

Linking Research to the Practice of Education

Linking Research to the Practice of Education is a publication of the School of Education (SoE), UNE, for all educators: early childhood, primary and secondary. It introduces research, conducted by SoE staff, applicable to educational settings.

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Editorial

Welcome to this edition of *Linking Research to the Practice of Education*, a UNE School of Education research newsletter for all educators.

Four articles are presented in this issue. First, Dr Mutuota Kigotho illustrates how using Personal Experience Narratives in the secondary classroom can help students gain confidence in their composition writing. The second article is a review of the book *Researching Early Childhood Education for Sustainability: Challenging Assumptions and Orthodoxies*. The co-editors of the book, Dr Sue Elliott, Professor Eva Årlemalm-Hagsér and Adjunct Professor Julie Davis, are active advocates in the field of Early Childhood Education for Sustainability. In this review, they briefly overview the content of the book then explain its relevance to practitioners and researchers alike. In the third article, Associate Professor Brian Denman presents an opinion piece on how to address some challenges of the "new normal" imposed by the ongoing COVID19 pandemic. In particular, Dr Denman argues that a reevaluation of Assessment Practice is warranted as the demands mount for Education to meet and even exceed the requirements for the future of work. The last "article" presented in this issue is an invitation for educators and students to participate in an art and craft competition. The author, Dr Marg Rogers, is seeking artwork productions from children, teenagers and adults to use for her eBook series designed to help Australian Defence Force (ADF) families navigate some challenges associated with deployment.

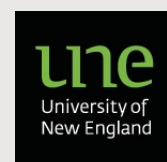
We hope that you find something engaging in this issue. The next issue will be published in February, 2021.

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Personal Experience Narratives (PEN) and the power of writing stories

Dr Mutuota Kigotho (UNE)

Writing is usually a very challenging task for most people. Students who are less confident writers may feel discouraged and disheartened when asked to write. The challenge for teachers of writing remains how to motivate and encourage their students to engage with composition writing. In this article, I share how writing narratives about personal experiences may help overcome the writer's block that some students may face. The article is based on a study I carried out in a girls' school in New South Wales where eighteen students responded to three writing tasks inviting them to narrate their personal experiences.

In a comment about Personal Experience Narratives (PEN) using digital storytelling, Robin (2009) notes that '[PEN] revolve around significant events in life and can be emotionally charged and personally meaningful to both the author and the viewer' (p. 224). Elsewhere, I have stated that 'in the competitive academic world, a literate person is taken to be one who possesses sound writing skills. Indeed, as a literacy skill, writing receives considerable attention in schooling' (Kigotho, 2018, p. 37) increasing as children and teenagers progress through their formal education.

Following Halliday (1994), teachers in Australia have turned to the functional model of language learning, which means language is usually taught within a context. This model has gained significant currency in the Australian school system, and is even being used in The Australian Curriculum: English (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2020). The curriculum for English uses standard grammatical terminology, but applies it within a contextual framework, in which language choices are seen to vary according to the topics at

hand, the nature and proximity of the relationships between the language users, and the modes or processes of communication available.

One research project about PEN involved me as a researcher working alongside an experienced secondary English and History teacher. In that research project, class teaching time was shared between the classroom teacher and myself as the researcher. The students were the participants in this research and were asked to undertake three main writing tasks.

In the first task, students were given an opportunity to write a composition about their personal experiences with keeping pets. Some students wrote about larger animals such as horses and cows, while others wrote about smaller animals such as dogs and cats. As they wrote about lived experiences, it appeared easy for the students to look for material to write about. Writing about pets served as a relatively level playing field and students happily participated in the exercise.

In the second task, students participated in a brainstorming session where they discussed how waste was managed by the local government. The most significant recent development was that the council had introduced a three-bin separation system that required residents to divide their waste into green, yellow and red bins. In the green bin residents placed green waste so that the council could use the waste to make manure from recycled green produce. In the yellow bins, residents placed plastic bottles and paper for recycling and in the red bins, residents placed what was destined for landfill. After brainstorming, students wrote letters to the editor of a local magazine encouraging their community counterparts to become involved in recycling their waste. Students indicated their individual contribution to the program as well as the contribution their families made towards saving the

planet by encouraging appropriate home waste management.

