Linking Research to the Practice of Education

University of New England

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.

Vol. 7, No. 1 (2023) | ISSN: 2207-5151

1. Three steps to teaching disciplinary literacies (p. 2-4)
2. Creating a "Golden Thread" Between Theory and Practice: The Value of Exploring a Comprehensive Conceptual Framework (p. 4-5)
3. The spiral curriculum revisited (p. 6-7)
4. Teacher well-being: Demystifying the burden of teacher workloads and problematising the role of school culture (p. 8-9)
5. Birdie's Tree research-based free resources about natural disasters (p. 10)
6. Book review: 'The body keeps the score: Mind, brain and body in the transformation of trauma' (p. 11)
7. Adult literacy campaigns bring significant benefits in First Nations communities (p. 12)

Lead Editor

Dr. Marg Rogers
marg.rogers@une.edu.au

Assistant Editors

Dr. Devrim Yilmaz
Dr. Leonardo Veliz

Editorial

Welcome to our March 2023 edition of Linking Research to the Practice of Education!

The first article, Dr Zuocheng Zhang provides us with a step-by-step plan to teach the language of each school subject, to students. The second article, by Dr Anna Du Plessis, discusses the way pre-service teacher practicums provide a link between theory and practice.

The third article, by Dr Brendan Jacobs revisits the 'spiral curriculum', discussing its' implication for STEM education. The fourth article, by Dr Leonardo Veliz and Dr Casey Mainsbridge, explores teacher wellbeing and the impacts of management practices on teachers' work and attrition.

Also, in this edition, is information about some free research-based resources to support young children's understanding and resilience about the impacts of climate change events and changes due to the pandemic.

Additionally, there is a book review about the impacts of trauma on individuals, including children and families. Finally, Professor Bob Boughton, reveals the impacts and benefits of adult literacy education in Indigenous communities.

Newsletter available at: https://bit.ly/SoEresearchnews

School of Education
University of New England
Armidale, NSW, 2351, Australia
education@une.edu.au

CRICOS Provider Number: 00003G

University of New England | School of Education

Three steps to teaching disciplinary literacies

Zuocheng Zhang | zzhang26@une.edu.au | Senior Lecturer in English, Literacies and Language Education

Literacy practices such as comprehending and composing texts differ from subject to subject. What students need to read or write in English is different from what is needed in their Science subject. The way proficient readers or writers read or write is also found to be subject-specific. Teachers therefore have the responsibility of 'see'ing the distinct literacy practices in their subject and teaching them so that their students can achieve the learning outcomes in their subject. In the unit Literacies and Numeracies in Context at the School of Education, the University of New England, we have developed an approach to assisting pre-service and in-service teachers to teach disciplinary literacies or subject-specific literacies.

Subject teachers may feel there is little room for literacy because their curriculum is already crowded. They may also be apprehensive about teaching literacy practices in their subject as they need to find a way of talking about literacy as well as strategies for teaching it. As our teaching students have experienced in the unit, there are three steps to follow to 'see' literacy as being integral to their subject teaching and incorporate literacy teaching into their unit of work. School teachers may find it helpful to follow these steps and hone their skill of identifying and teaching disciplinary literacies accordingly.

Step 1

The first important step to take is helping our teaching students grow a language awareness. Our teaching students are asked to keep a language use diary by recording their language use in the past 24 hours. They need to include the topic of any interactions they may have had, people with whom they have interacted and the medium of their interaction, for example, spoken; written; and/or digital.

They are often surprised by the variation in their language use in different contexts. They are then asked to describe what language features are chosen because of the topic, the role they play in the interaction and the mode of their interaction.

Metalanguage, that is language for describing language, is provided to assist them in their description. This includes the use of Field, Tenor and Mode for describing the context as shown in Table 1.

By using the metalanguage to review their first-hand experience of language use, teaching students heighten their awareness that language use is subject to contextual factors.

They also practice explicitly describing language-context connections. By extension, they come

to see literacy practices in their subject as being subject-specific.

We also introduce them to concepts such as genre, or type of text that is typically used in each subject, for example, narratives in English, word problems in Mathematics and inquiry reports in Science. The text organisation, key sentence structures and word choices in each genre are explained in detail to help them understand and discuss the most noticeable or important features of the genres in their subject.

Table 1: Metalanguage for describing context

Metalanguage Term	Meaning
Field	The metalanguage for the topic of the interaction.
Tenor	The metalanguage for the roles and relationships between people in the interaction.
Mode	The medium or channel through which the interaction undergoes.

Step 2

The second major step involves using the metalanguage to articulate the literacy practices in their subject. Instead of spelling out the literacy practices for them, we invite our students to interrogate their curriculum document.

For example, after they have selected a content description or statement from their subject curriculum, they are prompted to describe the activities their students will be doing to learn the content. They are reminded that the activities are the contexts of language use and then asked to explicitly describe the features of language use.

This step is often not as straightforward as it may first appear. Our teaching students are assisted with the following prompting questions:

- What do your students need to read/view/listen to or write/compose/speak in the activities?
- What genres are the texts they need to comprehend and compose, e.g., narratives, procedure, explanation?
- How do the texts unfold from beginning to end?

- What typical sentence structures are there in the text?
- What technical words are essential to use in the text?
- Are visuals such as images used along with language?

They are also provided the metalanguage for describing literacy knowledge as listed in Table 2.

