

# research

The research bulletin for the School of Education

**Issue 10:** June 2017

	News >	2
EITN Journal Celebrates 50 Years >		4
	The Interview >	5
	Arts Award Takeover Project >	7
	Spotlight on New Researchers >	10
	ALT Conference >	13
	SERA Conference >	15
Research Collaborations & Publications >		18
	Presentations >	20

# News



## Welcome...

to the tenth SoEd Research Bulletin.

## PhD Successes

Congratulations to the following students who successfully defended their PhD:

David Johnston, Norashikin Yusof and Kevin Stelfox (all from Education).

## Being and Becoming: The Creative Balance of the Artist Teacher

Jessica Singer (PhD Student)

From November 4th, 2016 till March 15th, 2017 a research led exhibition took place in the ArtSpace of the MacRobert Building. This exhibition was part of a research study currently underway by Jessica Singer, a third year PhD student within the School of Education. This body of work explored how individuals learn through their experiences in different environments and the impact of their identities and the relationships they form.

## Ready Project Update

Graeme Nixon

The Religious Education and Diversity Erasmus plus project was launched at the European Forum for Teachers of RE conference in Vienna in August. Teaching commitments precluded David Smith and Graeme Nixon from attending and presenting. However our partner Professor Peter Kliemann led the READY presentation, in which he outlined the intellectual outputs and activities from the project as it enters year 2. Peter, with colleagues and student teachers from Tubingen, Germany, will be visiting the School of Education and local schools in November. David and Graeme are currently finalising the READY website and this should go live very soon.

[http://eftre.weebly.com/uploads/6/1/2/9/61297569/ready\\_project.pdf](http://eftre.weebly.com/uploads/6/1/2/9/61297569/ready_project.pdf)

# News

## Public Engagement Event

Dr Laura Colucci-Gray  
and Dr Donald Gray

Dr Laura Colucci-Gray and Dr Donald Gray have led a successful public engagement event as part of the Festival of Social Sciences on the topic “the Human Scale”.

Based on the film co-authored by the architect Van Gehl, the event was integral part of the 6th century course “Sustainability: Challenges and Opportunities”. Students on the course undertook a small-scale ethnographic study of the city as a place for living and shared their work with the public and city councillors at the film screening, held on 8th November at the Belmont cinema.

## Visiting Scholars

Dr Laura Colucci-Gray

Between October and November the School has hosted two visiting scholars: Noa Ageitos from the University of Santiago de Compostela and Ms. Asta Astildur from the University of Iceland both visiting Dr Laura Colucci-Gray.

Noa is a PhD student working on a thesis in argumentation and science education.

Asta is a PhD student looking at arts-based methodologies in the teaching of sustainability in Higher Education.

## Erasmus+ project on the Introduction of part-time & short cycle studies in Serbia

Dr Rachel Shanks

Dr Rachel Shanks, alongside Dr Bruce Scharlau of the School of Natural and Computing Science at Aberdeen, is part of an Erasmus+ project to introduce part-time and short course Higher Education, similar to HNC and HND level studies, to Serbia. The Strategy on Education Development till 2020 in the Republic of Serbia identified the need for part-time (PT) and short cycle (SCHE) studies. The PT&SCHE Erasmus+ project aims to implement action plans for establishment of these studies in Serbia, including the necessary legislation framework.

PT&SCHE Erasmus+ Project Website:  
[www.pt-sche.metropolitan.ac.rs](http://www.pt-sche.metropolitan.ac.rs)

## Dr Rachel Shanks

Rachel Shanks has been appointed to the Steering Group of a major new independent research project scoping the future of work with communities. Funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and a legacy from the Community Development Foundation, ‘Empowered Communities in the 2020s’ will seek to learn what is working now, and what support communities need to thrive in the decade ahead.

[www.localtrust.org.uk/about-us/media/press-releases/new-project-launches-to-explore-a-radically-different-future-for-communities-as-report-suggests-collaboration-with-residents-is-key](http://www.localtrust.org.uk/about-us/media/press-releases/new-project-launches-to-explore-a-radically-different-future-for-communities-as-report-suggests-collaboration-with-residents-is-key)

# EITN Journal Celebrates 50 Years

Founded in 1965, the principal aim of the journal, which is published annually, is to provide information, comment and research findings on all aspects of interest to Scottish education, including from an international context, in a way that will have a broad appeal to teachers in primary and secondary schools, to lecturers in further and higher education and to other professionals including community education workers, educational psychologists and educational administrators.