In the third task, students were asked to write about how they had spent a national day of commemoration. The researcher suggested that the students write about how they had spent ANZAC Day. In Australia, ANZAC Day is commemorated on April 25 as a public holiday. The day was set aside as a mark of respect for those who served and sacrificed their lives in the Great War, World War I (WWI). However, in the years since WWI Australian troops have been involved in conflicts, peacekeeping and border control operations across the globe and so the date has become the day on which the nation remembers those who served Australia and those who have sacrificed their life, health or mental health to serve their country. The acronym ANZAC means the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps. The writing task was timed to coincide with the week after commemorating ANZAC Day. Again, since students were asked to write about lived experiences, they appeared to find it easy to report about this event in writing. Some students found this task culturally relevant, while others found it challenging.

As students engaged with the three tasks, they reported that writing about a topic they knew well helped them in gaining confidence in their composition writing. As a first step to scaffolding student's writing skills and improving their confidence, I argue teachers need to consider giving students tasks that are within reach. When teachers ask students to write about something that they have experienced, that automatically reduces the cognitive burden. This has the potential to make students feel more comfortable about managing a writing task. The teacher can gradually promote student writing progression by offering tasks that are more challenging. When a writing task is based on an authentic experience,

students are likely to be more at ease in attending to such writing as they write within a specific context and culture (Halliday, 1994).

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Review of Researching Early Childhood Education for Sustainability: Challenging Assumptions and Orthodoxies

Dr Sue Elliott (UNE), Professor Eva Ärlemalm-Hagsér (Mälardalen University, Sweden), and Adjunct Professor Julie Davis (QUT)

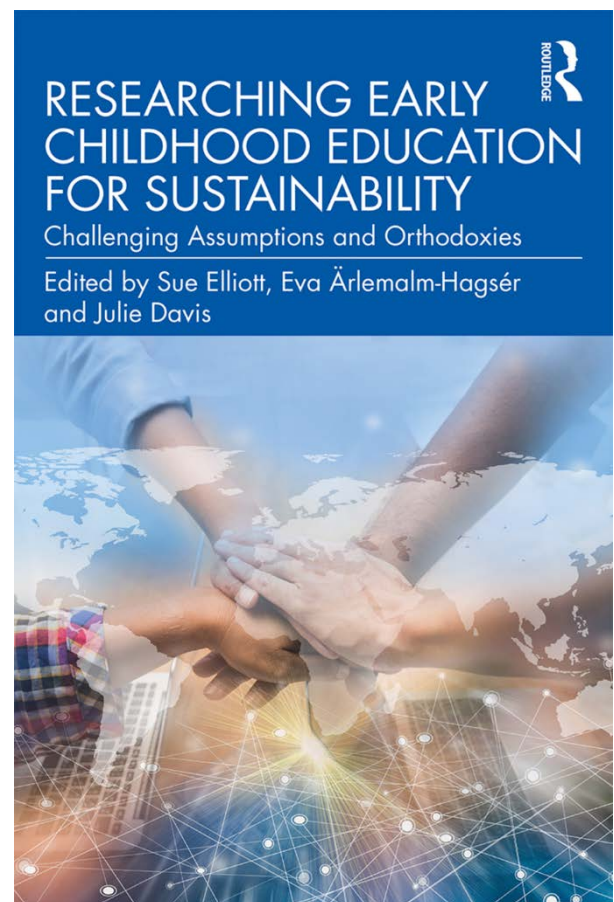
This new publication, *Researching Early Childhood Education for Sustainability: Challenging Assumptions and Orthodoxies*, was co-edited by Dr Sue Elliott, University of New England, Professor Eva Ärlemalm-Hagsér, Mälardalen University, Sweden and Adjunct Professor Julie Davis, Queensland University of Technology. All are long-standing active researchers, authors and advocates in the field of Early Childhood Education for Sustainability (ECEfS).