To give them concrete examples of making connections between content descriptions and learning and assessment task, we direct our teaching students to the work samples provided by ACARA or NESA for work samples by school children from various school subjects across all learning stages. They are guided to use the literacy concepts to analyse the strengths and weaknesses in literacy in the work samples.

Table 2: Metalanguage for describing literacy knowledge

Literacy concepts	Meaning
Genre	Text type.
Text knowledge	How text is organised, text structure, flow of text from sentence to sentence.
Grammar knowledge	Typical sentence structures such as sentence openers, sentences expressing cause and effect.
Word knowledge	Choice of technical vocabulary or everyday words.
Visual knowledge	How linguistic text and visual images are best laid out on the page or screen.

Step 3

The third key step is putting their knowledge of subject-specific literacies to use in their subject teaching. Our teaching students accept that literacy is an integral component of their subject teaching and needs to be taught explicitly where the demand for it arises. In their final assignment which is designing a unit of work, they are provided with a template which includes five columns as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Template for creating a lesson

Content description or achievement standard/ learning outcome that is addressed in the lesson	
Subject teaching activities	e.g., Explore human life styles and impact on the environment
Literacy demands that are placed on students by each subject teaching activity	Explain the consequences of the wide use of plastics
How the literacy demands are handled in the lesson	• Building a word wall for target vocabulary • Using highlighter to help parse complex cause-effect sentences • Sorting out text structure by putting scrambled sentences or paragraphs back to the correct order
Resources they use in teaching the subject and literacy demands	Worksheets

Summary

The above three steps of raising language awareness, identifying literacy demands and explicit teaching of literacy demands, develops in our teaching students the knowledge, skills and disposition essential to attending to literacy practices specific to their subject. These steps should also assist school teachers to 'see' literacy demands in their subject and ease them into integrated literacy and subject teaching. #

Creating a "Golden Thread" Between Theory and Practice: The Value of Exploring a Comprehensive Conceptual Framework

Associate Professor Anna Elizabeth Du Plessis | adupless@une.edu.au | Director, Office for Professional Learning, SoE

Finding and developing a "golden thread" between theory and practice in education entails strategic planning. It should embrace a full and comprehensive awareness of:

1. contextual factors,
2. associated aims and intentions,
3. pedagogical reasoning, and
4. *noticing*.

Noticing students and their learning will guide educators in identifying what needs to be done in classrooms and how it can be done. In this way, we are supporting a context-conscious approach. A strong "theory–practice" thread in teaching decisions and practices reflects a consciousness of students in their totality, and a responsiveness to their specific needs.

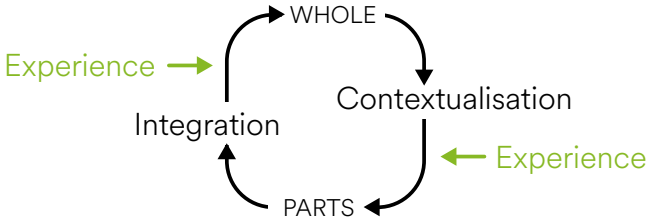
Such an approach is worth gold for classroom and behaviour management, students' development and for quality teaching. Quality teaching needs to be guided by a well-suited conceptual framing of teaching decisions; this supports the action of the invaluable link between theory and practice. In turn, a strong link between theory and practice offers a solid foundation for pedagogical mobility and flexibility.

The conceptual framing of quality teaching and learning effectively represents the context in which teachers perform their jobs and students explore learning. The tendency to identify quality teaching (and the desirable characteristics of a quality teacher) as a set of key factors—for example, self-efficacy, confidence, commitment, —cannot be justified if its appraisal is not embedded in context-consciousness. Any comparison (official or self-reflective) that is made between the perceived characteristics of an "ideal teacher" and the realities (or life-world) of an *actual* teacher operating in a complex classroom space are contextual. They are informed by the personal beliefs, norms, values, prejudices, and understandings of the appraiser. This is why context-consciousness is so vital. Both our ideals and our *moments* matter, and these need a frame to stimulate awareness of the context and lived experience thread in our classrooms to genuinely support the everydayness of teaching.

Over a decade ago, I developed a specific conceptual framework that was designed to support exploration of an in-depth understanding of lived experiences in an education environment with the intention of creating a context-consciousness foundation for teaching and learning. My context-conscious understanding development (C-CUD) (Du Plessis, 2019) theory begins by embracing teachers' voice and agency within their context as these are shared through linguistic encounters (verbal and nonverbal) and make meaning of the everydayness of being *the knowledgeable other* in the classroom. Being the knowledgeable other is tied to education ideals. This is more than merely emphasising their content knowledge, because it includes the significance of a teacher's feelings of *belonging* in the teaching profession and their "at-homeness" in their classroom and school context.

When teachers stand in a classroom to teach, they experience multilayered complexities of preparation, learning, planning, decision, behaviour, noise, weather, and other various anomalies in their endeavour to offer quality teaching for high-impact learning. Examining this situated fusion of experiences and events requires a theoretical lens with a social and cultural focus. I chose to embed C-CUD in Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural learning theories and Gadamer's (1975; 1976) philosophy of noticing and paying attention in order to reach deeper understanding of the truths in the classroom. Gadamer's (1975) hermeneutic philosophy aims to "understand the whole in terms of the detail and the detail in terms of the whole" (p. 258). I believe this summarises the activity of applying theory in practice. A clear understanding of the complete context appears through a compilation of its influential factors (sociocultural aspects, space, situations, and lived experiences), and the factors themselves find their meaning in relation to the entirety.

