

Editorial: Education Graduate Student Symposium 2014

Professor Brian Lewthwaite

Director of Research Education, James Cook University

Dr Lai Kuan Lim

Education Honours Co-ordinator, James Cook University

Dr Margaret Carter

Master of Education Co-ordinator, James Cook University

<i>etropic</i> 14.1 (2015):1-4. http://www.reefandleaf.com.au/etropic.html & http://www.jcu.edu.au/etropic

On Thursday, October, 2014, James Cook University held its inaugural Graduate Student Symposium in which we highlighted the research activity of our Education graduate students currently enrolled in Honours, Graduate Certificate of Research Methods, Masters or Doctoral studies. A symposium is all about ‘convivial discussion’ and that is what we as conveners sought, above all, to foster. The event was unique because it involved students from our three campuses (Cairns, Singapore, and Townsville) as well as our External students. The event was open to the public and communicated through the web-based platforms Collaborate and Skype. The symposium was structured to allow the twelve participating graduate students to present from one of these locations to audience in all three campuses and online. The program ran from 2:00 p.m. until 7:30 p.m. allowing for two sessions to run concurrently. Each session lasted for 30 minutes, allowing for a maximum of 20 minute presentation followed by a 5 minute discussion.

Graduate students were encouraged to participate no matter what stage they were at in the research process. It was not restricted to students near the end of their research. As conveners, we were seeking from a consolidated presentation, which may have meant a review or critique of the literature or a methodological overview or preliminary analysis of research findings. In brief, we wanted the presentations to contribute to convivial consideration and discussion. It was intended to be an oral presentation of a *research* perspective on an issue of interest from your research rather than a detailed account of the research. Symposia in ancient times were after dinner events, and we want your presentation to capture attention and promote consideration.

Graduate students, thereafter, contributed their papers for review to JCU’s *etropic*. This journal was founded in 2002 in response to a developing innovative research interest in the tropics among scholars in the arts, social sciences and humanities at James Cook University, Australia. The journal provides a multi-disciplinary venue for the dissemination of new research work on the variety and interrelatedness of nature, culture, and society in tropical regions. In line with the nature of a symposium and the mandate of *etropic*, the papers within this volume represent research in educational topics closely linked to our context, especially in rural, sustainability and Indigenous education.

Above all, the comments from the participants echoed the nature of a symposium. The presentations were each a focus for convivial discussion. The nature in which graduate

students engaged reciprocally with colleagues' presentations was representative of a symposium. We thank JCU Research for supporting this event.

An intentional goal of this special issue is to showcase the depth and diversity of community based, national and international research being undertaken by our graduate students. Spanning transnational territories including Vietnam, Papua New Guinea and Australia as well as cyber space, our students explore transformational change, pedagogical practices, curriculum design, leadership paradigms, sustainability, international mindedness, learner difference and diversity, and wellbeing practices. In many cases, our students have worked collaboratively with members of their supervisory team in the publication of these articles.

Reece Mills, Louisa Tomas Engel, and Brian Lewthwaite examine research in science education, accentuating the importance of conceptual change research in Earth Science education since Australia's national curriculum now mandates that students in Year 9 Science are required to learn about Earth Science concepts. These authors make the case for engaging Year 9 Science students in the creation of a slowmation to represent an Earth Science concept that has been misrepresented in popular culture, in an effort to support their conceptual change towards an accepted scientific understanding.

Employing Actor Network Theory (ANT) (Fenwick & Edwards, 2010), **Stefanie Biancotti and Kelsey Halbert** investigate the implementation of the Australian History and Geography curriculum initiatives by a junior secondary school department (Years 7-10) in North Queensland. They systematically and critically review the Australian curriculum implementation processes and outcomes, within one Social Science department, through a case study methodology (Koshy, 2010; Yin, 2003). The Actor Network theoretical framework identifies the actors (including lead researcher, teachers, administrators and objects such as Curriculum into the Classroom (C2C) materials) in the curriculum translation network and how the interactions between them shape the network and its processes. Researcher observations, interview and survey data provide insights into the ways in which teachers shape their own professional practices in response to curriculum change.

Jennifer Nicholls and Robert B Stevenson examine the case for understanding Queensland teachers' personal and professional beliefs about climate change and climate change education. The findings of the survey data from over 300 Queensland primary and secondary teachers were first analysed to identify teachers' understandings and beliefs relating to the realities, causes, and consequences of climate change. Next, the data were analysed to illuminate how teachers conceptualise climate change education in terms of content and processes. It appears from this data that a high percentage of teachers accept that the climate is changing and that the changing climate poses a risk to the Australian people, however, teachers do not appear to have a complex or nuanced understanding of what climate change education can be.

Marcia Thorne investigates sustainability teaching and learning from an environmental stewardship perspective. Marcia's research applies an explanatory sequential mixed methods research design to map and review environmental stewardship in the Australian Curriculum's sustainability cross-curriculum priority and in Year 10 students and teachers in the Wet Tropics region of Australia. Research methods include a document analysis of the Australian Curriculum's sustainability cross-curriculum priority; and survey and interviews to understand student and teacher subjective foundations of environmental stewardship and the expression of stewardship in school and life contexts.