A major theme for the journal is 'impact' and the implications of research for practice. Each issue of EITN has three sections:

- > The Journal section contains academic articles (3,500 to 6,000 words) which are subject to peer review
- > The Features section is made up of shorter items (up to 2,000 words) written in a less formal style
- > This is followed by a Book Review section

Editors Rachel Shanks and Claire Molloy welcome contributions to either Journal or Features sections, and are pleased to receive books for review.

The June 2016 issue celebrates not only the journal's first 50 years but also the life and work of Prof John Nisbet. The latest issue of Education in the North, published by the University of Aberdeen's School of Education can be found at: [www.abdn.ac.uk/eitn/journal](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/eitn/journal)

## Education in the North Call for papers!

### Democracy and Education

Submissions are invited for a Special Issue of Education in the North, on the theme of 'Democracy and Education'. This issue stems from the University of the West of Scotland conference which marked the 100th anniversary of the publication of John Dewey's famous work 'Democracy and Education'. Like the conference this special issue aims to reflect on the legacy and significance of Dewey's thinking for 21st century education, but also to consider the more general issue of the relationship between democracy and education in current times. The conference keynote speakers, Profs Richard Pring and Walter Humes are contributing to the Special Issue.

For information for authors visit: [www.abdn.ac.uk/eitn/information](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/eitn/information). Any queries email: [r.k.shanks@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:r.k.shanks@abdn.ac.uk)

### Research and children in the North

Submissions are invited for this issue of Education in the North, on the theme of 'Research and Children in the North'. This could be research into the education of children and young people, children's services or other issues related to children and young people. By 'North' we mean in the Northern hemisphere.

We welcome submissions of various kinds, and are particularly interested in submissions that address or cut across topics and issues including: Research about children and young people in the North / Research with children and young people in the North / Research by children and young people in the North.

For information for authors visit: [www.abdn.ac.uk/eitn/call-for-papers](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/eitn/call-for-papers). Any queries email: [r.k.shanks@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:r.k.shanks@abdn.ac.uk)

# The Interview



## Ruth Irwin

(Head of School)

### Where did your career in Academia begin?

Ruth tells me she comes from a long family history of teachers and admits that she entered into an academic career unintentionally and by chance, having initially gone to art school, then having worked abroad in a Biodynamic garden in Germany and as an art and outdoor education teacher for Special Needs Adults.

However, going to university as a mature student inspired her with a passion for ideas and she achieved a BA in History and Women's Studies at the University of Auckland in 1997. In 2001, she completed her Master's Thesis in the Philosophy of Education, writing on Nietzsche and Heidegger which then led to a Commonwealth Scholarship at the University of Glasgow where she completed her PhD in Environmental Philosophy, Climate Change and Education in 2005.

Between 2005 and 2007, she was a Postdoctoral Fellow and Lecturer at the University of Auckland where she taught Feminist Philosophy and the Philosophy of Science and Technology and wrote her first book. Between 2007 and 2008, she was a Lecturer in Climate Change and Political Theory, before becoming a Senior Lecturer where she taught corporate ethics, economics, climate change and society, and business sustainability.

Her move to the University of Fiji as Adjunct Associate professor enabled her to continue her interest in education as a key locus of transition in ensuring the positive use of technology in dealing ethically with climate change. Prior to her move to Aberdeen, Ruth was Head of the Department of Education at the University of Fiji.

# The Interview

## **What are your main research interests?**

Throughout her academic career, Ruth has maintained her interests in climate change and sustainability and has made use of her passion for Heidegger, Nietzsche, Bateson and Deleuze and Guattari as tools for critiquing the political and economic structures that threaten our world's ecological systems. She has written a book on Heidegger, Politics and Climate Change, edited a book on Climate Change and Philosophy and co-edited a book on Rebuilding a Just Society in New Zealand.

In addition, she has written numerous articles and book chapters on climate change, globalisation, education, UN policy and population.

## **What are your current research interests?**

Having worked in Fiji, Ruth has witnessed at first hand the massive damage done by climate change to the coral reef and to local communities through relocation due to rising tides. She has become increasingly interested in the notion of knowledge ecologies that allow indigenous voices to be heard in policy formulation and she has been analysing United Nations treaties on climate change in the light of ways in which the monoculture of knowledge has destroyed local voices.

Her status as advocate for social justice for indigenous peoples was recognised officially when UNESCO invited her in 2010 to speak at a symposium on Climate Change and Biodiversity in Monaco. She believes that the UN is more open to critical analysis now and that this has been the result of work done by researchers like herself.

