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Joint Staff-Postgraduate Student Research Projects 2015

The Massey University Institute of Education was established in January 2013 with the goal of becoming a leading national, regional and international centre of educational research excellence.

This will be achieved by investigating significant educational challenges in meaningful ways in order to contribute to global scholarly exchanges, help inform public policy choices and contribute in practical ways to the improvement of learners’ and educators’ everyday lives.

Our postgraduate research students have an important role to play in meeting this goal. One of the best ways we can help you to acquire the craft skills of being an educational researcher is to ‘nest’ you within a supportive, structured learning environment where research is already underway. In this approach, you will complete your project, report or thesis by working alongside our staff and other postgraduate researchers to fill some of the important gaps in our educational knowledge and understanding.

The following pages contain titles and brief descriptions of the many cutting edge educational studies on which our researchers are currently engaged. You are warmly invited to explore these topics and to consider applying to join one of our established educational research programmes in order to complete your postgraduate degree. The contact person for each topic is given at the end of the project summary.

Please feel free to get in touch and to find out more about the exciting research we do, research that aims to make a real difference. We very much look forward to welcoming you as a member of our education research community.

Ngā mihi,

Professor John O’Neill
Director

Kia ora, kia orana, ni sa bula vinak a, fakaalofa lahi atu, talofa lava, taloha ni, malo e lelei, fakatalofa atu,
ASSESSMENT

THE IMPACT OF HIGH STAKES ASSESSMENT ON TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THE MATHEMATICS CLASSROOM

Peter Rawlins and Glenda Anthony

Increasingly, formal high stakes assessment systems such as NCEA and National Standards are becoming part of the educational landscape. This study seeks to examine how teachers adapt their teaching practices in light of the requirements of high stakes assessment. To what extent are course design, content coverage, teaching resources, and pedagogies affected by the presence of such high stakes assessment? What is the effect of these assessment systems on assessment for learning practices? This projects seeks to broaden our understanding of the affordances and constraints of high stakes assessment on teachers.

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EFFECTIVE ASSESSMENT AND ASSESSMENT EFFECTS

Rose Atkins, Peter Rawlins, Jenny Poskitt and Linda Leach

Contributing students will investigate topics in assessment that contribute to ongoing programmes of staff research. These include:

- Using assessment to inform learning in education;
- Effective Formative assessment practices;
- Improving student outcomes through effective assessment practices;
- National Standards in NZ (suitable contexts could include: impact on students achievement, parents’ perceptions of National Standards reporting, impact on teachers’ practices, OTJs, moderation etc.);
- The National Certificate in Educational Achievement in NZ (suitable contexts could include: using assessment to facilitate quality learning in NCEA courses, formative use of assessments designed for summative purposes, impact on teachers’ practice and workloads, impact on students’ motivation, the impact of endorsements on motivation, the impact on tertiary assessment practices);
- Teachers’ and/or students’ conceptions of assessment;
- Issues or innovations in relation to peer- and/or self-assessment, group assessment.

Suitable contexts for any of these research projects would include: tertiary, secondary, primary, early years and work-based settings.

Contact: r.atkins@massey.ac.nz
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

TEACHERS’ HISTORIES AND BIOGRAPHIES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Kerry Bethell

This research programme takes as its key focus the early work of the loosely formed kindergarten movement in colonial New Zealand from 1870 to 1940. It aims to contribute towards a social history that recovers New Zealand teachers and leaders in early education, places them in historical context and analyses their contributions in order to expand our knowledge of teachers, gender relations and early kindergarten and childcare development.

Key organizing themes used include gender, class and, given the predominance of single women within the early kindergarten movement, marital status. Historical context is used as an organizing theme in which to explore how educational identities originate in a particular time and place.

More recent projects take a transnational approach to explore the global travels of teachers and ideas and the promotion of kindergarten through international exhibitions between 1880 and 1940.

Educational biographies are being compiled and used to explore the educational events that helped to form a person and shape her or his educational worldview.

Contact: k. bethell@massey.ac.nz
EXAMINING ASSESSMENT PRACTICES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

Claire McLachlan, Tara McLaughlin, Monica Cameron, and Karyn Aspden

This body of research is made up of a series of research projects focused on assessment practices in early childhood. Assessment in early childhood should be designed to provide useful information to children, families, and educators to support learning and development. Current trends in early childhood in New Zealand support the wide-scale use of learning stories for assessment (see Kei Tua o te Pae, Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars; Ministry of Education, 2004). There is a need to explore the range of assessment practices and the quality of assessment practices in early childhood. Aims of current and potential projects in this area include:

- Identification of the range of assessment methods used in early childhood.
- Exploration of the overall ‘quality’ of learning stories.
- Evaluation of the breadth and depth of learning stories (i.e., what content areas and dispositions are recorded).
- Exploration of practices and professional development to support early childhood teachers’ use of assessment information.
- Teachers’ perspectives and understanding of assessment practices.