The theories of Vygotsky and Gadamer come together in C-CUD by acknowledging the impact of lived



experiences (van Manen, 1990) that occur in or are linked to the space and situations in which teaching and learning take place (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The hermeneutic circle explained by Gadamer (1975) further encompasses experience and observation of the culture, beliefs, and history that surrounding and are part of demanding teaching and learning experiences in schools.

Through its new conceptual framing of education theory and practice, C-CUD is able to be inherently attentive to the myriad complexities of teaching and learning environments. Its lens places deliberate value on the meaning of *being*.

C-CUD thus links theory to the truths and life-worlds of teachers and their students within a specific time, space, and context. Its theoretical framing offers a platform that supports awareness of student data and evidence, their challenges, and their learning needs that is gathered from their own experiences, context, and reality. Teachers are then challenged through the same conceptual framework to engage in pedagogical reasoning that aligns theory and practice. The C-CUD theory thus facilitates an awareness and appreciation of the various aspects of teaching and learning contexts and how these come together to form a comprehensive conceptual picture of a classroom space. In doing so, it intrinsically upholds a broad understanding of classrooms and creates a foundation on which teachers can successfully develop the thread of theory and practice. #

References

Du Plessis, A. (2019). *Professional support beyond initial teacher education: Pedagogical discernment and the influence of out-of-field teaching practices*. Springer.

Gadamer, H. (1975). *Truth and method* (2nd ed., J.C.B. Mohr, Trans.). The Seabury Press.

Gadamer, H. (1976). *Philosophical hermeneutics* (D. Linge, Trans.). University of California Press.

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge University Press.

van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. SUNY Press.

Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.

The spiral curriculum revisited

Associate Professor Brendan Jacobs | bjacobs7@une.edu.au | Head of Department, STEM Education

As teachers we often revisit topics throughout the primary years with increasing complexity. We do this because it suits the age group we are working with and because the curriculum is also constructed using this approach. An example of this is when children write fictional stories throughout their primary years.

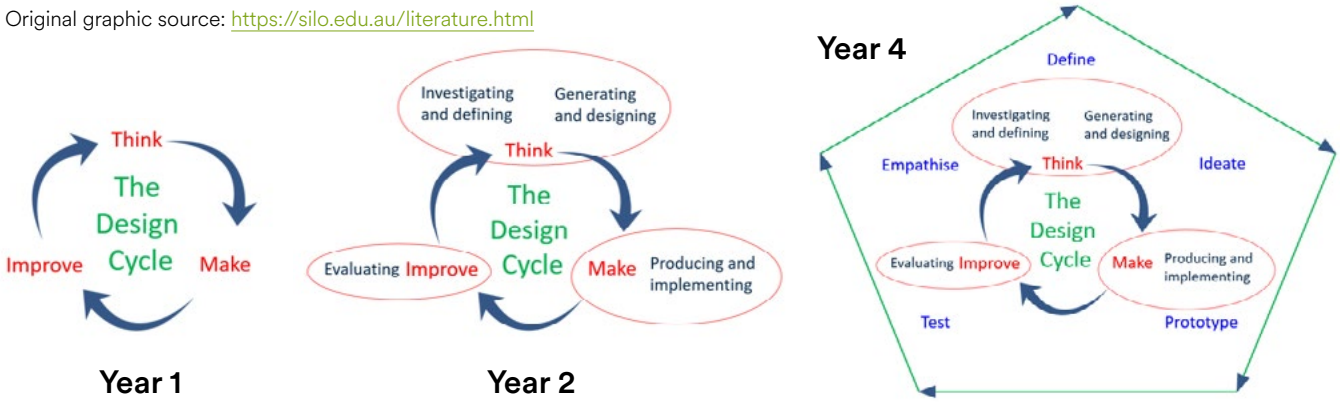
Bruner (1960) proposed that topics can be revisited at increasingly higher levels of complexity which is why this approach is known as the 'spiral curriculum'. The title of this article, 'The spiral curriculum revisited' is a play on words because the spiral curriculum is already built on the idea of revisiting a topic, but the point of this article is that the same approach can be applied to emerging topics which are not clearly articulated in the curriculum such as STEM education.

Bruner's approach has become widely influential based on his hypothesis that any subject "can be taught effectively in some intellectually honest form to any child at any stage of development" (p. 33). Within the very same paragraph Bruner stated that, "No evidence exists to contradict it; considerable evidence is being amassed which supports it" (p. 33). Over 60 years later this is still largely the case.

Figure 1 is an example of the spiral curriculum applied to the design cycle.

Figure 1: The Expanded Design Cycle

Original graphic source: https://silo.edu.au/literature.html



The design cycle is an important STEM concept. The formulation of 'Think, Make, Improve' (TMI) is from Martinez and Stager (2013) who proposed that "reducing the process to three steps minimises talking and maximises doing" (p. 54). TMI is also an example of the maxim to "make everything as simple as possible but not simpler" which is widely attributed to Albert Einstein. The expanded language in Year 2 of 'Investigating and defining', 'Generating and designing', 'Producing and implementing', and 'Evaluating' is from the Australian Curriculum. The Year 4 version retains the previous versions but with the additional dynamics introduced in the Stanford Design Cycle which adults use to identify commercial opportunities and develop new products, namely:

- Empathise
- Define
- Prototype
- Test.
- Ideate.

