

2010 AARE/ACDE NATIONAL EDUCATION RESEARCH FUTURES SUMMIT

Final report

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UTS:L&C
CENTRE FOR RESEARCH IN LEARNING AND CHANGE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There are many challenges and uncertainties regarding the future of Education as a scholarly and professional field, as well as the future shape and influence of educational work wherever it occurs. These uncertainties range from broader social, economic, political and environmental issues to the more immediate problems of workforce planning. In the face of such challenges and uncertainties, questions of how to think about the future, and commit to a process of examining conceivable futures, become major foci for Education research, as well as for research development and capacity building. The Education Research Futures Summit was a national joint venture of the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) and the Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE).

The purpose of the Summit was to contribute to a capacity of the Education field to analyse, envisage and plan for the future, conceived in terms of not one future but a range of possible ways of thinking and conceiving the future. In pragmatic terms, these considerations led to a set of outcomes aimed at contributing to strategic planning for both AARE and ACDE. They were directed to issues of workforce planning, research capacity building and the development of a strategic research agenda for Education research in a changing future.

The Summit was held at UTS on February 25-26, 2010, hosted by the Centre for Research in Learning and Change at the University of Technology, Sydney. This report summarises the key outcomes of the Summit process and stands as a resource for further stages of planning and development by AARE, ACDE, Deans of faculties and research leaders in universities, and the Education research and professional communities more broadly.

Outcomes of the Summit:

- 1) a set of recommendations for discussion and planning
- 2) a Special Issue of the *Australian Educational Researcher* (Vol 37, no 4)
- 3) a symposium at AARE 2010 in Melbourne, debating policy implications
- 4) a doctoral education resource produced from Summit video and print materials

Recommendations for discussion and strategic planning

The following recommendations have been generated from the discussion of the papers at the Summit. They will form the basis for strategic planning by AARE and ACDE and are intended to stimulate discussion by Education schools, faculties and research centres.

Issues identified	Strategies and directions for research and research training
Studying the future: complexity and complexity reduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AARE to facilitate member discussion and then prepare brief for University Ethics Chairs on issues arising from ‘emergent’ research methodologies that require flexibility and complexity • AARE to sponsor development of ‘education research futures’ video resource for new researchers
The need to further internationalise Australian education research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forming regional alliances • Strengthening South-South dialogue • Development of new cross-national research questions and new comparative methods • Implications for World Education Research Association (WERA) – AARE to host conference with APERA participation in 2012, emphasizing global/regional linkages – WERA symposium to be presented at AARE 2010 conference – focus on teacher Education research in Asia-Pacific
New questions for research design, methodology and ethics arising from E-research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AARE to explore contributing to building a Virtual Research Environment (VRE) infrastructure that would be available to members (similar to BERA’s use of Sakai resource) • AARE to sponsor training workshops in eResearch design and methodology – smaller, road-show or state-based workshops • special focus themes of AARE national conference? • AARE to sponsor and organize national workshops for quantitative research methods along the lines of the ‘Utility of Theory’ workshops • AARE to focus on development of policy guidelines for the ethical conduct of E-research?
New coalitions and alliances across educational sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SIGs to be created in higher, professional vocational education in AARE that are linked to HERDSA and AVETRA, with a view to building cross-sectoral research programs that address large-scale problems, such as those identified by the Bradley Review • identification of large-scale research programs that cross sectors, such as access, digital media etc
A more skillful response to Indigenous education research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AARE and ACDE to work together on developing an ‘accord’ for Indigenous education and education research (modeled on Canadian ACDE accords)
Challenges and lessons from ERA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a set of principles for maintaining integrity of research focus and direction in the face of pressure from ERA. Current journal rankings will inevitably change over the next round. Education research need to identify priorities and developmental needs to meet these priorities and a public position • ACDE and AARE to work together to provide stronger avenues to support ECRs in Education (eg Faculty ‘registration’ scholarships for ECR/HDR poster session at 2010 conference).



INTRODUCTION

The National Education Research Futures Summit was a response to a set of issues requiring a more skillful and coordinated response from the Education research community than has until now been possible. Most immediate of these were the effects of the ERA (Excellence in Research for Australia) undertaking its first research assessment exercise in 2010, and the increasingly urgent issues of teaching and research workforce in Education in the face of an aging academic and professional population. Beyond these immediate issues lies a set of broader questions facing the future for Education research in Australia: the changing role and place of Australia in a globalised world; changing modes of knowledge and knowledge production; the challenges and opportunities of digital media; the challenges to Education as a research and professional field of the increasing reach of educational work in all spheres of life. The Summit sought to open these challenges to debate in terms of what practical and intellectual responses might be necessary.

