Linking Research to the Practice of Education

Contents:

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Editorial

Welcome to the first issue of *Linking Research to Practice*, a UNE School of Education research newsletter for all educators. In this issue you will find four articles outlining research that may have applicability to your setting.

The first article, by Michelle Bannister-Tyrell and Catherine Wormald, looks at twice exceptional students and their needs. Perhaps you have students like these.

Adele Nye has contributed the second article examining rebuilding of educational centres which have suffered damage in fire: a very relevant article as bushfire season continues.

Is Snapchat or other forms of social media an issue in your educational setting? Sue Gregory, Jennifer Charteris, Yvonne Masters, Myfanwy Maple and Amanda Kennedy report on a project examining the use of Snapchat and some of the issues that arise.

The last article from Elisabeth Betlem and Marguerite Jones describes a professional development program, *Professional Partners: Mentoring the Mentor*, that has been piloted successfully in two schools. Anyone interested in initiating this program in their own setting please contact Elisabeth (contact details at the bottom of the article) for information.

We hope that you find something interesting in this first issue and would love to hear from you about how you perceive the newsletter. Issue 2 will come out in Term 3.

Yvonne and Nadya

Australian Twice Exceptional Needs Assessment Survey (ATENAS)

Dr Michelle Bannister-Tyrell, UNE

Dr Catherine Wormald, University of Wollongong

The University of Wollongong and the University of New England are currently conducting a joint national research study, the first of its kind within Australia, investigating teachers' perceptions and understandings of Twice Exceptional students.

There exists in Australian schools a group of students who are often not recognised in the classroom. They are students who are academically gifted and at the same time demonstrate a learning disability or disabilities. These students confound their parents and teachers with their ability to achieve amazing things but at the same time struggle with basics such as completing a task, remembering to bring the equipment needed at school, or experience difficulties focusing in class. These students may be referred to in the literature as gifted with a learning disability (GLD), twice exceptional (2e) double labelled or multiple exceptionality. The disability can be, but is not limited to a physical, cognitive, behavioural or emotional disability. Too often the disability masks the high intellectual ability of the student, which in turn can cause learning difficulties and a failure to achieve their potential.

While research at the international level is building momentum in gathering important data on these students, most studies conducted in Australia to this point, have been at the case study level. This study is open to all teachers and executive staff in Departmental, Catholic and Independent schools across Australia. In this way important data will be gathered from all schools systems, which in turn will make the analysis far more rigorous and valid for the Australian context. We are keen to hear about the professional needs of schools and teachers across Australia in supporting Twice Exceptional students in helping them meet their potential.

Even if you have never come across the term Twice Exceptional before, that too is important information for this study, and we would love to hear from you. Please see the information below.

If you are an educator (teacher or school executive) currently working in an Australian school and would like to be part of this important national study, please go to the following anonymous links and complete the survey there. All information is strictly anonymous; however, the demographic information at the end of the survey will give us vital information in ensuring this national study is representative of the Australian context.

Anonymous Survey Link

If you are an Australian educator and would like to contribute to this research please do so at the following links:

http://uneprofessions.az1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_eeQ7P0FGHEzRtUp

OR

QR Code:

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Rebuilding Schools After Fire

Dr Adele Nye, UNE

When a school suffers minor damage by fire, the impact for staff and students is irritating and disruptive. Principals must manage repairs and reorganize resources. When a major fire hits, either destroying the entire school or a significant proportion, the impact is far more substantial and enduring. Dr Adele Nye has been researching how schools in rural and urban communities rebuild after major fires. Her research has thus far explored the experiences of four school communities; Lyneham Public School, ACT, (1969) Kelso High School, NSW, (2005) Oxley High School, Tamworth, NSW (2012) and St Clare High School, Sydney, NSW (2014). Given there have been numerous large school fires, the research will continue and Adele is keen to hear from teachers, other staff and students who have had similar experiences.