The point here is that the previous versions of the design cycle are not changed but, rather, expanded.

This is because prior knowledge can be built on. Prior knowledge is not like scaffolding which is generally removed or replaced.

Bruner did not specify a particular interval for when to revisit a topic. This is likely because each topic is different so the spiral curriculum can be utilised on a case-by-case basis.

Figure 2 is a combination of two screenshots from an explanatory animation about electromagnetic fields made by a student in Year 5 using Microsoft PowerPoint.

The image on the left shows how an electric motor uses electrical energy from a battery to turn a wheel. An extension of this student's learning occurred only a few days later (as depicted on the right) where the same components were used as a generator with wind or water turning the wheel to light a bulb. Generators convert mechanical energy into electrical energy.

Figure 2: Screenshots of Electric Motor and Generator Imagery

Original graphic source: https://brendanpauljacobs.com/magnusportrait.html

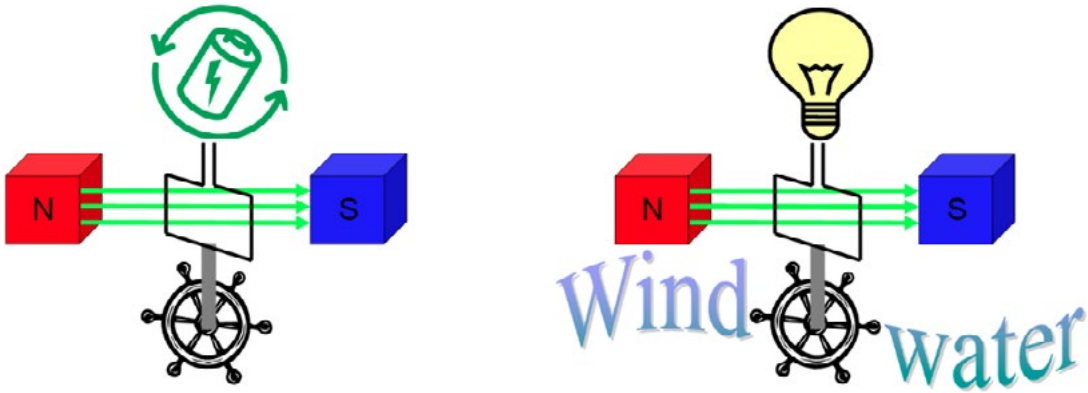


Figure 3: Area and Perimeter Activity Using a Rope

Original graphic source: https://silo.edu.au/12lp.html

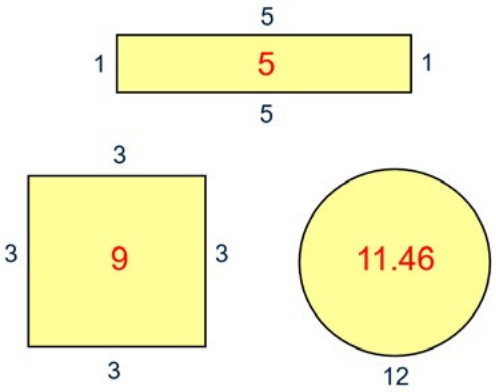


Figure 2 was part of a research project about primary school students making explanatory animations for the sake of their own learning. Figure 3 represents a quick activity which can be done with children of any age, depending on how much you expect the children to understand.

The steps for this activity are as follows:

- Using a long rope joined together at both ends, find a large space such as outside.
- Step inside the rope with the children so that the rope is behind your waist and everyone is facing in.
- Try making different shapes and ask the children to estimate if the area of each shape is the same or different.
- Return to the classroom and examine the following three shapes which all have the same perimeter of 12.
- The teaching point is that area is affected by shape, not just perimeter.

Each of the shapes depicted in Figure 3 have a perimeter of 12, but the circle has the largest area. The formulas to find the area of each shape would be appropriate for upper primary students but the fact that the rope is the same length in each instance is easily grasped by all students because they can see that it is the same rope each time.

The rope activity is part of a longitudinal research project to develop 28 units of work for STEM integration across each term of the primary years (i.e., 4 terms x 7 years). Draft versions of these units are freely available at https://silo.edu.au/. #

References

Bruner. J. (1960). *The process of education*. Harvard University Press.

Martinez, S. L., & Stager, G. (2013). *Invent to learn*. Constructing Modern Knowledge Press.

Teacher well-being: Demystifying the burden of teacher workloads and problematising the role of school culture

Associate Professor Leonardo Veliz | Director, Head of Department - Curriculum | lveliz@une.edu.au
Dr. Casey Mainsbridge | Lecturer in Personal Development, Health and Physical Education

A marked tendency to view the teaching profession through a discourse of 'crisis' is prevalent across the world. In Australia, the narrative of teacher crisis has been nurtured by ever-growing challenges that have a direct impact on teachers' well-being, performance, practice, and decision to either stay or leave the profession (Weldon, 2018). The recently announced and released National Teacher Workforce Action Plan addresses, among several other areas, the need for 'reducing unnecessary teacher workload' (Priority Area 3) and 'raising the status and value of teachers (Priority Area 4).