## **What are your future research interests?**

Ruth is determined to use her research writing to influence policy and to benefit those most at risk of suffering the ravages of climate change. She plans to continue her research collaboration with scientists, NGOs and local communities in Fiji and hopes to put in a research bid for funding. She has recently organised an Education conference in Fiji on the theme of Knowledge Ecologies in order to open up spaces for alternative voices to be heard on the subject of climate change, education, technology and social organisation. She is also passionate about helping the Fiji education system to develop, enabling young people there to feel more confident in making their own voices heard. Finally, she looks forward to the next few years as a research professor at the University of Aberdeen, writing books on education and climate change and advising the UN from her couch!

# Arts Award Takeover Project



## October 2016

Sandra Nicol - School of Education,  
Pauline Black - School of Language,  
Literature, Music & Visual Culture

An interdisciplinary approach has been adopted to conduct research on the impact of an Arts Award Takeover Project carried out at Kaimhill Primary School in Aberdeen. Sarah Longfield, of social enterprise See Think Make led the Takeover, with Pauline working as assistant leader. Jack Christie, a Masters in Music student acted as the Arts Administrative Assistant and a range of BMus music students were involved during the week of the Takeover, as well as MA Education and PGDE Primary students who were on school experience placement.

Three 'Golden Aims' were agreed upon between the school and See Think Make:

- > To discover the school's true creative potential and build on this
- > To embed the vision and approach of the Takeover in the ecology of the school
- > To empower everyone in the school to have the confidence to take creative risks and believe in their ideas

This school 'Takeover' is a new venture that has never been done in schools in Scotland before. The theme chosen for the week was 'Jump in and run with it!' Artists such as a fiddler, hip-hop musicians, a drama teacher and a dancer as well as a jazz band and percussion trio introduced the pupils to a range of Arts media. Class teachers then incorporated these workshops into their lessons over the week. Digital learning was central to this and Pauline interacted with all classes using digital technology to allow pupils to use apps and record their work in a range of ways. iPads were used in classrooms and films were made by the children to demonstrate their new skills and knowledge. A digital portfolio was introduced across the school to capture and share pupil learning and all pupils also completed an Arts Award log book.

See Think Make Website:

[www.seethinkmake.co.uk/takeover.html](http://www.seethinkmake.co.uk/takeover.html)

# Arts Award Takeover Project



The Arts Award framework is in place to enable young people to develop as artists and arts leaders. Its ambition is to empower young people to ‘learn to learn’ and to have autonomy and agency in their own personal and educational development. (Hollingworth et al, 2016)

**Arts Award Website:** [www.artsaward.org.uk/site/?id=64](http://www.artsaward.org.uk/site/?id=64)

‘Teachers welcome Arts Award because it can be delivered within the curriculum or in extra-curricular activities to keep a wide variety of arts subjects alive.’

Arts Award adviser in Scotland (ibid)

Since 1996, How Good is our School? (HGIOS) has become a nationally and internationally recognized brand, which underpins effective self-evaluation as the starting point for school improvement. HGIOS provides a suite of quality indicators that support staff in all sectors to look inwards, to scrutinize their work and evaluate what is working well for learners and what could be better. It is a key aspect of the Scottish approach to school improvement. The framework is designed to be used to support self-evaluation and reflection by practitioners at all levels.

A new (fourth) edition was published in September 2015.

**HGIOS Website:** [www.educationscotland.gov.uk/resources/h/hgios4/introduction.asp](http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/resources/h/hgios4/introduction.asp)

Kaimhill Head Teacher Susie Webster and her school management team see the Arts Awards Takeover Project as an ideal framework for enacting the key aspects of HGIOS 4 about creativity and its emphasis on digital learning. The age of digitalization is constantly growing and children are central to this in that they are keen to engage with technology in a range of formats.

Sandra and Pauline have formed a partnership to support interdisciplinary action from a Higher Education perspective with Pauline being an active promoter of digital learning, which is a key aspect of education policy.



# Arts Award Takeover Project

The Arts Award Takeover Project is seen as a conscious effort to realise the school's aspiration of developing creativity and digital learning. Through undertaking such programmes of teaching and learning, pupils can work towards attaining the goals outlined below.

## **Creativity Skills**

Creativity, entrepreneurship and innovation is increasingly embedded across learning. Children and young people benefit from learning and teaching through partnerships with education, employers, creative industries and cultural sectors. Learners are confident and ambitious with high levels of self-esteem. They are motivated to explore and challenge assumptions. Children and young people take ownership of their own learning and thinking. They are imaginative, open-minded, confident risk-takers, and appreciate issues from different perspectives. They can ask questions, make connections across disciplines, envisage what might be possible and not possible, explore ideas, identify problems and seek and justify solutions.