We are also open to student-initiated related areas of interest that compliment the overall focus on assessment.

Contact: c.j.mclachlan@massey.ac.nz or t.w.mclaughlin@massey.ac.nz

SUPPORT CHILDREN’S PHYSICAL HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Claire McLachlan, Aj Amol (Sports Science), and Tara McLaughlin

Physical health and well-being is critical for children to reach their full potential. Healthy children eat well and are active every day. This body of research focuses on projects that partner with stakeholders (families, early childhood education, health services, and businesses) to support children’s healthy development. Research team members will provide support to stakeholders and conduct research that benefits the health and well-being of children. Current projects are in development and we are open to student-initiated related areas of interest that compliment the overall focus on health and well-being.

Contact: c.j.mclachlan@massey.ac.nz
This line of research is focused on examining teaching practices that support children’s learning and social-emotional competence in early childhood settings. Recent reports have indicated that teachers in early childhood need more support and guidance about teaching practices and the pedagogical tools to promote children’s learning and social-emotional competence. The multiple aspects of this area of research are designed to examine teaching practices that are appropriate for the New Zealand EC context, explicate these practices within an organizing framework, and identify teachers’ professional learning needs to use these practices competently and confidently. Aims of current and potential projects in this area include:

- Exploration of teaching practices in Kindergarten, Education and Care, or Playcentre settings.
- Exploration of teaching practices for young children, toddlers, or infants.
- Exploration of existing models and frameworks (e.g., Incredible Years).
- Exploration of practices and professional development to support early childhood teachers to use effective teaching practices.
- Changes in child outcomes from regular use of effective teaching practices.
- Teachers’ perspectives and understanding of assessment practices.

We are also open to student-initiated related areas of interest that compliment the overall focus on teaching practices for learning and social-emotional competence.

Contact: tw.mclaughlin@massey.ac.nz
EXPLORING RELATIONSHIPS AMONG CHILDREN’S ABILITIES, DEVELOPMENTAL STATUS, AND HEALTH AND WELL-BEING.

Alison Arrow and Tara McLaughlin

In today’s world, there is a significant amount of data on children and families. The purpose of this line of research is to exploit publically available, anonymous databases to explore relationships among children’s abilities, developmental status, and health and well-being. Researchers will conduct secondary analyses with relevant datasets. Planned analyses focus on relationships among health and well-being variables, as well as analyses that explore the identification of sub-groups of children with similar profiles of abilities and examine the extent to which sub-group membership is associated with children's social-emotional competence and other aspects of health and well-being.

We are also open to student-initiated related areas of interest that compliment the overall focus on secondary analysis of extant data.

Contact: a.w.arrow@massey.ac.nz or t.w.mclaughlin@massey.ac.nz

STRENGTHENING EARLY LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES (SELO) IN LITERACY FOR CHILDREN, WHĀNAU, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Claire McLachlan, Chrissy Lepper, Alison Arrow and Tara McLaughlin

The purpose of this project is to strengthen parents’ and families' abilities and confidence to help children develop literacy in home settings. There are several opportunities to conduct research alongside an existing funded contract, working with early childhood centres and communities in target regions on the North Island, including New Plymouth, Gisborne, Wellington and areas south of Lake Taupo. The project will offer a series of parent programmes in kindergarten and childcare centres and invite parents whose children attend this service to participate. Project aims include:

- Supporting parents’, families’ and whanau understandings of language and literacy acquisition.
- Promoting children’s learning and development of all forms of literacy, including oral literacy.
- Establishing or strengthen links between homes, early childhood settings and local schools.

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NETWORK ANALYSES OF EDUCATION CHARITIES

John O'Neill

Since the Statute of Charitable Uses, 1601, one of the main objects of charity has been education. Today educational charities are very diverse, ranging from local community education trusts, to small progressive alternative schools, large elite private schools, global ‘not-for-profit’ educational management and service organisations, neoliberal policy think tanks, and the ‘pet projects’ of both secular and Christian conservative philanthro-capitalists. Contributing students will be trained to search the New Zealand Charities Register in order to identify a small sample of educational charities with similar characteristics. They will then conduct a critical analysis of these charities’ rules, personnel, activities, relationships, funding sources and distributions. Finally, they will evaluate the relative balance between private and public benefit provided by each educational charity.