The research has highlighted stories of a determination at all levels of the school community as they strive to rebuild. It has also revealed the detail and sequence of the intense period after the first emergency report. In the case of Kelso High School for example this included the last night phone calls to the principal, the description of tall flames visible across town and of media helicopters hovering and reporters seeking interviews with staff and children. Dr Nye has been struck by the way in which principals and staff have braced themselves and conducted their first meeting after the fire, armed only with butcher's paper and a sense of fortitude, they embarked on a task of mapping and prioritizing how they would move forward. In these challenging circumstances the staff were acutely aware that they are bereft of school buildings and resources, and yet, had hundreds of children awaiting an outcome and some sort of school future.

Housing students in the following weeks and months after the fire has been a challenge for the school executive and staff. In some cases, such as Kelso High School, children were dispersed to neighbouring primary schools, local university and a high school until demountables could be brought on site. In the case of St Clare, where the fire occurred during school holidays, the demountables were brought immediately to the school site and Principal Presland's call "Our Kids, Our School, Our Site, Day One!" was realised.

The story of the built environment consistently includes the temporary demountable structures that become home, sometimes for a number of years. For some students these 'demountable cities' will be the primary environment for their time in that school. For staff and the department these temporary sites produce particular challenges regarding resources and access. Even timetables have needed to be adjusted to give children time to get across school grounds between classes. Soon enough however these are replaced with the new school building and a new era begins for that community.

The research has also begun to shed light on some of the changes over time regarding occupational health & safety and emergency services practices. Contrasting the children of Lyneham helping clean burnt desks and walking through charred buildings to high fences restricting access and air quality checks after the Oxley High School fire. These fires did impact on policy too, for example after the Lyneham fire all schools were required to have fire alarms installed. The Kelso school fire reinvigorated the push for schools to have security fences, although it is noted that this has not been fully implemented across the board.

Collecting the stories of how schools rebuild after major fires has revealed there are both short and long terms stages of reconstruction and this has been reliant on qualities of resilience, determination among staff and students, the value of strong leadership from innovative principals and the importance of dynamic relationship with departmental staff. The recollections and stories have been both inspirational and heartwarming yet do not shy away from the realities of the challenge these schools have faced. Dr Nye looks forward to continuing this research and encourages anyone to contact her if they would like to tell their story.

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Research in the School of Education

Please explore research in the School of Education at the University of New England, http://www.une.edu.au/about-une/academic-schools/school-of-education/research for more information about our research areas.

Snapchat: Now you see it, now you don't!

Associate Professor Sue Gregory, UNE
Dr Jennifer Charteris, UNE
Dr Yvonne Masters, UNE
Professor Myfanwy Maple, UNE
Associate Professor Amanda Kennedy, UNE

Has Snapchat been an issue in your school? Are you aware of what your students are using Snapchat for? There are aspects of Snapchat use that have made news reports and the research reported here shines a light on some of the issues being encountered.

Snapchat is an App that is used on smart technology (iPhones, Smartphones, iPads, tablets, etc). A person can take a photo, or write some text, send it to another person, and then, at a designated time later (usually about 10 seconds), the image/text disappears – off both people's devices. While Snapchat is great for sharing events/thoughts with friends it can also have a sinister side. Some people have used this disappearing media to send inappropriate images/text. Snapchat has been/and is used for fun, but it has also been used as a form of bullying. As researchers from the University of New England, we have been exploring the use of Snapchat in schools throughout Australia. Principals and teachers have completed surveys and have been interviewed. Students have completed surveys and attended a focus group discussion. The results of this research is presented here, including some ways forward for schools, parents and school students.