Karen D'Aietti, Brian Lewthwaite, and Philemon Chigeza discuss an action research study of non-indigenous teachers navigating the dominant discourses on a remote Torres Strait (TS) island in Far North Queensland (FNQ). It focused on Karen's teaching journey in a grade 6/7 classroom, documenting her efforts to navigate and respond to Explicit Instruction (EI) and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP), both of which inform policy statements in the region. Using a reflective journal, informal student dialogue sessions, yarning circles, student work samples and teacher observations, Karen describes her endeavours to adjust her practice to determine how best to meet my learners' needs, preferences and learning styles. The findings of this study strongly suggest that practitioners cannot blindly forge ahead with the EI model, but rather this model must be adjusted if practitioners are to truly consider their students from a culturally responsive viewpoint.

Lyn Nichols provides a voice for Aboriginal and Islander teacher education programs (AITEP), as she examines past reflections for future considerations in indigenous education. Using a phenomenological approach, Lyn's study explores the perceptions of the program and its influence based upon the experiences of those who participated in it, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous and to identify what they believe were elements that supported them to success. Implications of these experiences to current considerations in pre-service Indigenous teacher education are offered.

Louise Wilkinson and Sue McGinty deliberate the power of shared leadership for school improvement in indigenous education. These authors' focuses on a microcosm of such relationships that is the one between Indigenous Education Workers (IEWs)/Community Education Counselors (CECs) and principals in the North Queensland educational region (NQR). The research described aims to examine and transform the professional relationship between these key people as they respond to and address implementation issues of 'Closing the Gap' guided by a critical theorist framework will be conducted using a mixed methods approach. It is the authors' intention to use this research to highlight best practice in educational leadership through planning and action in the NQR, and potentially to the wider system in the state of Queensland.

Florence Boulard investigates the development its young people to be global citizens through the teaching and learning of different cultures and inclusive of the French Pacific Islands. Florence demonstrates how the French language classroom can be used as a means to contribute to developing the international-mindedness of young Australians with regards to our East-side neighbours.

Jillian Marchant and Pauline Taylor scrutinize the experiences of adult learners residing in rural communities in the state of South Australia. Understanding the role of education through the social experiences of adult students in rural communities highlights the role of education in the areas of personal, social and community development. The authors show a way of investigating social engagement offered through education, especially those that allow rural students to enhance their chances across the life course. It does so through engaging with the reports from adult students.

Ellen Fields scrutinizes the substance, structure, and dynamics of how youth are engaging in interest-driven environmental peer-to-peer learning and activism within social networking "affinity spaces". Ellen's research is situated within a constructivist research paradigm and employs ethnographic methods to gain "insider" understandings of teen social media practices that relate to environmental learning and action, as experienced by the teens

themselves (Lankshear et al, 2011). Ellen draws on network structure and various interactional dynamics related to scale of network, leadership, membership, and adult facilitators in regards to fostering environmental learning and action in youth-driven affinity spaces. Ellen offers some recommendations for adult facilitators in regards to fostering environmental learning and action in youth-driven affinity spaces.

Gail MacDonald and Helen Boon examine the support provided to children whose family members are deployed to a war zone with the Australian Defence Force (ADF). Gail's research concentrates on the effectiveness of support provided to the students at school while their family members are deployed. She examines the provision of proactive and responsive support services for students, teachers and parents and the sharing of a contextual understanding of the ADF lifestyle provided by the Defence School Transition Aides (DSTAs). The DSTAs work add to the whole school contribution to supporting students whose family members are actively deployed with ADF.

Richard Stewart and Brian Lewthwaite introduce Richard's proposed qualitative study examining the transition from a remote Indigenous community of Lockhart River on Cape York from the perspective of the students, their parents and care-givers. Access for remote Indigenous students to quality education provision in major urban centres is a key element of government policy in addressing disadvantage in education outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. Despite this, there is little in the way of recent research into the transition process in terms of its effectiveness in ensuring the delivery of a quality secondary education.

Using a transformative paradigm research approach, **Kravia Kainaro** reports on the progress of his comparative study exploring guidance and counselling service in PNG and Queensland with a particular focus on services available to schools in Goroka (PNG) and in Townsville (Queensland, Australia). Kravia explains his mixed methodologies including autoethnography, survey questionnaire with guidance counsellors and interviews with several pertinent individuals in PNG and State schooling Queensland. Based on research findings, it is Kravia's intention to make recommendations specific to the transformation of guidance and counselling services in PNG schools.

Thi Huong Tra Nguyen, Helen Boon, and David King takes us to Vietnam where she examines the impacts of climate change, particularly in poor coastal communities. While external climate change projects have been conducted in some coastal provinces, Tra examines the lack of local education programs to enhance communities' awareness and adaptive capacity to cope with climate change. Furthermore Tra proposes a community education program to help Ha Tinh locals adapt to climate change.

Using self-study methodology, **Katherine Tucker and Brian Leithwaite** probe the tensions in enacting Care theory as a pedagogical practice in early childhood classrooms. Through the recursive analysis of a self-study research portfolio with a critical friend, Katherine revealed two key tensions between one's actions and intent and between safety and challenge. Implications for future research specific to pre-service teacher learning and the way teachers both problematise their practice and consider care in early childhood classrooms are identified.