Contact: j.g.oneill@massey.ac.nz

THE INEQUALITY OF SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT: CAUSES AND SOLUTIONS

John Clark

One of the biggest problems in education is the inequality of school achievement as measured by such international instruments as PISA, PIRLS and TIMSS. To generate viable solutions to the problem we need to establish causes. If student achievement on such measures follows directly from learning then we need to look much more closely at two things: what is learning and what factors shape learning? These two questions are closely connected and come together in an explanatory theory of causal mechanisms which incorporates both constitutive elements (how the brain works as opposed to everyday folk psychology talk of minds and mental states) and etiological elements (a proximal/distal continuum of all social factors rather than a within/beyond school dualism). With a reformulated approach such as this it is then possible to determine whether or not such initiatives as national standards, charter schools and investing in educational success can make significant contributions to reducing the inequality of school achievement.

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EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

LEARNING INTERVENTIONS

Jeanette Berman

With increasing reliance on overseas studies and research that informs learning intervention and support there becomes an increasing need to maintain some focus on nationally developed intervention programs. Whilst overseas research provides critically important knowledge, understanding and approaches this needs to be aligned with those that are contextually relevant and valid. There is opportunity for students to be involved in exploring the research base and efficacy of learning intervention programmes in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The **Quick60** and **RevUp** literacy interventions, developed by Dr Sandra Iversen, are New Zealand developed interventions that require further investigation to explore the efficacy and impact of these interventions with children and adolescents across age ranges. Students will have the opportunity to work in collaboration with Dr Iversen in a range of discrete studies.

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ETHICAL CHALLENGES IN EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY AND PSYCHOLOGY IN SCHOOLS

Terence Edwards

A large body of literature exists on the ethical challenges and dilemmas that face school and educational psychologists internationally yet there is relatively little New Zealand centred research. There is a need for further research that investigates the ethical challenges facing educational psychologists and other psychologists working in school settings. The focus of this area of research is on investigating and identifying the issues and challenges psychologists face working in and for school/educational settings and the strategies and tactics employed to satisfactorily, and ethically, resolve them.

Contact: t.edwards@massey.ac.nz
In the Aotearoa/New Zealand context the role of the educational psychologist has traditionally been situated in, and their services delivered from, central agencies (e.g. Psychological Service under the old Department of Education, the Specialist Education Services, and more recently the Ministry of Education). Services that have been provided from these central agencies are largely if not wholly informed and driven by the policy demands of the government of the day. This gives rise to the question of the extent to which the services that are provided under policy are aligned with the needs of schools and other educational settings and the learners who receive or need educational psychology related services. Students engaging in this area of research will be involved in exploring the psychoeducational needs of educational settings and the current practice in educational and school psychology with a view to identify strengths and opportunities to enhance access to services.

Contact: t.edwards@massey.ac.nz or j.berman@massey.ac.nz
INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

CREATING OPTIMAL LANGUAGE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS IN CLASSROOMS

Sally Clendon and Elizabeth Doell

There is growing awareness that children with speech, language and communication support needs (SLCNs) are likely to experience poor literacy and educational outcomes, have lower self-esteem, engage in fewer social interactions and have difficulty developing prosocial behaviours. Current evidence documents the risk factors related to employment opportunities, relationships and socio-economic indicators associated with persisting SCLNs. Teachers' report and prevalence data indicate that a number of children entering school (particularly in disadvantaged areas) are likely to have SCLNs which may persist throughout their school years. Currently, there is very limited evidence for effective systems and strategies to support children with SCLNs within their typical instructional and social interactions in school contexts.

Our research explores a universal or systems approach to developing support for children with SCLNs in Years 1 to 3. The research project is a collaborative partnership with teachers who are interested in creating an optimal language learning environment (OLLE) in their classrooms. Research students will work with teachers to document and analyse outcomes associated with increasing teacher and child awareness and knowledge about SLCNs, innovative opportunities for engaging children in language learning activities, and explicit support to facilitate participation in interactions with teachers and peers.

Contact: s.clendon@massey.ac.nz or e.h.doell@massey.ac.nz
IDENTIFICATION AND PROVISIONS FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED LEARNERS

Tracey Riley

Have you ever wondered how schools identify and provide for the needs of students with exceptional abilities and qualities? While national surveys provide an indication of current approaches to identification and provisions for gifted and talented students, there is a lack of a strong evidence-base informing these practices. This research delves into the who, how, what, why, when and where of current practices with New Zealand’s gifted and talented learners by investigating a range of practices in different educational settings (e.g. regular classrooms, out of school programmes and competitions), using observations, document analysis and interviews. This research seeks to broaden educators’ understandings of the development, implementation, and evaluation of gifted and talented education in New Zealand schools.