While we consider that issues of workload and underappreciation of the teaching profession need to be addressed to mitigate the impact on teacher well-being, we strongly argue that what is significantly wearing teachers out is the complex, and often neglected, dimensions of school culture. School culture is understood as those created and re-created traditions, beliefs, practices and rituals that are built up over the years as teachers, students, parents and administrators work collaboratively to achieve goals and deal with crises (Deal & Peterson, 2009).

We report on findings from a large-scale study that collected quantitative and qualitative data from a total of 374 primary (N=184) and secondary (N=190) school teachers from across all states and territories (see Table 1 for more information about participants). Teachers at different career stages and from across the curriculum took part in the study. To understand teacher well-being and the way it's impacted by a range of factors, we explored the following four dimensions:

i. school culture,
ii. school leadership,
iii. professional demands, and
iv. social, cultural and political challenges.

In this report, we pay specific attention to the role of school culture in teacher well-being and teachers' decision to stay or abandon the profession.

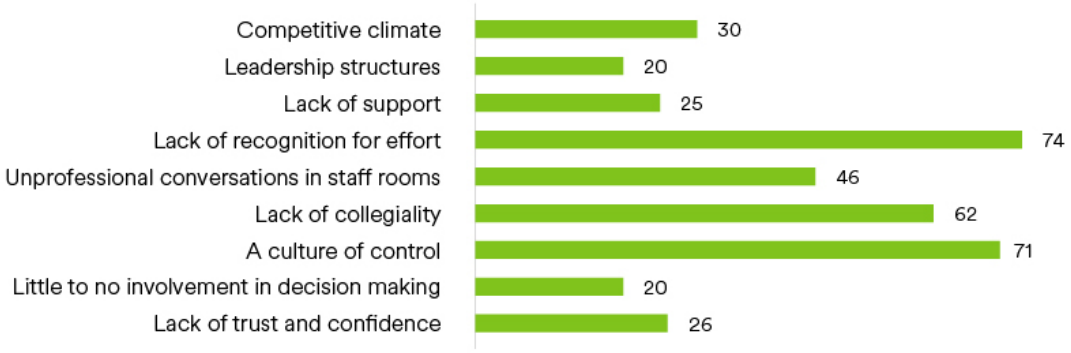
Table 1: Participant information

	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT
Primary	30	**25**	**20**	**23**	**22**	**27**	**26**	**11**
Secondary	31	**35**	**24**	**21**	**22**	**20**	**14**	**23**

In one of the various questions, teachers were asked to select one out of nine aspects of school culture that most heavily impact their job satisfaction and well-being. Figure 1 shows teachers' response distribution across the eight factors of school culture.

What is particularly striking in the data is that 'Lack of recognition for effort' is what a large proportion of teachers feel is affecting their well-being. Unlike much of recent debate and discussion on teacher burnout, well-being and satisfaction which has focused on class

Figure 1: Factors of school culture affecting teacher well-being



sizes, heavy workloads and insufficient pay, the above data speaks of issues that appear to be silenced by the current rhetoric on workload. Interestingly, qualitative data gathered through in-depth interviews with a sample of primary and secondary teachers affirmed that while workload issues are of concern to them, they consider that anyone entering the teaching profession has to live with this lack of recognition:

Teaching is one of those professions like accounting, business, or others in public services where you have to come into the job with an understanding that it won't be a 9-5 job. Our workloads are an issue, and we have to live with it, but the day-to-day stuff going on in schools, in classrooms, in staff rooms is really what affect my mental health the most (Jade [pseudonym]).

While issues of workload are recognised as an issue for Jade, what appears to be contributing to her well-being is the everyday practices that form part of school culture. Dan speaks more specifically about some of the issues that are prompting him to consider leaving the profession:

Totally agree that teaching is underrated, but it's not about pay increases or having more time to do lesson planning. It's really about leadership mindsets that are not supportive of a culture of appraisal or recognition of what we do. Simply saying "well done" or "that was a great play you put on" would change the world.

Dan's comment ties in very well with 'lack of recognition for effort' as shown earlier. His observation about 'leadership mindsets' weaves together with Sarah's comment below:

I get totally drained as a teacher when I feel I am working on my own in an environment that doesn't foster a sense of community. School leaders have a really important role to play in intentionally creating supportive environments that nurture collegiality. But the managerial mindset of school leaders is a barrier. You can have some control over your workload, but you can't control leadership mindsets.

Sarah's observation on the importance of a community and supportive environment seems to be central to fostering teacher well-being. The role of school principals is essential in facilitating these settings. While workload is something teachers can exercise a level of control, shifting leadership mindsets away from control and managerialism is beyond the realm of possible actions for teachers.

In conclusion, while we acknowledge the importance of reducing teachers' unnecessary workloads and freeing them up to focus on the core of teaching as a way of keeping them in the profession, we advocate for systemic changes to the various aspects of school culture which have a significant impact on teachers' well-being.

Small changes can make a huge difference, and some of these may include:

- creating professional learning communities that nurture communities of practice,
- fostering a culture of appraisal and recognition,
- offering opportunities for professional development for teachers,
- sharing and fostering a clear vision,
- modelling expected behaviours, and,
- as far as school leaders are concerned, re-assessing leadership styles that best serve the community.