## **Digital innovation**

Children and young people work individually and in teams creating both digital and non-digital solutions. As their digital literacy becomes more sophisticated they embed computation to solve problems. Increasingly they apply the core principles underpinning digital technologies to develop their own ideas. Their skills are up-to-date with technological advances informed by a range of sources including the expertise of the young people themselves.

## **Digital literacy**

Children and young people are innovative, confident and responsible in the use of technologies and staying safe online. They critically examine and make informed choices about the use of digital technology to enhance and personalize learning in school and where appropriate, beyond the school day. They anticipate and respond to new opportunities and threats caused by developments now and in the future. (HGIOS pp52)

# Spotlight on New Researchers

## Jacinta Birchley

(PhD Student)

I applied for the Teacher Scholarship offered by the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain to attend their annual conference. Application was by a written expression of interest (explaining reasons for wishing to attend the conference) alongside support from my supervisors Karen McArdle and David Smith. Whilst I had initially to pay the fees and travel expenses they were refunded by full attendance at the conference and submitting a short reflective blog piece for the PEGSB website based on my experience of attending the conference. This is my blog piece.

### **Blog re Attendance at the PESGB, New College Oxford, 1 to 3 April 2016**

It gave me great delight to read the email (8 am Saturday morning!) that informed me I had been awarded a teacher scholarship to attend the annual Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain conference at New College Oxford.

I had been hoping I would get the chance to go “up” to Oxford as I work as a full time teacher and am finishing off my Ph.D. part time, so attendance would be an opportunity for me to: broaden and add depth to my (so far) limited exposure to the philosophy of education; situate my research and teaching within the wider education dialogue; find “new” ways of thinking; enhance my teaching and keep motivated!

The theme of the conference was 100 years since Dewey and his work and ideas were explained and interpreted by many speakers. It was heartening to hear Professors saying his books were a difficult read so I didn’t feel so alone in my struggle to understand and their suggestions for alternative readings were helpful. I had not quite realised until it was highlighted at the conference, how philosophy of education was now missing from many teacher training courses. This caused me great concern as an understanding of why

# Spotlight on New Researchers



teach, what education is for, is vital for anyone working in the field: teachers need to be aware of the driving forces behind their everyday practice. To hear people philosophising on the purpose of education as beyond just passing exams was reassuringly in contrast to much of the rhetoric and practice these days. Flourishing was being used in the way intended.

Pasi Sahlberg's entertaining but highly informative stroll through PISA was a fitting end note to the conference. This had great resonance for me as my research is in social justice and the education of looked after children: the expectations on education to compensate for the great disadvantage many looked after children face is great, and as a practitioner researcher, I understand education has a part to play but it cannot do this alone so the acknowledgement, within this presentation, that schools cannot always compensate for society was reassuring.

Being able to walk the walk and talk the talk over the three conference days and experience the idyllic setting of New College, a place dedicated to promoting and allowing thinking has lasted well

beyond that short space of time. Being able to putting names to faces of people such as Richard Pring and Morwenna Griffiths whose works I was using has bought their works more alive. I thank the PESGB selection committee for giving me the opportunity to attend the conference and would encourage others who are thinking of applying to do so.

## **Karolina Gombert** (3rd year PhD Student, affiliated with SoEd)

Facing the Future 2016 was a two-day interdisciplinary postgraduate conference for Masters, PhD and early career researchers, held in Old Aberdeen. It was organised through the Centre for Environmental Change and Human Resilience (CECHR) at the University of Dundee and James Hutton Institute, in collaboration with the University of Aberdeen; and driven by us, two PhD students (Henri de Ruyter and Karolina Gombert) affiliated with the Life Course and Population Health Research Group, the Rowett Institute, the school of education at the University of Aberdeen, as well as the James Hutton Institute.

# Spotlight on New Researchers



The rationale behind the conference this year we decided as follows: in our rapidly changing world, it is vital to create and support strong, resilient ecosystems, food systems and human communities. Therefore, this year's Facing the Future conference under the theme "Realising Resilience" focused on understanding community and ecosystem resilience, and equipping participants with the practical tools to foster and maintain community resilience.

The fascinating and thought-provoking International Futures Forum (IFF) agreed to design the Conference Workshop. The design and facilitation was carried out by Dr Anthony Hodgson, who is a founder member of IFF and an Honorary Research Fellow of Dundee University with his research colleague from H3Uni, Dr David Beatty. In conversation with us, we decided to address the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in order to give a more graspable account to the issues we are dealing with. A review published by the International Council for Science points out that the approach suffers from a 'silo' mentality that has not taken a systems science approach. As a contribution to

filling this gap the practice session of the conference designed by IFF together with us demonstrated a method through which an interdisciplinary research group could rapidly investigate and gain insight into some of the crucial patterns of interaction implicit in combinations of the sustainable development goals. The new method being introduced involved all the participants taking part in a structured dialogue based around a geometry of interaction that ensures significant patterns of connection between the goals will be highlighted and propositions for integrative strategies for action recommended. We together with our participants enjoyed the conference a lot. The conference exercise was a success.