The co-editors capture the now burgeoning international ECEfS research field. With the increasing urgency of global climate disruptions, compounded by a now-global pandemic, the international scope of this book offers a comprehensive guide to the key role of sustainability in early childhood education, at a time when it is critically needed. There is a vital place for ECEfS across every sphere that purports to advocate for children in the present and that values their futures. As Clark et al. (2020) recently stated in the medical journal, *The Lancet*, “We live in an era like no other. Our children face a future of great opportunity, but they stand on the precipice of a climate crisis” (p. 649). Central to the research shared in this volume is the perspective that young children can, and should, be active participants in transformative change for healthy, just and sustainable futures, alongside their educators and other significant adults. More importantly, the book offers some practical advice to inspire early years’ educators to implement ECEfS in their early learning communities.

The book chapters are arranged in three clusters Cluster 1: Ethics and Values; Cluster 2: Historical and Sociocultural Contexts; and, Cluster 3: Curriculum and Pedagogy.

Cluster 1 comprises an analysis of historical and contemporary early childhood theories. For researchers and practitioners alike, this presents an opportunity for engaging in critical reflection about the interactions between humans and the planet we inhabit. Authors in this cluster advocate for a pedagogical transformation towards eco-centric worldviews that promote the thriving of all species, not just humans. For example, practitioners might investigate with children relationships between humans and the Earth.

Cluster 2 is more pragmatic in focus, charting ECEfS policy directions and initiatives across a range of countries and offering a snapshot of changing national landscapes. In particular, there are early signs that some early childhood education policies are changing to incorporate education for sustainability. The co-editors encourage all educators to advocate for ECEfS as integral to policy at every level from services to national governments, policy and practice change go hand in hand.



In Cluster 3, the chapters feature research into curriculum and pedagogy and exhibit two foci. Firstly, a re-examination of the historical legacies around children’s outdoor play in nature. Some chapter authors invite educators to look beyond a “nature only approach” to sustainability and consider newer

theoretical stances such as post humanism. A post humanist stance involves a shift away from anthropocentrism where nature is perceived as a human resource and the embedding of ethical relationships with nature. Secondly, the key role of education for sustainability in teacher education courses is argued and concerns raised about its total absence across many courses. Both pre-service and in-service professional learning for all educators is essential, if ECEfS is to be embedded in daily practice.

The co-editors have long argued across many platforms for the legitimate place of ECEfS as a leading research and practice contributor to global sustainability and intergenerational equity. We are now urgently and collectively navigating the global COVID-19 pandemic and witnessing the impacts across all the UNESCO sustainability dimensions: political, economic, social and natural (UNESCO, 2010). As co-editors, we assert that this pandemic is a test case for managing the 'slow catastrophe' of climate change (Pierrehumbert, 2006). We need monumental shifts in thinking and practice and invite researchers and practitioners globally to "challenge assumptions and orthodoxies" in order to make transformative change happen sooner rather than later.

To locate a copy of the book, please visit:

<https://www.routledge.com/Researching-Early-Childhood-Education-for-Sustainability-Challenging-Assumptions/Elliott-Arlemalm-Hagser-Davis/p/book/9781138332263>

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Re-evaluating Education post COVID-19

Associate Professor Brian Denman

Deputy Head of School and Head of Department for Globalisation, Leadership and Policy at UNE

In the midst of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, I have found myself betwixt and between Australia and the United States of America, having been temporarily marooned in the States due, in part to my mother's passing. This time of self-reflection over the last few months has allowed me to consider what our "new normal" should be post COVID-19.

As a comparative educator, who researches educational systems worldwide, I contend that the education sector must reevaluate its immediate priorities as a condition for its own survival. These include:

- 1) protecting educators;
- 2) maintaining links between teachers, students, parents and community;
- 3) identifying and correcting technological change and disruptions;
- 4) reassessing education for life; and,
- 5) re-evaluating education as a personal investment.