Many of these issues are often unaddressed, unnoticed, not deemed important, left for teachers to deal with, or not even worthy of mention at a national level as is the case of the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan. #

References

Deal, T. E. & Peterson, K. D. (2009). *Shaping school cultures: Pitfalls, paradoxes, and promises*. Jossey-Bass.

Weldon, P. (2018). Early career attrition in Australia: Evidence, definition, classification and measurement. *Australian Journal of Education*, 62(1), 61-78. https://doi.org/10.1177/0004944117752478.

Birdie's Tree research-based free resources about natural disasters

Dr Marg Rogers | marg.rogers@une.edu.au | Senior Lecturer in Early Childhood, Postdoctoral Fellow with the Manna Institute

Children's Health Queensland has developed suites of free research-based resources under the umbrella name of 'Birdie's Tree'. The resources assist young children in understanding the impacts of climate and natural disasters on their lives. This can include changes to their homes and communities, or people they know.

The free, online resources include:

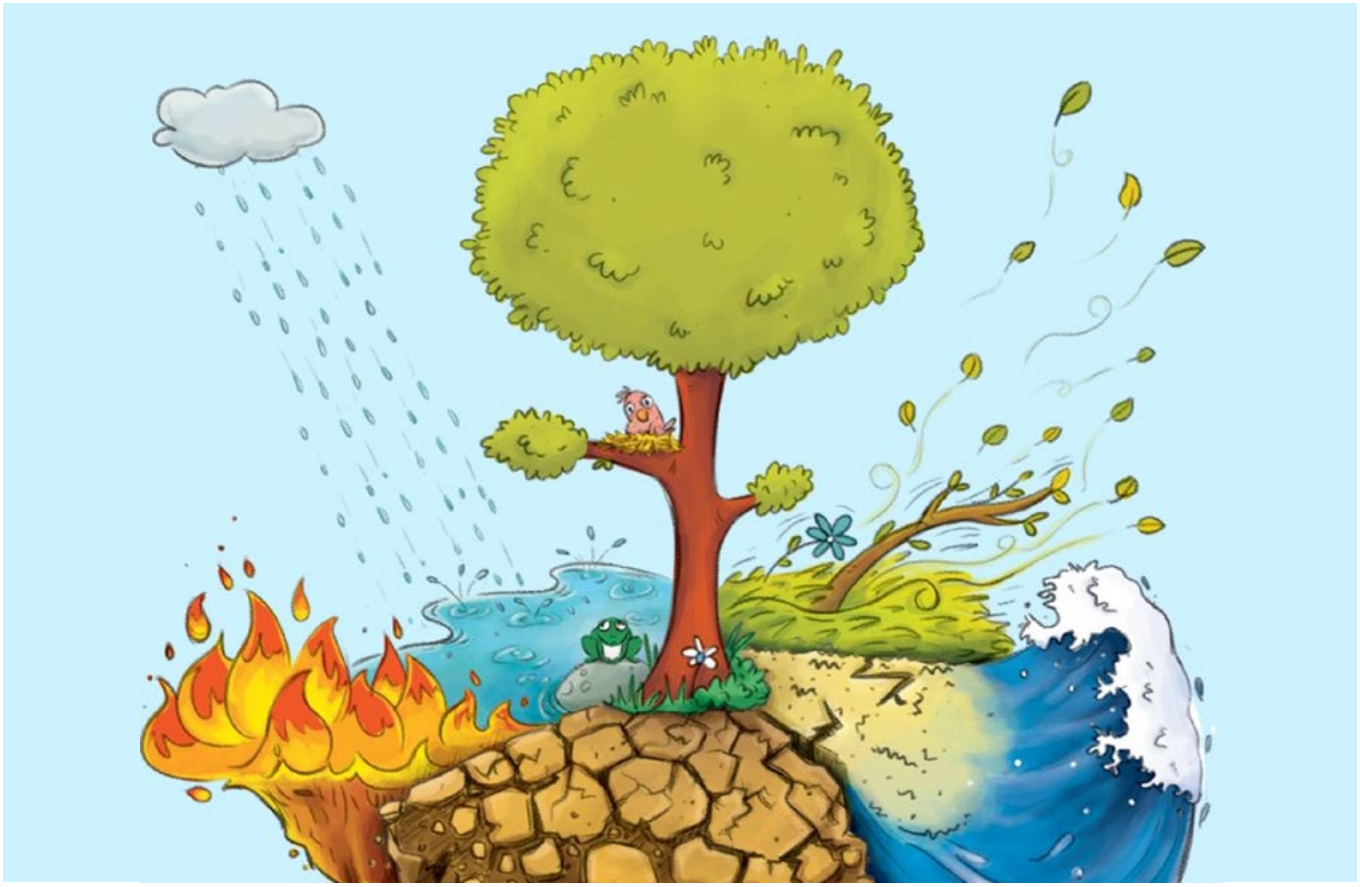
- Children's books
- Games
- Curricula
- Information and resources.

There are animations, read-along versions in various community languages, and accompanying educational resources. There are also books and resources about the pandemic.