When principals and teachers were asked specifically what they saw students using Snapchat for (through a survey with over 500 participants), they responded in the following manner (please note that "sending inappropriate text" could be the same
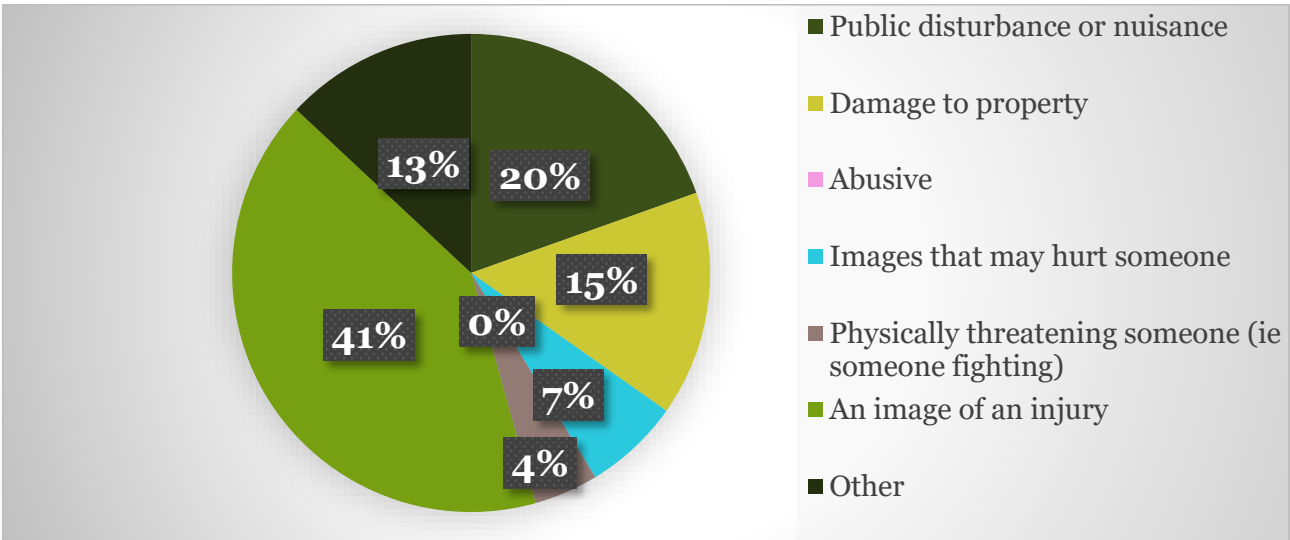
as "sexting", but these are the terms used by the practitioners).

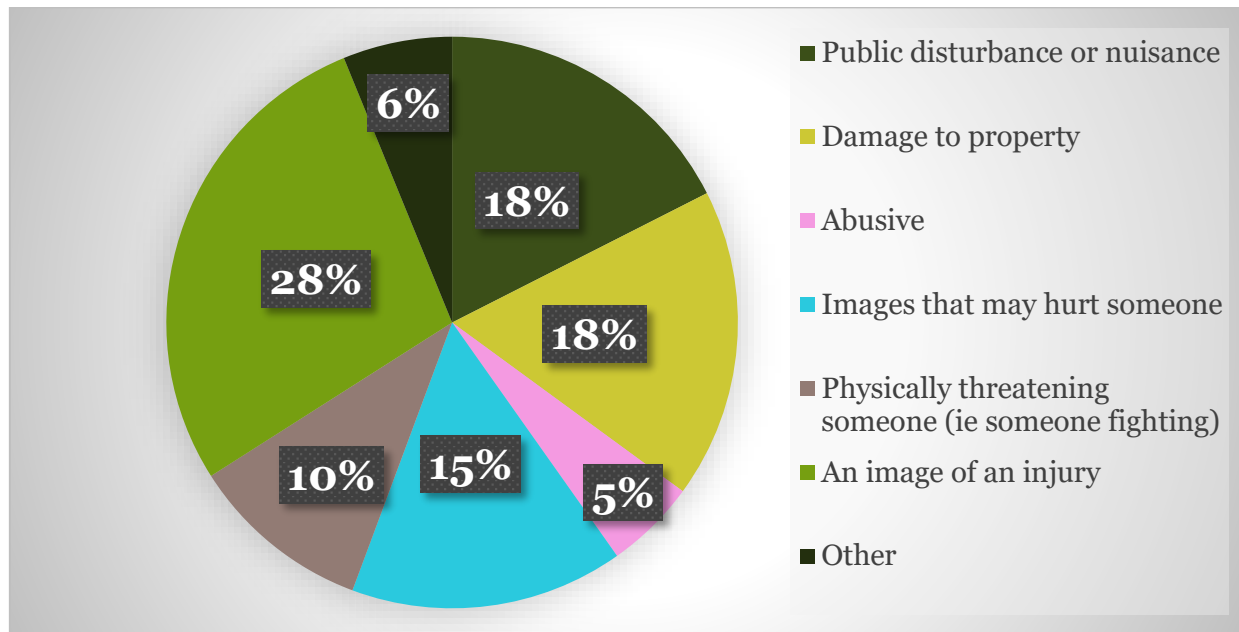| Use of Snapchat	Percentage
No visible use of Snapchat in the school	26.8%
Playful use - sending images, videos, messaging	45.1%
Bullying/harassment	11.8%
Sending inappropriate images/text	12.4%
Sexting	1.8%
Self-harm	0.9%
Parental involvement/complaints	1.2%
Total	100%