Education's future relies heavily on decision-making now, and consumer confidence will ultimately decide its fate. The "disruption" of COVID-19 is providing the education sector with an unequivocal opportunity to take stock of a fundamental, longer-term challenge such as re-evaluating core competencies and the curriculum. This is what educators can control and modify and from my observations, it is high time this be re-examined. As financial scholars begin to differentiate the economy from the markets in a post COVID-19 world, so too should educators begin to differentiate between developing core competencies and the scaffolding of personalised attributes (higher order skills). This requires a bold step in shifting the emphasis from how much a student has learned to incorporating what has been learned. From my perspective, the 'how much' and 'what' should be considered an integration of education's "new normal". The 'how much' may be analogous to the economy and the 'what' to the market. Both are essential to building knowledge accumulation and know how, yet the 'what' has, at times, been blurred by the influence of promoters of NAPLANs and other international survey instruments.

The challenge now is how educators can best measure personalised attributes with core competencies in school settings. No longer are core competencies enough to meet and exceed requirements for the future of work or increase standards of excellence. An investment in assessing personalised attributes within the curriculum is needed now.

At UNE's School of Education, personalised attributes such as creativity, communication, analytical thinking, problem solving and reflective thinking have been identified as critical in improving productivity, efficiency and job satisfaction, but perhaps more importantly, in identifying strengths of character in each

student. Post COVID-19 provides for individualised opportunities to engage in further learning through the integration of personalised attributes with core competencies. The hope is that if such an integration and benchmarking system were to become operational, it would also promote new forms of educational developments that could not only benefit the individual, but also the greater community.

UNE has designed **online, personalised** assessment tools designed to **measure** and **visualise** higher order skills among students, which have been embedded in the new Master of Applied Leadership and Master of Comparative and International Education for 2021.

The need for rethinking assessment methods

School curricular reform has typically been highly prescribed in Australia. This has resulted in a reconciled listing of skill sets or competencies that do not necessarily match identifiable personalised attributes associated with higher order skills (e.g. creativity, communication, analytical thinking, problem solving, and reflective thinking). It also does not provide the incentive for critically reflecting on pedagogical approaches and methods of assessment that could accommodate, benchmark, and scaffold higher order skills. Sir Ken Robertson has for some time called for a re-introduction of art and allied subjects into the school curriculum, arguing that the "Enlightenment/Industrial Revolution" model of education no longer provides the grounding to foster higher order skills (see for example Robinson and Aronica, 2016). A comparison of curricular changes over time in the West, particularly in Australia, has seen the near obliteration of arts and music in general education, which exacerbates the need to meet student

demands and ultimately employment prospects. In a recent report published by the Australian Bureau of Communications and Arts Research (2019), demand for creative skills is expected to increase, especially as Artificial Intelligence (AI)---in all its various forms---develop and become integral in future workplaces.

There is a critical need for the educator to take charge and utilise his/her ability to assess the student in question, to scaffold knowledge acquisition and student potential and to build on the accumulation of constructed knowledges. This need is addressed by Gonski et. al (2018, p. 67), who emphasised the importance of ongoing teacher professional development and maximising student impact by allowing each teacher to:

- select, adapt and apply appropriate assessments to determine the students' current levels of attainment in particular learning areas;
- use assessment outcomes and data to diagnose and evaluate the diverse capabilities and learning needs of individual students in a classroom;
- analyse and use data and evidence about student learning to select appropriate resources and activities to tailor teaching to meet the personalised learning needs of students; and,
- collaborate with, and support, colleagues to implement teaching methods that maximise individual student learning growth.

Ongoing research at UNE's School of Education emphasises studies designed to gain greater insight into the attitudes, beliefs, perceptions and expectations of key stakeholders in benchmarking and scaffolding higher order skills with core competences. While higher order skills may differ at national, regional and local levels, contextual

differences and multiple understandings and application of these attributes may pave the way for shifting the focus from basic literacy and numeracy to celebrating individualised character strengths based on application. By attempting to unmask best practice and identifying appropriate ways to benchmark and scaffold these skills, UNE's School of Education aims to personalise the learning experience of each individual student, which helps promote greater competency in skill utilisation for long term potential.