The outcomes, and more details can be found in the conference report via this link. [https://issuu.com/cechr/docs/ftf\\_2016\\_report](https://issuu.com/cechr/docs/ftf_2016_report)

## Owen Okie (PhD Student)

Congratulations to Owen whose PhD research project on Integral Medicine won Best Poster Award at the European Integral Conference. The poster can be downloaded from here:

<https://integralherbalism.wordpress.com/tree-poster-for-european-integral-conference-2016-owen-okie-pdf>

# ALT Conference

ASSOCIATION  
FOR LEARNING  
TECHNOLOGY



## ALT Conference Report

5-8 September 2016,  
University of Warwick

Sarah Cornelius

The annual ALT conference is a gathering of over 400 academics, learning technologists, educational developers and technology and digital learning managers with shared interests in the development and effective use of learning technology in education. Although the Association serves all sectors (including schools and FE), delegates are mainly from Higher Education. The face to face event is supported by online activities, including live streaming of keynotes, a very active twitter stream and an online conference site for communication and sharing between delegates, many of which can be accessed from the conference web site: <https://altc.alt.ac.uk/2016>

The conference chairs this year, Professor Nicola Whitton (MMU) and Alex Moseley (University of Leicester) brought a playful note to the conference, reflecting their research interests in games and learning. They assembled an impressive collection of keynote speakers, which are summarized here.

### **Ian Livingstone, Founder of Games Workshop *Code, create, collaborate***

Ian was a co-author of the NESTA Next Gen. report <http://www.nesta.org.uk/publications/next-gen> which highlights the failure of the education system to provide learners with the skills needed for our important games and visual effects industries. He highlighted the learning and skills development that takes place in games and the need for teachers (and teacher trainers) to understand and use games and gaming approaches.

Keynote presentation – recording available at: <https://altc.alt.ac.uk/2016/sessions/keynote-ian-livingstone>

Forthcoming book (2017) Hacking the Curriculum

### **Jane Secker, University of Leicester *Copyright and eLearning***

Jane spoke about the importance of information literacy in teachers and students and the need to think about copyright as respect for other people's ideas.

Keynote presentation – recording available at: <https://altc.alt.ac.uk/2016/sessions/keynote-jane-secker>

# ALT Conference

**Donna Lanclos, UNC Charlotte and Dave White, University of the Arts, London**  
*Being Human is your problem*

Donna and Dave made the case for us to take responsibility, as privileged members of institutions, for discussion and development of teaching and learning which develops practices and identities, and doesn't get 'stuck' around issues of access and skills as institutions focus more and more on metrics and surveys. They argued that we need to be human in digital spaces, create open cultures where students and staff share, and be honest about processes.

Keynote presentation – recording available at: <https://altc.alt.ac.uk/2016/sessions/keynote-donna-lanclos-and-david-white/>

**Lia Commissar, Wellcome Trust**  
*Neuroscience and Education*

Lia attempted to explain why neuroscience is important for education and summarise some of the key findings emerging from research in this area. She also outlined the enormous research effort currently underway, supported by the Wellcome Trust and organizations including the

Education Endowment Foundation looking at a range of interventions over the next 4-5 years. There are still many underexplored areas to which neuroscience will contribute, for instance the uniqueness of adolescents, the impact of stress on learning and learning throughout life.

Keynote presentation – recording available at: <https://altc.alt.ac.uk/2016/sessions/keynote-lia-commissar>

**Josie Taylor, University of Leicester**  
*In the valley of the trolls*

Josie provided a thought provoking presentation of the darker side of interaction on the internet, highlighting some of the challenges created if we are committed to open practices and making work available to everyone, not just those who agree with us. Her key advice is to 'Ignore, block, report' in the face of any trolling incidents.

Keynote presentation – recording available at: <https://altc.alt.ac.uk/2016/sessions/keynote-josie-fraser>

Further information about the conference is available from: <https://altc.alt.ac.uk/2016>  
The next ALT conference will take place in Liverpool in early September 2017.