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SYSTEMIC DISCIPLINARY PROCESSES

Vijaya Dharan

Systemic disciplinary processes exclude children and young people from their learning contexts – i.e. early childhood settings, primary, intermediate and high schools. Official data suggest that the alienation process peaks at the age of 14, and that one of the categories with the highest number of stand-downs and suspensions is *Continual Disobedience*.

In a research project in 2014 involving secondary schools that included a national survey and a small number of focus group meetings, it became apparent that there is no ubiquitous approach to handling school disciplinary processes. They tend to be influenced by a number of school based factors as well as community issues. However, such exclusionary discipline practices are not restricted to secondary schools and statistics show that the age level of students stood-down and/or suspended is getting lower. Although data on children from early childhood setting is anecdotal and not officially documented, children under 5 are also increasingly excluded from pre-schools.

Contributing students will research the beliefs, practices and policies that contribute to this alienation process across the age groups, as it has a significant impact not only on the learning outcomes of children and young persons, but also on society.

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LEARNING TO BE LITERATE WITH SMART SCREENS

Alison Arrow

New domestic digital technologies (smartphones, iPads, tablet computers, laptops) have altered children’s access to narratives and information. There is little research that identifies good practice with digital technologies in school settings, only suggestions on how to use it. Our aim with this project is to identify good practices through an analysis of the use of digital technologies in early childhood education and junior primary school settings. This research project will investigate the ways that children interact with screens within two early childhood institutions and during the first year of school in two primary school classrooms, focusing on the emerging literacy behaviours and the pedagogies in each setting. Data will include children’s interactions with representations on screen using screen recording software and interviews with each educator exploring their beliefs and the institution’s policies in the area.

Contact: a.w.arrow@massey.ac.nz

THE SIMPLE VIEW OF READING AND WRITING

Tom Nicholson

The simple view of reading and writing (Gough, 1992; Juel, 1988) argues that reading ability is composed of just two components: decoding and language understanding. It predicts that a good decoder who is poor at understanding what they read will also have poor language so that they would still not understand the text even if it was read to them because it is above their language understanding. It also predicts that someone with good language who does not understand what they read must also be poor at decoding and that their many inaccuracies interfere with comprehension. The simple view of writing says that writing ability is composed of two elements, ideas and spelling. It predicts that a poor writer who is good at spelling must have poor ideas so that even if they dictated their story it would still get a poor quality rating. It also predicts that someone with great ideas who gets poor assessments for writing must have poor spelling and that this poor spelling limits the number of words they write and causes the reader to think they are not adequate writers.

The study will involve a group of children in either primary, intermediate or secondary school, assessing them in both reading and writing to see if they can be divided into groups that fit these predictions, or whether there might be exceptions to these predictions.

Contact: t.nicholson@massey.ac.nz
SET FOR VARIABILITY TRAINING

Bill Tunmer, James Chapman and Alison Arrow

A recent Tunmer and Chapman article is one of the most popular articles in the Scientific Studies of Reading in 2011-2012. This article examined how vocabulary influences word recognition skills through set for variability which is the ability to determine the correct pronunciation of words, from incorrectly pronounced words. Vocabulary also influenced reading comprehension both indirectly, through set for variability and word recognition, and directly, from year 1 to year 3. This series of research projects will investigate several of the follow-up questions derived from this work. Data will include carrying out assessments and intervention tasks with children.

Contact: w.tunmer@massey.ac.nz

LITERACY PRACTICES OF CHILDREN AT HOME

Alison Arrow

Rhetoric abounds with regards to what children do at home, and how they engage with literacy (or not), but there is very little research on what children actually do and how they do the things they do. This includes how they use their home practices in school contexts. This large research project involves a series of research projects across a range of methodologies, primarily case study, to look at literacy practices:

- Children’s interactions with favourite rich texts (novels or films) at home and their literary responses within classrooms;
- Children’s home engagement practices with YouTube and the various kinds of learning involved;
- Beginning blogging – the kinds of writing and reading and interactions involved from children in the age range 7-17 years old;
- Public library internet use by children compared with home use practices of their age group;
- Case studies of children, looking at their literacy practices at home (reading, viewing, writing, and designing), within community groups and at school. A research project would include children of the same age, but different projects could have children from 4 years to 18 years. This could possibly also include a comparison between children in a ‘digital classroom’ and those in a ‘regular classroom’.

Contact: a.w.arrow@massey.ac.nz
READING THE FIRST WORD: DO LETTERS MATTER?