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Early Childhood Defence Programs Project

Dr Marg Rogers (UNE)

The Early Childhood Defence Program is a three-year project that has been designed to create, evaluate and publish 2 free, online programs to assist parents and educators to better support very young children from 2 years old in Australian Defence Force families. These children are exposed to family stressors such as frequent relocations and a parent or

parents who work away for extended periods of time due to deployment and training.

Some of the resources in the programs include research-based eBooks that act as a springboard for discussions and activities with children. Prior research has shown there were almost no age and/or culturally appropriate resources for younger age groups, their parents reported feeling isolated and unsupported (Rogers & Bird, 2020) while educators described being under-resourced (Rogers, 2020). The eBooks and related program modules cover a range of topics, such as deployment, family transitions, responses to parents working away and parenting issues experienced when one parent is frequently coming and going from the household. Additionally, a few modules are for specific families who may experience a parent returning home with an injury or a mental health condition.

I am asking the community to be involved in the project in 2 ways:

- I. providing me with some ideas of what they think they might like to see in the programs and resources now under development; and,
- II. contributing artwork for some of the resources through the competition outlined below.

Art and Craft Competition 2020

Entries from children, teenagers and adults open until 20th October 2020. Winners will be announced during Children's Week on 1st November 2020.

Each category will have one prize of a \$50 (AUD) voucher from a local shop near you e.g. toy or variety shop.

Artwork might be in many forms including:

1. drawing (e.g. crayon, chalk, ochre, pencil, charcoal, digital on paper, canvas, fabric, bark, rock, recycled materials, metal)
2. painting or dying (e.g. on paper, fabric, bark, rock, recycled materials)
3. craft, mosaic, paper cutting or collage using recycled, natural and/or new materials



Photo by Wei-Cheng Wu on Unsplash

4. installations, lanterns, woodworking, metalwork



Photo by Dominik Scythe on Unsplash

5. sculpture or masks (e.g. clay, sand, mud, plasticine, metal, wood, rock, metal)



Photo by Alex Jones on Unsplash

6. printmaking (but not commercially created stencils or stamps)
7. arrangement of natural or recycled objects (e.g. shells on the beach, rocks on the ground, leaves on a path, flowers)



Photo by Federica Giusti on Unsplash

8. textiles (e.g. sewing, weaving, knitting, tatting, crocheting, patchwork, costuming)

Children can submit entries to **one of five** categories.

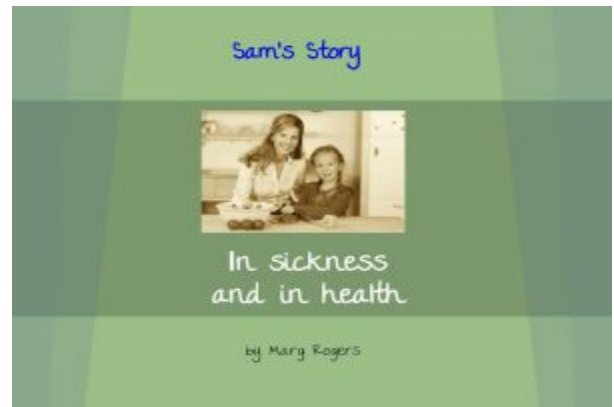
Category one

Ages 3-5: cover for 'Ben's story: And so, things have been a bit different since Dad came back injured'. This story is about what happened in Ben's family when his Dad came back early from deployment because he was injured. His Grandmother tells a story to help Ben understand that families can work together to help each other.



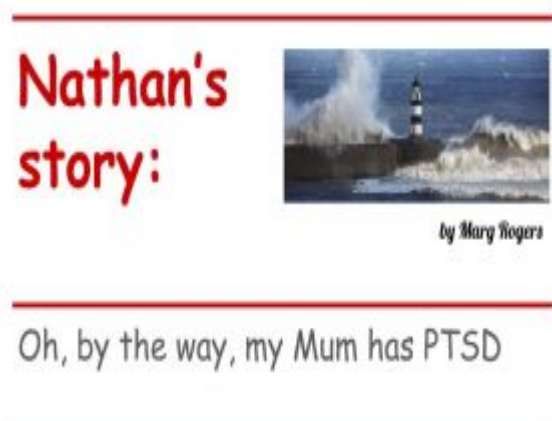
Category two

Ages 6-9: cover for 'Sam's story: In sickness and in health'. This story is about what happened in Sam's family when her Mum came back from deployment and was not able to do all the things Sam used to enjoy doing with her Mum because of her injuries. They have to find other activities to do together.