# SERA Conference

## SERA Conference Report

November 2016,

University of Dundee

Sandra Nicol

### Keynotes

On Wednesday 23rd the Conference was officially opened by Professor Stephen McKinney, President of SERA who introduced the opening keynote lecture entitled '*Challenging? Attainment & Improvement - myths, mysteries & myopia*' given by Professor Louise Hayward, University of Glasgow. She explored the myths and mysteries that seem likely to lead education into the myopic world of post truth policy and practice; assessment ends up in the role of the 'villain' whereas she argues research offers an insight into how assessment 'enhances learning for all...promoting The annual Scottish Educational Research Association (SERA) Conference took place on 23rd - 25th better life chances that lie at the heart of any commitment to social justice.' She went on to promote alternative approaches encouraging policy makers, practitioners, and researchers to work together to 'improve and empower rather than deliver.'

The second keynote, sponsored by GTCS, was delivered on Thursday 25th by Professor Matthew Clark of the University of York St. John. The title of this lecture was '*Education and Democratization: Moving beyond the service of goods to write the poetry of the future.*'

Professor Clark drew on the insights offered by many authors from the world of politics, sociology and psychology as well as education to critically analyse what is going on in the human consciousness, driven by the addictions and seductions of capitalist and neo-liberal politics. Also education has given in to 'market-based principles' where 'measurement and performance targets and indicators has led to the narrowing of the curriculum in order to concentrate resources on improving test outcomes.' Clark offered a psychoanalytical reading of current problems and invited the audience to reflect on the inner world that drives our actions...

On Friday, Professor Margaret Arnott of the University of West of Scotland delivered the Nisbet lecture titled: '*Jigsaw puzzle of education policy? Nation, State and Globalized Policy Making.*' She reviewed a raft of policies exploring the tensions that have arisen in Scottish education and how global approaches and agencies such as the OECD have impacted on 'national traditions and practices.' The lecture specifically addressed the 'question of how significant territorial interests remain in the presence of increasingly salient global economic, social and cultural interests in educational policy, ...and Scotland's response to global agendas of policy change and education policy in England.'

### Conference Programme and Delegates

The Conference programme was varied covering areas such as social justice and inclusion, professional and vocational learning, policy, and assessment amongst others. Delivery included papers, symposia, pecha kucha, 3-minute thesis, round table discussions, workshops and posters.

# SERA Conference

Delegates were drawn from all over Scotland and parts of the UK including the Icelandic group who have been regular attenders over several years as well as other international participants. Staff from the University of Aberdeen played prominent roles in the conference including judging papers, sitting on panels and chairing sessions.

## University of Aberdeen Contributors

Dr Kirsten Darling McQuistan's paper entitled '*Creating a relational understanding of the role of the teacher: a self-study*' focused on the critical reflection of the 'complex interacting web of social, cultural, historical and political norms and expectations. She explored the feeling of 'disembodiment' because of the continued focus on the learner giving the potential to 'disconnect the teacher from the learner.' The paper suggests that the approach of self-study could be a possible antidote to this problem where teachers not only recognise 'who they are' and 'what they might become' but also the 'possibility of influencing the ever-changing fabric of the education system.'

Rachel Shanks presented a paper on '*Parentcraft education for hard-to-reach parents via podcast.*' Rachel was presenting on behalf of herself and other researchers in the field of paediatrics. The focus was how to provide accessible antenatal/parentcraft education for those mothers who can be less easy to reach, because

of social deprivation, geographical location, age or marital status. An outline of the study was provided and Rachel explained that the findings suggested podcasts, or another web-based intervention, have the potential to increase accessibility to parentcraft education for women who live in more remote rural areas.

Sandra Nicol's presentation on '*Support for Supervisors of Masters Level Dissertations/Work Based Projects: the student perspective,*' outlined work undertaken by her and her colleague Sarah Cornelius and followed on from a paper published earlier in the year with the regard to supporting the supervisors of dissertations and projects. One outcome of the previous part of this action research project worthy of further research was 'the value of communication and collaboration between supervisors to help provide appropriate support for students and for each other'. The paper outlined research to investigate enhanced support now provided for supervisors might have impacted on raising attainment of students.

Sandra Nicol also presented a paper entitled, '*The Use of Moving Image Education in the classroom to enhance attainment.*' The area of exploration was, 'Can MIE be a versatile tool that can be employed in the classroom to motivate children, in particular those who find writing challenging?' Sandra outlined her methodology and main findings which included; Education students see the use of MIE as a key resource in the delivery of literacy and; that reluctant writers (pupils) are finding other ways to demonstrate their literacy levels through verbalisation, story boarding and artwork.



# SERA Conference

The emerging concern is that there is the development of a 'parallel' curriculum that alienates pupils from school as it does not necessarily incorporate the digital world they inhabit.