Alison Arrow

Reading research has not yet been able to identify how children make the qualitative shift from non-readers to readers. This research project proposes that knowing names of letters enables beginning readers to learn and store orthographic representations of words. This research project will investigate how children learn words as a function of letter names and sounds known, as well as the influence of their own name, and encompasses a series of smaller studies. The ability to understand print as a second order symbol of a concept is also part of the research project. Data will include how children perform on the moving word task of Bailystok when the symbol is a picture and when the symbol is a printed word of a matched concept, letter knowledge, own name abilities, and a teaching task for simple printed words.

Contact: a.w.arrow@massey.ac.nz

SUCCESS IN EARLY LITERACY

Alison Arrow, James Chapman, Keith Greaney, Bill Tunmer & Jane Prochnow

Success in early literacy is a large scale longitudinal research project that examines the implementation of differentiated instruction in new entrant classrooms, using the Cognitive Foundations Framework (Tunmer, unpublished manuscript) to guide assessment, planning and practice to improve literacy achievement outcomes in later years. We are looking for people interested in joining this project that uses mixed methods to examine the effectiveness of supplementary teaching strategies. Smaller projects within this large project include:

- Analysis of new entrant teacher instructional prompts and practices;
- Patterns of literacy development in new entrant children;
- How vocabulary influences word recognition skills through set for variability which is the ability to determine the correct pronunciation of words, from incorrectly pronounced words;
- Examining the relationship between student attention and literacy achievement;
- The relationships between different literacy components.

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CAN READING WORDS FASTER IMPROVE READING COMPREHENSION?

Tom Nicholson

Most researchers think that fast word recognition is important for reading comprehension but some argue that it is not, that other things are more important such as vocabulary and background knowledge. This study replicates a classic study by Oakan Weiner and Cromer (1971). This well-known study asked 96 5th graders to read passages that were either hard or easy to read in terms of getting the words right. They found that while good readers had better comprehension when they read words accurately than not accurately, poor readers were no better in comprehension whether they read words accurately or not. This suggested that accurate word recognition by poor readers was not enough for good comprehension and that the reason they did not do well was that they were not focused on meaning whereas the good readers were. A possible problem with the study is that the poor readers may not have been trained well enough to read the words in the passage. The idea is to replicate this study to see if the classic results still stand. It is an important issue in reading theory because of its implications for teaching in the classroom and whether to focus on word reading or reading for meaning or both.

Contact: t.nicholson@massey.ac.nz
DEVELOPING EARLY ALGEBRAIC REASONING

Jodie Hunter and Glenda Anthony

In recent years there has been an increased emphasis on algebraic reasoning in primary school classrooms. In this study, we look at how early algebraic reasoning can be integrated into every-day mathematics lessons in primary classrooms. This includes how teachers develop their understanding of early algebra, the planning, adaptation and types of tasks which can be used to develop algebraic reasoning and the classroom culture which supports students to engage in algebraic reasoning.

Contact: j.hunter1@massey.ac.nz

UNPACKING ANXIETY IN MATHEMATICS CLASSROOMS

Margaret Walshaw

Contemporary research reports tend to paint a picture of active classroom communities in which all students and teachers are fully engaged with mathematics. Reports of environments like these can be deceiving because they cover over individual students’ anxieties about doing mathematics successfully. Mathematics anxiety is the focus of this series of projects. The interest is, specifically, on the way in which anxiety shapes, is shaped by, and prevents productive engagement with mathematical activity. The overriding goal of the series of projects is to develop a theoretical explanation, based on classroom evidence, for the work that anxiety does within the mathematics classroom.

Contact: m.a.walshaw@massey.ac.nz

MATHEMATICS AND STATISTICS LEARNING FOR AND THROUGH OTHER LEARNING AREAS

Tim Burgess

The integration of learning mathematics and statistics with learning in another area of the curriculum can provide opportunities for developing students’ understanding of the world. This project will examine students’ learning in relation to both mathematics and statistics and one other learning area, such as through the use of rich real world contexts, issues, or problems.

Contact: t.a.burgess@massey.ac.nz
TEACHING MATHEMATICS TO “AT RISK” STUDENTS

Margaret Walshaw

Student mathematics underachievement and disengagement from learning represent deeply serious challenges for the New Zealand education system. Presently we know that ‘at risk’ students are over-represented at the lower levels of mathematical proficiency. Vulnerable students include those who have a history of behavioural difficulties as well as students who experience feelings of failure at school as a result of their disabilities. This series of projects will explore what it is that teachers do in learning environments with ‘at risk’ students to enhance engagement in and lift mathematical performance of these students.