Category three

Ages 10-12: cover for 'Nathan's Story: Oh, by the way, my Mum has PTSD'. This story is about Nathan and his siblings and Dad as they work together to help their Mum who has PTSD, and to understand what PTSD is.



Category four

Teenagers and adults: cover for 'But really, Love, we're OK: Stories they tell from home'. This book is for adults and gives examples of those parents who have stayed at home while their spouse deployed from World War I until today. It is about the way they often do different and extra jobs, and parent by themselves. They try to let their spouses know they are okay so they don't worry, even when things are rough.



Category five

Any age: cover for 'But really, Love, I'm OK: Stories they tell from the front'. This book is for adults and shows those parents who have deployed from World War I until today. It is about the way they want to let their spouse back home know they are okay so they don't fret, even when things are really tough.



More information about the [competition](#), [rules](#) and [entry form](#) are on our [website](#), along with free resources for [parents](#), [educators](#), [children](#), and those wanting to learn [Auslan Keyword singing](#).

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Interested in further study in education?

Do you want to return to study? Do you want to know more? The University of New England offers a wide variety of programs to assist teachers to upgrade their skills. Within many courses you can specialise in the area in which you are interested. For more information, visit some of the links below:

School of Education Postgraduate Study: <http://www.une.edu.au/about-une/academic-schools/school-of-education/future-students/postgraduate>

Graduate Certificate in Education Studies: <https://my.une.edu.au/courses/2020/courses/GCES/program-of-study-schedule-a.html>

Master of Education: <https://my.une.edu.au/courses/2020/courses/MED>

Master of Education (Research): <https://my.une.edu.au/courses/2020/courses/MEDR>

Doctor of Education: <https://my.une.edu.au/courses/2020/courses/EDD>

PhD: <https://my.une.edu.au/courses/2020/courses/PHD>

Interested in Becoming a Teacher? The career opportunities for education graduates are increasing every year, especially in regional, rural and remote areas of Australia. By studying at UNE you will be well equipped to perform in these often-demanding contexts, plus you'll be more likely to obtain a permanent teaching position if you work in an area of teacher shortage. The NSW Government even offers a variety of targeted scholarships to help you study and gain employment:

www.teach.nsw.edu.au/getpaidtostudy

UNE has developed undergraduate courses in Early Childhood and Primary and K-12 Teaching to expand employment prospects by qualifying you to teach across two sectors.

What Teaching Courses are Available? UNE offers a number of undergraduate Education courses including:

Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood Teaching)

Bachelor of Education (K-6 Teaching)

Bachelor of Special and Inclusive Education (Primary)

Bachelor of Education (Secondary Arts)

Bachelor of Education (Secondary Mathematics)

Bachelor of Education (Secondary Music)

Bachelor of Education (Secondary Science)

Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood and Primary)

Bachelor of Education (K-12 Teaching)

You can find out more about all UNE courses via the Course and Unit Catalogue: my.une.edu.au/courses/

Worried About the New “Three Band Five” Requirements? Many of our Initial Teacher Education courses are structured to include one year of “discipline studies” (i.e. subject/s that you will go on to teach in schools) in the first year of study. Successful completion of this first year also gives all students, irrespective of their educational backgrounds, the opportunity to demonstrate they meet the Government’s academic standards for studying teaching.

Try our online ‘Teaching Solution Finder’ at www.becomeateacher.com.au, which makes it easy to understand the entry requirements of our Early Childhood Education and Initial Teacher Education degrees, and design a study pathway based on your personal circumstances.

Want to stay informed about our School activities? Join our UNE School of Education community on Facebook to keep up with our news and happenings in research, teaching and learning: facebook.com/UNEEducation