Final year PhD student Esther Nyaga gave a conference paper in the Professional and Vocational Learning Strand. Her paper 'School Leadership and Teacher Professional Learning: An Exploration of Head teacher Leadership Practice in Public Primary Schools in Kenya' was very well-received with a number of interesting questions following on from her presentation.

Laura Colucci-Gray co-convened a round table with Betsy King from Learning for Sustainability Scotland and Helen Docherty, current chief executive of the General Teaching Council. The round table invited representatives from different teacher education institutions to share their approaches to the implementation of learning for sustainability in their teacher education programmes. Representatives from Edinburgh, West of Scotland, Glasgow and Aberdeen offered a range of significant contributions. Discussion focussed on new pedagogies and new philosophical approaches to learning and education which open pupils' opportunities to learn from the whole world.

PhD student Jessica Singer offered a workshop using arts-based methodologies to explore the identity of the teacher and the identity of the artists. Workshop was

very enjoyable as we were invited to talk about our different backgrounds; reasons and motivations leading to a career in education... and we discovered that as educational researchers we are all a bit like artists... the art of research at the heart of education!

## **SERA as an organisation**

Several members of staff are involved in the organisation of SERA. Please contact anyone listed below for further information.

Dr Laura Colucci-Gray, past president, sits on the Executive board as does Dr Rachel Shanks. Sandra Nicol sits on both the Conference committee and Executive and is assisting the Academic Secretary in this current year. Dr Mhairi Beaton is also on the Executive as the representative of BERA. SERA has links with both it and other European and worldwide research associations.

The SERA website is supported by the University of Aberdeen and so there are and have been close links with SERA for many years. It would be encouraging for more School of Education staff to become members of the organisation and details can be had from the website: [www.sera.ac.uk](http://www.sera.ac.uk) PhD students are particularly encouraged to sign up as this offers opportunities for them to explore their research focus with a wider audience and present findings etc.

There are several networks in SERA such as the Poverty and Education network, the Scottish Physical education Network and the Leadership Network. For more information visit: [www.sera.ac.uk/networks](http://www.sera.ac.uk/networks) An Emerging Researchers Network has also recently been set up. The networks hold events throughout the year.

# Research Collaborations & Publications

## Paper Accepted

**Journal:** Professional Development in Education

**Title of article:** Changing the landscape of school/university partnership in Northern Scotland

**Authors:** Yvonne Bain, Jayne Bruce, Douglas Weir (School of Education)

## Research Collaborations

### Dr Laura Colucci-Gray

Between October and November two visitors - Prof Allyson McDonald from the University of Iceland and Dr Annie Pirrie - from the University of West of Scotland - have visited the School of Education to develop new links and collaborations. Annie Pirrie delivered a seminar and workshop on writing as research on Tuesday 8th November. Recording and PowerPoint of her presentation are available on the Research Exchange on my Aberdeen. Prof Allyson McDonald will deliver a seminar on 15th November.

## Research Publications

### Rachel Shanks

Attard Tonna, M. and Shanks, RK. (in press). 'The importance of environment for teacher professional learning in Malta and Scotland'. *European Journal of Teacher Education*.

Cornelius, S. and Shanks, R. 'Expectations and challenges: the implementation of mobile devices in a Scottish primary school'. *Technology, Pedagogy and Education*. Published online: 16 Mar 2016. DOI: 10.1080/1475939X.2016.1153513

### Dr Laura Colucci-Gray

Dr Laura Colucci-Gray has recently contributed a critical analysis of the newly released science benchmarks for CfE, published on Prof Mark Priestley's blog. The blog is gathering a selection of critical views from academics in various subjects about the new benchmarks.

See full text at the following link:

[www.mrpriestley.wordpress.com/2016/11/15/some-commentary-on-the-new-cfe-science-benchmarks](http://www.mrpriestley.wordpress.com/2016/11/15/some-commentary-on-the-new-cfe-science-benchmarks)

### Graeme Nixon

Since the last bulletin Graeme has had 2 journal articles and 1 book chapter published. Here are their locations and abstracts:

Nixon, G., McMurtry, DC., Craig, L., Regan-Addis, H. & Annick, N. (2016). 'Studies in mindfulness: widening the field for all involved in pastoral care'. *Pastoral Care in Education*, vol 34, no. 3, pp. 167-183.

[www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02643944.2015.1127990](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02643944.2015.1127990)

Since 2010, the University of Aberdeen, Scotland, UK, has offered an MSc in studies in mindfulness degree programme within its School of Education. The programme has attracted over 200 students from multiple professional contexts, providing the authors with the opportunity to gather and analyse demographic data, as well as data regarding student motivations and expectations, both personal and professional. The paper initially creates a picture of the current UK 'studies in mindfulness' landscape by describing the established programmes at UK universities.