One teacher stated that Snapchat has been used as outlined: "I understand anecdotally that some students have been involved with sexting and the like in the past, but for the most part it is used for amusing and light-hearted exchanges between students."

Students were also surveyed to ascertain their thoughts/beliefs about the use of Snapchat in schools (66 responses from two schools surveyed). These students were aged between 16 and 18 years of age. Of these students, 57% stated that they have sent images to others that they considered private.

84% say that they have had their images saved by others, with 66% used without their consent. They felt: amused, fine, indifferent, uncomfortable, untrusting, distressed and violated by this. 33% of students said they have received text/images that have made them feel uncomfortable, whilst other emotions included 26% sad, 27% angry and 14% consisted of happy, good, threatened or "gross". These students, also stated that they have sent images of the following type:

- Public disturbance or nuisance
- Damage to property
- Abusive
- Images that may hurt someone
- Physically threatening someone (ie someone fighting)
- An image of an injury
- Other

13%   20%   0%   15%   41%   7%   4%

The types of images received by students were:

Legend:
- Public disturbance or nuisance
- Damage to property
- Abusive
- Images that may hurt someone
- Physically threatening someone (ie someone fighting)
- An image of an injury
- Other

Pie chart values: 18%, 18%, 5%, 15%, 10%, 28%, 6%

A Secondary School Principal commented, summing up the collective views about the use of Snapchat in Schools, "I think social media becomes an avenue for students to hide behind, to inflict pain on others… They don't understand the full consequences of what they are doing, the full impact, how devastating it can be. I think social media is an avenue for brutality that they see as fairly innocuous, fairly easy to access. There are no apparent consequences. They could sit in their bedroom at 10'clock at night and tell someone to commit suicide because they are so angry at them. If they said it face to face it would be a far more confrontational thing. Saying it via a quick Snapchat means that it comes and it goes and it disappears. They feel anonymous. They feel insulated by that technology and no one has come to me with a good story about it."

A High School teacher stated: "There is depression and anxiety - depression because they're feeling so bad about themselves because these people have made such comments. And they're not willing to get out of bed because of that. They are scared to come to school because of what might happen… So, it can snowball when they're making those comments about each other online - and that's what leads to these anxiety disorders or the depression that, you know, unfortunately we do see an increasing incidence in our school."

One result of this research is the creation of flyers for parents and students. These are attached. Please contact the project lead if you are interested in obtaining a flyer.

If you wish to get in contact with any of the researchers, please liaise with the lead of the project, Associate Professor Sue Gregory

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Professional Partners: Mentoring the Mentor

Dr. Elisabeth Betlem, UNE
Dr. Marguerite Jones, UNE

Mentoring of teachers working towards accreditation and of teacher education students during professional experience is often undertaken by experienced teachers. *Great Teaching, Inspired Learning. A blueprint for action* (2013) revealed that often mentors take on the role of mentoring with little or no professional learning.

