

## Editorial

Evaluation, gender, policy and politics: this edition of the *Australian Journal of Education* reports on research that examines some of the fundamental matters in education, dealing with evaluation in terms of teacher quality, higher degrees and the curriculum; and the effect of a student's gender and the effect of a teacher's gender on students' educational attainment. Such matters depend on the relation between educational policy, research and the professional knowledge of teachers, a relation that can itself be usefully subjected to examination.

In 'Conceptualising and evaluating teacher quality: substantive and methodological issues', Lawrence Ingvarson and Ken Rowe examine how teacher quality has been inadequately conceptualised and evaluated, and show how approaches that tackle capacity building in teacher professionalism—in terms of pre-service teacher education content and subsequent in-service professional development and that specify and evaluate teaching standards—take us beyond the proxy 'measures' that are typically used to describe teacher quality in terms of teachers' qualifications and experience and students' academic outcomes.

Allyson Holbrook, Sid Bourke, Terry Lovat and Hedy Fairbairn approach the matter of evaluation in 'Consistency and inconsistency in PhD thesis examination', to explore the content and conceptual analysis of examiner reports for 804 Australian PhD theses in terms of consistency and discrepancy, and the process by which discrepant examiner recommendations lead to university committee decisions on PhD theses.

There is, of course, no mandated curriculum for the PhD, but Holbrook, Bourke, Lovat and Fairbairn find that consistently applied standards in thesis examination demonstrate the innate robustness of what they call the 'invisible' doctoral curriculum.

Richard Berlach and Michael O'Neill turn their attention to what has been a highly visible curriculum in Western Australia. 'Western Australia's "English" course of study: to OBE or not to OBE, perhaps that is the question' reports on their examination of outcomes-based education (OBE) in terms of conceptualisation and implementation. They conclude that the absence of any agreed understanding regarding the core of the curriculum lies at the heart of the problem for OBE, since OBE lacks an agreed reference point from which to develop examination protocols.

What effect does a student's or a teacher's gender have on a student's educational achievement? In 'Gender differences in educational achievement to age 25', Sheree Gibb, David Fergusson and John Horwood report a small but pervasive tendency for females to score better than males on standardised tests and to achieve more school and post-school qualifications. Re-examining the associations between gender and measures of educational achievement by adjusting for teacher

ratings of classroom behaviour, they also report findings of reduced gender differences, which suggest that one approach to reducing gender differences in educational achievement lies in improving classroom behaviour.

Laura Sokal and Herb Katz investigate the effects on boys in terms of reading in settings that provide male teachers and computer-based books. They report their finding that there are no differential effects in terms of boys' reading achievement or reader self-perceptions whether they are taught by males or by females and whether or not they use technology in their reading practices.

In the final contribution, 'The teacher's role in the research-policy-praxis nexus', Sarah Ohi examines the relationships between educational policy, research and the professional knowledge of the teachers that implement policy. Focusing on the Victorian Early Years Literacy Program, she reports findings that policy tends to prescribe practice, rather than informing and being informed by teaching practice and research, to the detriment of the teachers at whom policy innovation to improve the quality of learning and teaching is directed, and to the detriment of their students.

We wish *AJE* readers good reading.

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