The National Education Research Futures Summit was a joint venture of the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) and the Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE). It was held at UTS on February 25-26, 2010, hosted by the Centre for Research in Learning and Change at the University of Technology, Sydney. The purpose of the Summit was to contribute to rethinking the current boundaries, limits, constraints, possibilities and responsibilities for Education research in Australia, and thereby to help build a national research agenda that will shape strategic planning for the field.

Eighty participants attended the Summit, nominated by Deans and Heads of School of Education from thirty-three of Australia's thirty-nine public universities and several private higher education providers. Participation was also invited from education research associations from other sectors (including higher education and vocational education [HERDSA and AVETRA]). As well, nominated participants were members of associations for teacher education (ATEA), curriculum studies [ACSA]. Participation also included members of the Executive of AARE and the ACDE Board, from NCVET and researchers from New Zealand and Singapore. A range of early, mid and late career researchers and Indigenous researchers from Australia and New Zealand participated in the Summit.

Five Discussion Papers were commissioned as stimuli to help generate dialogue, exploration and debate. Two Discussants for each paper were tasked with identifying a set of key issues and questions for Education research arising from these papers. Plenary and small group discussion considered key issues and questions arising from the papers and the Discussants' presentations. A GoogleDoc was created during the Summit for individuals and groups to engage in issues arising from each paper session. This was made available online to participants subsequently, to optimize dialogue of issues and ideas. The papers addressed the following five critical areas:

- i. study of the future and the issue of complexity
- ii. the knowledge question in educational research
- iii. what counts as educational research?
- iv. locating Australia: global, regional, local
- v. digital media, technologies and scholarship: eResearch in educational inquiry

A draft report, summarising the key issues and questions arising from the Discussion Papers, and proposing a set of responses for practical and strategic implementation, was developed in April 2010 and circulated to participants at the Summit and to the AARE Executive. The

recommendations in this final report have been revised and developed from feedback on the draft report. The following sections of the report elaborate on the key outcomes.

Recommendations

Each of the five Discussion papers generated questions and debate in discussion about their implications for strategic planning for AARE and ACDE, as well as more broadly across other professional associations concerned with educational research, such as AVETRA. The issues and strategies summarized in the Executive Summary above arose directly from discussion about the immediate and longer-term implications of the questions and issues raised. They will be taken forward by an implementation working party of AARE in line with strategic planning priorities. It is hoped that further activity from other professional and research bodies will follow.

Broader intellectual and educational outcomes

The special Issue of the *Australian Educational Researcher* (Vol 37, no 4) consists of the five papers presented at the Summit, together with reviews of recent books addressing questions of educational futures and framed by an editorial essay synthesizing the discussion and debates. It is expected that this Issue will form a key resource for the proposed educational package from the Summit, 'Education Research Futures', together with video material from the Summit, framed pedagogically in relation to a set of questions and discussion points from the Summit process, and a set of related literatures.

Each author of the five Discussion Papers prepared a set of questions and discussion points arising from discussion at the Summit. These are presented below and will form the base of the 'Education Research Futures' educational resource to be produced for dissemination in 2011.



Paper 1. Study of the future and the question of complexity

Noel Gough

Gough's paper considers the ways in which 'the future' can be approached as an object of scholarly inquiry, and focuses on how the language of complexity invites a re-rethinking of education in terms of *emergence*. Complexity potentially destabilises the instrumentalist rationality that programs' educational systems to privilege orderly and predictable processes culminating in stable output. However, although complexity offers an opportunity to 'escape the program', this potentiality is undermined by a politics of *complexity reduction* – a pervasive tendency in Australian public life. Gough suggests some strategies for 'escaping the program' – strategies that might resist complexity reduction and catalyse emergence in Australian educational research as preconditions of/for inventing possible~impossible futures. Some questions arising from this argument are:

- How can we resist the default disposition to engage with complex systems in education through a politics of complexity reduction?
- How can we limit the complexity-reducing effects of homeostatic regulatory mechanisms in education and research e.g. National Curriculum, ERA, TEQSA, My