Evidence suggests that while practical knowledge is valuable, experience alone does not necessarily guarantee effective mentoring. Hence, in order to meet the recent national agenda within a local context it was decided, in consultation with school leaders, that professional development for teacher-mentors was a priority. Although compulsory online training modules for teacher-mentors are available, research suggests that schools are such complex organisations each operating within its own cultural setting, that mentoring skills might better be explored and practised in that context. With this in mind, and working with a third member of the team, we designed a research project around a model used by Elisabeth (first author) during her thesis work. The model aimed to support teacher-mentors in their reflective practice and for us as academic partners to critically reflect upon our roles in the process.

The aim of the research was to trial and to refine the model so it evolves into a sustainable professional learning framework, which teachers can instigate and maintain in their own school context. The model was piloted and analysis of the findings contributed to new understandings regarding:

- teacher-mentors' learning and identity development as mentors;
- teacher-mentors' understanding of participatory action research (PAR); and
- academic partners' understanding of collaborative learning.

Professional Partners: Mentoring the Mentor, a school-university partnership, was established between the University of New England and two rural schools in the Northern Tablelands. This collaboration, undertaken in the past 12 months, involved school-based Participatory Learning Groups (PLGs), which met for eight, one hour sessions over three school terms. The teacher-mentors identified an area of need within their practice, set goals, planned, acted and observed, evaluated and reflected as they worked towards their professional goals. For some it involved redefining their role from supervisor to mentors. Others aimed to enhance communication techniques such as when 'having difficult conversations'. University partners guided, supported, and maintained momentum.

Insights
Role definition.

Quotes from the results included: "*Having some sort of defined role, I think is helpful, our role is different to a Supervisor … it is to guide … and* [encourage] *mentees to solve their own problems*" said one teacher-mentor. Another commented that she learned to "*be supportive … be more* [the] *stand beside role rather than* [the] *stand in front type*" mentor.

In another school, teacher-mentors wore many hats, supervisor, coach and mentor. They worked to differentiate these roles. One teacher-mentor commented that the process led to "*personal*

growth and … feel[ing] *stronger in our roles and more capable of doing them …*". In addition, another commented on how they drew on each other's strengths "*we do have this bond together, we do sit down and critically reflect*". A third said "*it's been a really good process for us to not give up, not say that we are horrible at this but learn how* [to] *get better at this*".

Collaboration and relationships.

Members from both PLGs commented on how closer relationships evolved through the reflective process developing greater trust and collaboration. The cyclical reflective strength of the PAR process was voiced by one teacher-mentor, "*It kept going, round and round … because we do, build on something, we gain the skill… practice …, reflect on that skill, can we add this bit too it and then kept going around*". The process was flexible and adaptable as another revealed "*it can be used in lots of different contexts such as during staff meetings … you join a group … it would be a fantastic tool*" for structuring professional learning.

Early reservations.

In spite of early reservations about time commitments, teacher-mentors and university partners valued the time invested in open and honest discussion. "*I never thought* [the PAR process] *was a chore in any way, … I enjoyed the process, …* [it] *made me think about the way I do things, which is grea*t" voiced one teacher-mentor.

Our future work aims to further refine the model so that it can be disseminated by teacher-mentors for use in an increasing range of schools. The program provides 20 hours of professional development for those interested in or currently mentoring colleagues. If your school has a group of teacher-mentors wishing to join this research project, please contact Dr. Elisabeth Betlem.

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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. Contact Associate Professor Sue Gregory, Course Coordinator on sue.gregory@une.edu.au for more information or 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/2017/courses/GCES/program-of-study-schedule-a.html

Master of Education: https://my.une.edu.au/courses/2015/courses/MED

Master of Applied Leadership in Positive Education: https://my.une.edu.au/courses/2017/courses/MALPE

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

Doctor of Education: https://my.une.edu.au/courses/2015/courses/EDD

PhD:https://my.une.edu.au/courses/2015/courses/PHD