Contact: m.a.walshaw@massey.ac.nz

MATHEMATICAL PRACTICES AND PASIFIKA LEARNERS
PROFESSIONAL FACILITATOR LEARNING

Bobble Hunter, Glenda Anthony, Jodie Hunter

Drawing on a current large-scale professional learning project working with teachers in schools with predominantly Pasifika students there are opportunities for in-depth exploration of the actions of the teachers as they construct learning communities of mathematical inquiry. Data will include teacher interviews and observations of practice as the teachers enact pedagogical practices which are culturally responsive to Pasifika students. Examples of nested research projects include explorations focused on:

- Teacher knowledge and beliefs
- The ‘funds of knowledge’ teachers use to structure mathematical tasks
- Grouping practices
- Mathematical discussions
- Student engagement and disposition.

Contact: r.hunter@massey.ac.nz
DESIGNING RICH MATHEMATICAL TASKS INCLUDING FINANCIAL LITERACY TASKS

Glenda Anthony, Jodie Hunter and Peter Rawlins

Opportunities to learn in the mathematics classroom are mediated through the tasks that students engage with. In this study we look at planning/design and trial of sequences of rich tasks that can be used with heterogeneous groups. Identification of big mathematical ideas (with possibility to focus on financial literacy context), task challenge, opportunities for engaging in the processes of reasoning and sense making, and catering for diversity of student readiness will be central guiding features of the tasks development and implementation.

Contact: g.j.anthony@massey.ac.nz

THE IMPACT OF HIGH STAKES ASSESSMENT ON TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THE MATHEMATICS CLASSROOM

Peter Rawlins and Glenda Anthony

Increasingly, formal high stakes assessment systems such as NCEA and National Standards are becoming part of the educational landscape. This study seeks to examine how teachers adapt their teaching practices in light of the requirements of high stakes assessment. To what extent are course design, content coverage, teaching resources, and pedagogies affected by the presence of such high stakes assessment? What is the effect of these assessment systems on assessment for learning practices? This project seeks to broaden our understanding of the affordances and constraints of high stakes assessment on teachers.

Contact: p.rawlins@massey.ac.nz

STATISTICS IN THE PRIMARY/INTERMEDIATE CLASSROOM

Tim Burgess

Statistics is a significant part of the Mathematics and Statistics learning area, but there is a major need for classroom-based research on the teaching and learning of statistics. This project, which will link in with current on-going research on the use of technology to support the teaching and learning of statistics and/or probability, will look at opportunities for enhancing the teaching and/or learning of statistics and/or probability.

Contact: t.a.burgess@massey.ac.nz
SPECIALIST TEACHING

SUPPORTING DIVERSE LEARNERS THROUGH INTERPROFESSIONAL AND EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE

Jill Bevan-Brown, Julia Budd, Vijaya Dharan, Wendy Holley, Alison Kearney, Jude MacArthur, Mandia Mentis, Tracy Riley.

Arguably one of the most significant changes facing schools today is the growing diversity of school populations. There is extensive evidence of inequitable educational outcomes for some groups of learners. This issue requires a re-investigation and questioning of traditional teaching practices and beliefs. The Specialist Teaching team has as its research focus these issues of social justice and the links to pedagogy and cultural responsiveness in the areas of Autism, Blind and Low Vision, Complex Educational Needs, Gifted and Talented, and Learning and Behaviour.

Specific projects include:
- Student Voice ASD (j.m.bevan-brown@massey.ac.nz)
- Student's rights (a.c.kearney@massey.ac.nz)
- Interprofessional practice (m.mentis@massey.ac.nz, j.m.budd@massey.ac.nz)
- Evidence based practice (v.m.dharan@massey.ac.nz)
- Professional Identity, Wellbeing and Authentic Practice (w.holley-boen@massey.ac.nz)
- Teacher education and inclusive education (j.a.macarthur@massey.ac.nz)
- Identification and Provisions for Gifted and Talented Learners (t.l.riley@massey.ac.nz)
TEACHING AND LEARNING

TEACHING AND LEARNING IN EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES AND SETTINGS

John O'Neill

In everyday settings, individuals and groups of people learn to understand, appreciate and make sense of their worlds in many ways. This series of case studies sets out to explore the often invisible processes of teaching and learning in these everyday activities that enable individuals, groups and communities to contribute to social, cultural and economic development.

Classroom settings provide limited, partial understandings of the many diverse ‘ways of knowing’ (Harris 2007). Such ways of knowing may be said to explain how people live, develop, communicate and interact with the natural and social worlds around them through teaching and learning relations. Contributing students will investigate how teaching and learning take place in ordinary everyday activities and settings using a variety of theoretical tools such as Rogoff’s ‘intent community participation’, Engeström’s ‘cultural historical activity theory’, Bourdieu’s ‘theory of practice’, ‘Akonga Māori’ (G. Smith, 1997), and ‘The Pacific Way’ (Anae, et. al., 2001).