# Research Collaborations & Publications

Data from an entry questionnaire completed by three cohorts of students on the 'Aberdeen' programme and data collected from students throughout their studies is then presented, analysed and discussed. The authors argue that, in their professional roles, graduates from programmes and courses at Universities in the UK are introducing an ever-increasing number of people to mindfulness. They are implementing and integrating mindfulness into diverse social, business contexts as well as into all sectors of education.

The University of Aberdeen's programme, based in the School of Education, perhaps represents a move towards more holistic, pastoral and multi-professional applications of mindfulness. This contrasts with the clinical, pathological settings for mindfulness to date.

---

Nixon, G. (2016) 'Conscientious withdrawal from religious education in Scotland: anachronism or necessary right?' *British Journal of Religious Education*, vol 38, pp. 1-15.

DOI: 10.1080/01416200.2016.1161597

This paper considers the right of parental withdrawal from the statutory subject Religious Education (RE) in Scottish primary and secondary schools. The background, history and current legislative situation relating to this right are considered, as well as current discussions and debates about this issue.

The intentions are to establish how often and for what reasons parents opt to withdraw their children, as well as to investigate how schools and local authorities respond to requests for withdrawal. This research is informed by a survey of primary and secondary schools within two local authorities in particular. It emerges that there are relatively few cases of withdrawal. A majority of participating schools argued for the abolition of this right.

---

Nixon, G. McMurtry, D. C. (2016). 'Mindfulness'. In C Martin, M Fleming & H Smith (eds), *Mental Health and Well-Being in the Learning and Teaching Environment*. Swan and Horn, Auctermuchty, pp. pp289-301

David McMurtry and I have also had a book chapter published.

In this chapter, the authors introduce the concept of mindfulness in education. An initial introduction to mindfulness and its origins as a secular approach to health and well-being is followed by a consideration of the broad educational context and the challenges and opportunities associated with introducing mindfulness into education. Mindfulness is then considered as a means to enhance both well-being and learning.

The chapter concludes with a consideration of the potential benefits of mindfulness for learners and leaders of learning. In helping us to let go of the often mindless and restless striving that lies at the heart of our mental processes and habit-driven behaviour, mindfulness prepares the way for genuinely rich and deep learning and the journey from self-obsession to a fuller engagement with life and with others. There can be few worthier educational ideals (Hyland 2009).

# Presentations

## Conference Presentations

### Dr Rachel Shanks

Shanks, R., Robinson, F., Shanks, S.D. and Wilson, P. (2016) 'Parentcraft education for hard-to-reach parents via podcast', Scottish Educational Research Association Conference, '*Challenging? Attainment and improvement...*' Dundee, UK, 23rd-25th November 2016.

Shanks, R. and Molloy, C. (2016) Young people's political communities and democratic participation, Contemporary Childhood Conference, '*Young Citizens & Society: Fostering Civic Participation*', Glasgow, UK, 2nd-3rd September 2016.

Aderibigbe, S., Holland, E., Marušić, I. and Shanks, R. (2016) Paper 1: Barriers to mentoring, in Network 1 Symposium 'Teacher mentoring: barriers, benefits and the reflective practitioner model', European Conference on Educational Research, '*Leading Education: The Distinct Contributions of Educational Research and Researchers*', Dublin, Ireland, 23rd-26th August 2016.

Shanks, R. (2016) Informal learning at academic conferences, Network 6 roundtable: Conferences In The Context Of Academic Performance, Informal Learning And Alternative Designs - Between Theory And Practice, European Conference on Educational Research, '*Leading Education: The Distinct Contributions of Educational Research and Researchers*', Dublin, Ireland, 23rd-26th August 2016.

Shanks, R. And Molloy, C. (2016) Young people's voice and political communities in schools in Scotland, *Democracy and Education Conference*, Ayr, UK, 16th June 2016.

## Research Presentations

### Dr Laura Colucci-Gray

Dr Laura Colucci-Gray and Ms. Jo Trowsdale (University of Warwick) have given an invited workshop for the Launch of the Curriculum Network led by Prof Mark Priestley, 9th November, University of Stirling. The workshop stimulated reflection on the pedagogical implications of introducing the Arts in the teaching of STEM... From STEM to STEAM... what assumptions and what possibilities?

Dr Laura Colucci-Gray will attend the round-table organised by GTCS and Learning for sustainability Scotland at the forthcoming SERA conference in Dundee, on 21 November. Laura will present on the provision on sustainability education currently available in the School of Education and will report on the conversations held over the past year with Dr Liz Curtis, Ms. Catriona McDonald, Dr Archie Graham and Dr Donald Gray.