The resources provide a springboard for educators and parents to start conversations with children about what is happening in their home and community. The resources are designed to build understanding, empathy and resilience. #

Birdie's Tree - Growing together through natural disasters

Original graphic source: https://www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au/natural-disaster-recovery/



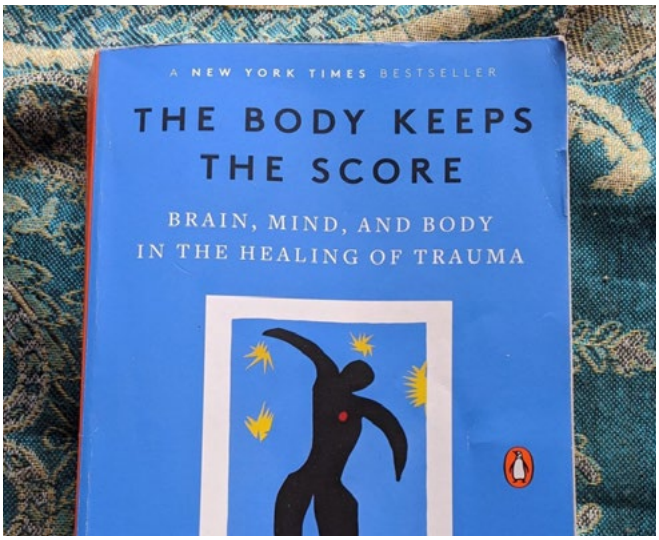
Book review: 'The body keeps the score: Mind, brain and body in the transformation of trauma'

Dr Marg Rogers | marg.rogers@une.edu.au | Senior Lecturer in Early Childhood, Postdoctoral Fellow with the Manna Institute

Educators are more frequently teaching children from families affected by trauma. The child or family members may have been exposed to trauma through:

- abusive relationships
- bullying
- violence
- moral injury
- natural disasters and climate emergencies
- refugee experiences (e.g. war, terrorism, famine, dangerous journeys, persecution, detention camps)
- witnessing or being involved in an accident
- work (e.g. first responders, defence members and veteran personnel)
- other experiences.

Children we work with may have experienced trauma directly or through transfer from their family members. The vicarious trauma transfer might occur from imagining what their family member experienced. Alternatively, they might hear, overhear or see what their parent experienced. Further trauma might be experienced through the family member's behaviour because of the original trauma.



There has been a growth in the number of courses available for trauma-informed practice, many of them giving valuable information and practical strategies.

Bessel Van Der Kolk's book 'The body keeps the score: Mind, brain and body in the transformation of trauma' gives us an excellent, accessible, affordable account of his learning about the impacts of trauma on individuals and families. In the book, the reader learns how the author himself learned, through his patients, and their families' lived experiences.

This book is refreshing because the author admits that, as a society, we do not know very much about this topic. Further, he reveals that mental health professionals' knowledge is still extremely limited. Despite this, the book offers insight into how those who support these individuals and families can be better informed. The book explores Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome, complex PTSD, how triggering works and how to reduce its' effects.

Especially useful for educators, the book has four chapters about child-related trauma. Van Der Kolk (2014) explains that childhood trauma is likely to reappear through various behaviours and emotions due to the impact on the nervous system and brain. This makes relationships more difficult for them in childhood and adulthood. He explains the way the bodies of victims react to childhood trauma, including hypervigilant immune system that often fails to differentiate between minor and major threats causing chronic auto-immune diseases, heart and digestive conditions in later life.

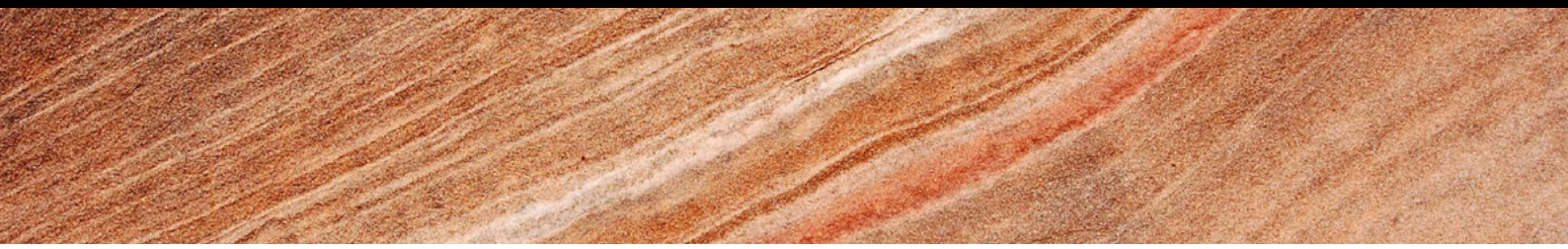
Encouragingly, Van Der Kolk (2014, p. 356) explains that many of our great innovators of 'social change have intimate personal knowledge of trauma... (due to) insights and passions that came from having dealt with devastation'. Additionally, the 'same is true of societies' such as advances due to the Great Depression and wars (Van Der Kolk, 2014, p. 356). He adds,

trauma is now our most urgent public health issues and we have the knowledge necessary to respond effectively. The choice is ours to act on what we know (Van Der Kolk, 2014, p. 356).

This book assists educators to empower children's voices and provides training in how to support children's experiences of trauma. This is a first and very necessary step to address these children's needs and support their recovery. The book is available from book sellers and department stores and is generally less than $20. #

Reference

Van Der Kolk, B. (2014). *The body keeps the score: Mind, brain and body in the transformation of trauma:* Penguin.



Adult literacy campaigns bring significant benefits in First Nations communities

Professor Bob Boughton (UNE Adjunct) | rboughto@une.edu.au

Between 2017 and 2019, researchers at UNE and UNSW received an Australian Research Council grant to work with two First Nations organisations, The Lowitja Institute, and the Literacy for Life Foundation, to evaluate the impact of a mass adult literacy campaign in selected First Nations communities in NSW.

