20 and is working toward future research collaborations.



DR QUAN HAI NGUYEN
INTERNATIONAL PHD GRADUATE

Thesis title: Speaking Pedagogy: Insights from Vietnamese EFL Teachers' cognitions and Classroom Practice

Principal Supervisor: Associate Professor Honglin Chen
Co-supervisor: Dr Amanda Baker

Improving EFL learners' speaking competence has always been identified as a central tenet in language teaching across diverse EFL contexts such as Vietnam. Yet, the development of a principled and effective pedagogical model for teaching English speaking skill has been long neglected.

Dr Quan Hai Nguyen's qualitative study has shed light on this issue from the perspective of Vietnamese EFL university teachers' cognitions and practices. With rich qualitative data obtained from interviews, classroom observations and stimulated recalled interviews, the study provides a comprehensive picture of the current practice in teaching speaking skills in a Vietnamese tertiary context. The study had its major focus on two key aspects in teaching speaking: speaking subject matter content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. As an insider of the researched context, Quan suggested a context-sensitive pedagogical model for speaking skill instruction in Vietnamese setting.

Since graduation, Quan has returned to his own institution, Can Tho University, where he provides training and sharing opportunities to his peers to support them to develop their students' speaking competence. Also, his model is being applied in practice by being introduced, through seminars, to local teachers. On this basis, Quan has disseminated his research findings by creating a community of practice where teachers regularly come together for lesson planning, co-teaching, peer-observing and reflecting. Evaluation and further adaptation made to the model is on its way, which will hopefully be shared through journal articles published in the next few years.



DR ALYCE MASON
DOMESTIC PHD GRADUATE

Thesis title: The Communicative Experiences of High School Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder in a Digital Media Intervention Program

Principal Supervisors: Professor Garry Hoban and Associate Professor Roselyn Dixon
Co-supervisor: Associate Professor Pauline Jones

Dr Alyce Mason's research focussed on student-generated approaches to digital media-making for enhanced communication. Adopting a multiple case study design and the theoretical framework of multimodality, the study documented the experiences of four high school students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in a Digital Media Intervention Program.

The research revealed students with ASD: 1) created various forms of digital media to communicate their experiences using a variety of modes (especially when given opportunities to use their own content), 2) demonstrated awareness of modal affordances, and 3) exhibited positive social interactions with peers during the making and sharing of digital media.

Alyce's doctoral thesis was awarded Commendation for Outstanding Thesis (from both examiners) and the School of Education Outstanding Thesis Award. Upon graduation Alyce went on to pursue her love of digital pedagogy as an Academic Developer in Dubai and the UK before returning to UOW where she now works as the manager of the TEL Education Specialist team within UOW's central Learning, Teaching and Curriculum unit.

Alyce and her team were awarded the UOW Vice Chancellor's Award for Outstanding Professional Service Staff for their development of a UOW-wide online training program for academics transitioning to remote delivery, and the winners of the Australian Financial Review 2020 Higher Education Award for Learner Experience in recognition of UOW's rapid response and effective transition to remote learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



DR ABDULLAH SALEH ALAMR
INTERNATIONAL PHD GRADUATE

Thesis title: Digital Games and English as Foreign Language (EFL) Learning in Tertiary Education in Saudi Arabia

Principal Supervisor: Associate Professor Irina Verenikina

Co-supervisor: Dr Rose Dixon

The relationship between digital games and second language (L2) learning is generally a controversial issue. Many adults and teenagers in Saudi Arabia (as well as around the world) play these digital games in English although it is not their first language. Dr Abdullah Saleh Alamr’s study investigated the relationship between playing digital games as a leisure time activity and English language learning achievement among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students.

The results of this study showed a statistically significant difference in students’ language achievement (SLA) between students who play rich-and-moderate-in-language games, such as adventure and role-playing games, compared to students who play low-in-language games, such as car racing and sport games. The results also showed a statistically significant difference in SLA especially in English speaking and listening between students who engage highly in social interactions while playing online games than those who had low social interactions. Students reported that rich-in-language games were a valuable source of language learning and that online gaming provided opportunities for improving communication in English. The findings from this study aims to inform a new approach where educators can blend leisure time with formal instructional time. This may improve the language learning process, improve student achievement and increase motivation for learning English among EFL students.

Dr Alamr’s thesis received an Examiners’ Commendation for Outstanding Thesis from both examiners.

Since completing his PhD, Abdullah has been appointed as the Director of the English Language Department, at the Institute of Public Administration in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.





DR DEBRA BOURNE
DOMESTIC PHD GRADUATE

Thesis title: An investigation of senior secondary school teachers' experiences of integrating information and communication technologies (ICTs) into teaching and learning in the era of Australia's Digital Education Revolution

Principal Supervisor: Professor Sue Bennett

Co-supervisor: Professor Lori Lockyer (UTS)

Dr Debra Bourne's thesis focus was ICT integration in the context of New South Wales (NSW) senior secondary education (Year 11 and 12) during a period of rapid change associated with heightened national school-education policy activity in Australia. The qualitative study used a phenomenological approach, developing and understanding of ICT integration from teachers' perspectives as their schools transitioned to 1-to-1 laptop programs.

The conceptual framing for the study drew on the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework. This enabled a consideration of the complex knowledge structures that teachers bring to bear when integrating ICTs.

Teachers' experiences of ICT-integration were complex and situated. The senior secondary teachers in this study integrated ICTs in ways that promoted student learning of their specialist subject content and they invoked specialised knowledge when planning and implementing ICT-integrated learning activities. However, the highly prescribed nature of subject content knowledge posed a contradiction for some teachers who felt that the value of ICT integration and teaching students ICT skills and knowledge was not reflected in the high-stakes exit examination system characteristic of the final years of school. The findings of this study help to inform future ICT-integration policy and strategy in senior secondary school by highlighting the particular contextual factors that need to be considered.

Since completing her PhD, Debra has continued to work as the Leader of eLearning and Library Services at St Patrick's College for Girls, Campbelltown, NSW and has recently been appointed to the role of Assistant Principal, Learning and Teaching.



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