Contact: j.o.neill@massey.ac.nz

TEACHERS' LIVES AND CAREERS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

John O'Neill

This project aims in the longer term to build a substantial archive of oral histories of teachers throughout Aotearoa New Zealand. Contributing students will each conduct up to ten life and career interviews with practising, former or retired teachers in a particular locality, sector, subject area or language medium. Training in interview methods and ethics, and a standard interview schedule will be provided. Once the individual student research study has been completed the original recordings will be permanently archived. Students will therefore contribute to creation of a national archive as well as completing their degree.

Contact: j.o.neill@massey.ac.nz
YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR TECHNOLOGY USE

Maggie Hartnett

Technology changes influence the way we do things and the way we think about ourselves. This includes young people. This project is nested within and builds on a larger study conducted at a national level with Year 12 students, one aspect of which explored how changes in technology influence young people’s identities. Following on from the survey, a series of interviews with young people are being undertaken to explore patterns of technology engagement that exist based on school decile. This is important because current research indicates that digital literacy, or “the ability to understand and fully participate in the digital world” (NetSafe, n.d., p. 3), is crucial to being an active, contributing citizen in today’s society. Yet issues of digital exclusion (also known as the digital divide), where some members of society are unable to contribute due to issues such as lack of digital capabilities, socio-economic difficulties or infrastructure barriers, persist. Anecdotal evidence suggests that digital literacy is more apparent with some social groups rather than others. There is potential for postgraduate students engaged in research that builds on this project.

Contact: m.hartnett@massey.ac.nz

EPORTFOLIOS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND NETWORKING

Mandia Mentis, Maggie Hartnett and Alison Kearney

ePortfolios are currently being used to demonstrate learning outcomes in relation to professional competencies within formal professional programmes. This study aims to investigate the potential of ePortfolios as tools for professional digital identity development. Research questions will focus on using ePortfolios to document ongoing professional learning, to showcase work, for reflective practice, and for networking, connecting and sharing resources within professional communities of practice and how this helps to build digital identity.

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PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Sally Hansen, Ally Sewell and Kama Weir

If learning is embedded in participation in the social and cultural activity of community practices (Rogoff, 2003), it follows that teachers’ learning is also embedded in participation in the practices of their professional community. This project aims to develop a professional learning community for professional practitioners in the fields of primary and secondary teaching, specialist teaching and applied health areas. As educational academics, we will join you as contributing members of this learning community to build individual and collective capacity around issues that are relevant and important to your professional practice. Developing a professional learning community such as this is an example of a sociocultural practice in that it provides a context for learning through establishing reciprocal relationships, promoting dialogue and sharing power. Through these responsive and negotiated interactions, regular sharing and critical interrogation of your practice and the latest educational research you will be supported in your professional learning to make sustainable practice changes (Stoll, 2006; Timperley et al, 2007).

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LEARNING AND TEACHING IN TERTIARY CONTEXTS

Linda Rowan, Linda Leach, Nick Zepke

Current research on the effects of teaching within tertiary environments recognises the shifting social, environmental, and political circumstances that contribute to decisions made by adult learners to undertake post-compulsory study. Once studies commence further factors influence these learners’ approaches to studying, their continuation of their studies and their completion of courses (Tinto, 2006/7; Zepke & Leach, 2007). What teachers do, how learners and teachers are supported, how that support is organised, and how learners respond to the teaching and learning environment matters.

Students will have the opportunity to develop their own projects which contribute to research projects that build on studies of student engagement, retention and success across the tertiary sector, for example: Universities, Wananga, Institutes of Technology Polytechnics, Private Training Establishments, workplace learning and Industry Training Organisations, Adult and community education. Students may also focus on sub-sectors within these such as life-long and life-wide learning or with specific groups of tertiary students, for example: Maori and Pasifika students, students aged under 24, or adults with learning difficulties.

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MEASURING STUDENT TEACHER SELF-EFFICACY IN CULTURALLY DIVERSE LOW SOCIOECONOMIC EDUCATIONAL PRACTICA SETTINGS

Penny Haworth, John O’Neill, Sally Hansen, Tara McLaughlin, and James Chapman

Despite theoretical preparation for the task, otherwise competent and confident novice teachers often struggle in practice to meet the needs of pupils in culturally diverse, low socioeconomic early childhood and school settings. The most recent systematic review on the contribution of practicum experiences to early career teacher development found that there has been little rigorous study in this area (Anderson & Stillman, 2013). We are interested in investigating questions about how to evaluate the readiness of initial teacher education (ITE) students for such experiences, and in defining the nature of and contexts for effective support for student teachers before, during and after the practicum.