Local community members were involved in organising and teaching the basic literacy classes. They were also trained to collect a range of data using community surveys, literacy assessments, interviews, and focus groups. With campaign participants consent, their pre-and post-campaign participation and outcomes data were then successfully linked to their health and justice system data held by state authorities.

As far as we know, this was the first study in Australia to use these 'data linkage' methods to evaluate the longitudinal impact of educational interventions in First Nations communities. Both the qualitative and quantitative data demonstrated very significant benefits had been gained by participants who took part in adult literacy classes. It also demonstrates the positive impact of education of one family member on the whole family.

The results

Reduction in serious offending

One of the most dramatic findings, reported last year in the *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy*, was a reduction in the rate of serious offending among participants, and a higher use of legal assistance services. The implications for attempts to reduce the rate of incarceration among First Nations adults through what are called 'justice re-investment' strategies was the subject of a recent article in The Conversation.

Mass adult literacy campaigns have been used over many decades in countries of the Global South where a significant proportion the adult population have not benefited from basic education. In 2012, UNE evaluated the first Australian trial of this model in the western NSW community of Wilcannia. Since then, campaigns have run successfully in 13 communities, most in NSW, but more recently also at Yarrabah in Queensland and in Ltyentye Apurte and Tennant Creek in the NT.

Last year, a House of Representatives Inquiry into Adult Literacy recommended that governments develop a sustainable funding model for the campaign to be upscaled and extended to more communities. This is now under consideration by the new Federal Labor government.

Impact on children and grandchildren

For schools and school teachers struggling to achieve better English language literacy outcomes for their First Nations students, the good news is that many adults who participate in these campaigns are subsequently able to engage more confidently with the education of their children and grandchildren.

Just as importantly, schools which supported the campaign in the participating communities were able to improve their relationships with some of the most educationally disadvantaged adults and their families, and through this were able to gain a better understanding of the enormous challenges these

families face. The initial findings of a UNE PhD student, Ruth Ratcliffe, whose thesis analyses the impact of the campaign on school-community relationships in more detail, was published in 2019.

To learn more about the mass adult literacy campaign model, please visit www.lfff.org.au #

References

Beetson, J., Anderson, P., Lin, S., Williamson, F., Amazan, R., Boughton, B., . . . Schwartz, M. (2022). Impact of a community-controlled adult literacy campaign on crime and justice outcomes in remote Australian Aboriginal communities. *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy*, 11(4), 56-68. doi: https://doi.org/10.5204/ijcjsd.2201.

Ratcliffe, R., & Boughton, B. (2019). The relationship between low adult literacy levels and Aboriginal family and community engagement in educational decision making. *Australian and International Journal of Rural Education*, 29(1), 1-16.

Page 12 photo: Literacy for Life Foundation Collarenebri Graduate, Joyce (left), sharing a book. (Source: Adam Sharman - used with kind permission)

Page 13 photo: Devil's Marbles near Tennant Creek, NT. (Credit: Callum Parker)

Are your students or staff interested in studying early childhood?

Explore the UNE Course Handbook

Studying early childhood education has many benefits, including:

- making a difference in the most important years of a child's life,
- the ability to build on children's interests and strengths,
- being able to place children at the centre of their education,
- being part of a growing and important field,
- being in demand (there is a shortage of degree-qualified early childhood teachers in Australia),
- working closely with families to support children's learning, and access to a variety of work options

There are two different early childhood education courses offered at UNE.

Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood Primary)

This is a unique teacher education course that offers two career options for graduates. The course allows employment flexibility across schools and early childhood services to suit graduates' opportunities and circumstances.

It is an initial-teacher education qualification that encompasses working with children from birth to age 12 in both early childhood and primary school settings. This course is available:

- full time or part time,
- on-campus or online,
- to start in Trimester 1 and 2 each year.

Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood Teaching)

This degree is designed to meet the Australian Government's requirements for Early Childhood Education and to qualify graduates as four-year trained Early Childhood Teachers (ECTs) for children aged birth to 5 years.

Students are offered 2 years credit into the degree, if they have a Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care or equivalent, plus a year of work experience in an early childhood setting. This course is available:

- full time or part time,
- online
- to start in Trimester 1, 2 and 3 each year.

Scholarships

Many states and territories are offering scholarships for early childhood education students. Search the department of education in your state or territory to see what they are offering.

School of Education
University of New England
Armidale, NSW, 2351, Australia
education@une.edu.au

CRICOS Provider Number: 00003G

Are you interested in further study?

School of Education Postgraduate Study

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, to the right:

Graduate Certificate in Education Studies
Master of Education
Master of Education (Research)
Doctor of Education PhD

Are you wanting to become 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 (Early Childhood and Primary)
- Bachelor of Special and Inclusive Education (Primary)
- Bachelor of Education (K-6 Teaching)
- Bachelor of Education (K-12 Teaching)
- Bachelor of Education (Secondary Arts)
- Bachelor of Education (Secondary Music)
- Bachelor of Education (Secondary Mathematics)
- Bachelor of Education (Secondary Science)

You can find out more about all UNE Education courses via the Handbook.

Worried About the "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/UNEeducation

University of New England | School of Education