Project work will focus on building an integrated suite of measures of teacher efficacy and cultural responsiveness to evaluate professional intercultural efficacy at individual (student) as well as collective (school/centre and institutional) levels. The project is focused on the ITE practicum but there is also potential to adapt the measures developed to other professional preparation programmes offered by the University that include a practicum component (e.g. psychology, social work, nursing, counselling, speech-language therapy). An additional related area of interest is exploring the nature of ‘invited spaces’ for interaction between mentor professionals and students, in a range of different practicum contexts.

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EXPLORING ATTITUDES AROUND FATNESS IN NEW ZEALAND

Cat Pausé

Research outside of New Zealand demonstrates that most individuals, regardless of body size, occupation, race, or education level, have negative attitudes towards fatness and fat individuals. This body of research focuses on exploring the attitudes around fatness held by groups within New Zealand (healthcare providers, MSD employees, young children, those in school to become teachers, etc). Research team members work to uncover these attitudes and consider the impacts on the interactions with individuals of all body sizes. Current projects are in development and I am open to student-initiated related areas of interest that complement the overall focus.

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Elbaz (1990, p. 32) notes that accounts of teachers’ experiences are “the very stuff of teaching, the landscape within which the work of teachers can be seen as making sense.” However, despite current expectations that individuals will have multiple careers in one lifetime, the literature (e.g. Nias, 1989; Elbaz, 1990; Hogan, Rabinowitz & Craven, 2003) often depicts teachers’ careers as a simple progression from novice to expert. In particular, English language teachers often have unique career trajectories that span a range of learning and learner levels in both national and international contexts. Teachers in this field include both native and non-native speakers of English who teach in diverse contexts such as English as a foreign language, English as an additional language in English speaking contexts, as well as English for specific and academic purposes which now encompasses a wide range of specialist contexts such as business, law, tourism, medicine, aviation, various trades and fashion design (Paltridge & Starfield, 2012). Maybe it is that very diversity that threatens professionalism in this field. For example, Thornbury (2001) refers to ‘the unbearable lightness’ (p. 391) of the field of English as a foreign language, citing the prevalence of international back-packers who are employed to teach English without relevant academic or teaching qualifications beyond being native speakers of English. Haworth (2008) also refers to the threat to the professional status of English language teachers in New Zealand due to the prevalence of part-time, short-term, teachers and paraprofessionals such as teacher aides. Furthermore, Davison (2001) argues that the policy, in some Australian states, of subsuming English as an additional language under Literacy has eroded the professional status of English language teaching. I am part of an international group of researchers who are interested in finding out more about the varied career trajectories of English language teachers. This information will be of interest to teachers who wish to build a professional career in English language teaching as well as to teacher educators in this field.

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HOW PASIFIKA PARENTS ENGAGE IN YOUNG CHILDREN'S LEARNING

Lesieli I. Kupu MacIntyre

A large body of literature has focussed on low achievement of Pasifika students in New Zealand primary and secondary schools, yet there is little or no research on how young Pasifika parents can lay the foundation for high achievement in primary and secondary schools by engaging in their young children's learning. There is a need for research to investigate how and what effective cultural teaching strategies, young Pasifika parents can practise at home and in other informal learning settings. The purpose of this project is to explore how young Pasifika parents engage in their children's learning activities at home, in church and in valued contexts in the community. This project will explore the parents' and children's daily learning/teaching activities in the above contexts; how they interact in English and their Pasifika languages; and identify how they use appropriate social and intercultural exchanges in their children's learning. In conclusion, some means of enhancing the parents' engagement in their children's learning will be provided.

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TEACHING TERTIARY STUDENTS FROM DIFFERENT CULTURAL AND LANGUAGE BACKGROUNDS

Alyson McGee, Gillian Skyrme

There is a strong call from both the government and tertiary leaders to increase the enrolment of international students in New Zealand. Since the 1980's the income derived from international student enrolments has continued to climb with this industry seen as one of New Zealand’s top export earners (Butcher, 2009). The implications of these enrolments for students and teachers are rarely examined in any detail by those who make these calls, and yet satisfaction for all concerned seems essential for sustainable internationalisation processes.

The focus of this project is principally on teachers’ needs and adaptations to having students from a variety of language and cultural backgrounds in their classrooms and/or supervisory relationships. Students can be involved in research focused on:

- Tertiary teachers beliefs and values
- The role of the tertiary teacher
- Language challenges for students and teachers in tertiary settings
- Assessment with students from different cultural and language backgrounds
- Successful classroom practices and responses
- Professional development for teachers

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