- School and My University websites, etc?
- Which current research practices reduce complexity retrospectively (by backwards selection of selected trajectories) and/or prospectively (by reducing initial variables)?
- Which contemporary manifestations of tacit, token and take-for-granted futures need to be exposed and critiqued as empty signifiers?
- Which educational slogans (e.g. 'transparency', 'evidence-based') and guiding metaphors ('benchmarking', 'ground-breaking', 'streamlined sector') should be high priorities for sustained and rigorous negotiation and critique of their meanings, products and effects?
- How might we produce more open, recursive, organic, nonlinear and diverse assemblages of human, technical, 'natural', and textual 'materials' and socio-technical relations as sites of emergence in education and educational inquiry?
- What new themes and tropes in SF (speculative fiction, science fiction, science fantasy, speculative futures, speculative fabulation) might be generative for imagining alternative futures in education (and educational inquiry)?
- How do we overcome the 'democratic deficit' (Biesta 2007) that results from many education researchers' obsessions with evidence-based practice ('what works'), the measurement and comparison of educational outcomes (and the resultant neglect of educational purposes), and the flawed logics of pursuing validity through 'triangulation' of 'multiple' (or 'mixed') methods?



Paper 2. The knowledge question in educational research

Bill Green

The question of knowledge is arguably central to educational theory and practice alike. Classically, what is widely regarded as the fundamental curriculum question is *What knowledge is of most worth?* – usually attributed to Herbert Spencer, writing in the latter part of the 19th century. That question is in turn commonly and characteristically rendered, somewhat transformed, as *What should the schools teach?* One hundred years later, Basil Bernstein described 'curriculum' as a key message-system for schooling, along with 'pedagogy' and 'assessment', with curriculum understood in this context as referring in a relatively commonplace way to 'educational knowledge', or rather "what counts as valid knowledge" educationally (Bernstein, 1977: 85). Green's paper addresses the question of the *object* of Education, or what knowledge is it organised around and addressed to; how that knowledge is to be characterized; what kind of knowledge it is, what other knowledges and knowledge fields it is aligned to and how it fits within the disciplinary and symbolic hierarchy of the University. These questions have major implications for the research interests and orientations of those working within the field, as well as for research education and training. Specific questions include:

- What is the distinctive knowledge project of Education as a research field? What challenges is it currently facing, and what are likely to emerge in the future?
- How best to take account of knowledge historically – that is, with due regard for the past, the present *and* the future?
- How is knowledge changing, and what are the implications and challenges not simply for educational research but more generally for Education?

- What counts as worthwhile educational knowledge? From the point of research, and from that of curriculum and pedagogy? What *should* count, in both cases?
- How to understand the distinction (and the relationship) between the *research* function (ie generating new knowledge) and the *practice and policy* function?
- Is there justifiably a case for 'bringing knowledge back in'? What would this involve?
- To what extent does disciplinary knowledge dominant or at least define the contemporary scene? How is *disciplinarity* to be best understood? How does it relate to inter-, cross-, multi-, pre- and trans-disciplinary inquiry?
- What knowledges, if any, are commonly left out of formal consideration, from the point of view of educational research?
- To what extent does disciplinary knowledge need to be complemented and/or supplemented by other knowledges and other knowledge forms and practices?
- Is there more to the knowledge question in and for Education than the *propositional* (knowledge that...) and the *procedural* (knowledge how...)? How to accommodate and deal adequately with tacit knowledge and understanding, with 'positional' or 'situated' knowledges, with the poetic and the mythic, with the issue of 'phronetic' knowledge, or *phronēsis*? With knowledges of 'the third kind' (Shotter)?
- How is Education to be positioned within the epistemic communities of Social Sciences and the Humanities? Are there other epistemic communities to consider?



Paper 3. What counts as Education research?

Alison Lee

The question of what Education research is or should be became one of the key points of debate at the Summit. It became apparent, through discussion and debate over the two days, that there are very different interests and responsibilities involved – for Deans, Heads of School, researchers and research educators – in relation to defining and boundaries and priorities. The complexity of these issues emerged clearly and require further teasing out.

The paper that directly addressed this question some of this debate re-visits a set of questions concerning the relevance and continuing viability of twentieth-century boundaries and divisions are between Education and putatively 'non-educational' work, for example in workplaces and other complex organizations. The paper considers the implications of these questions of boundaries for the future of Education and hence Education research. It considers the category of Education itself as a 'problem of the present', and explores a range of ways in which educational work is being de-parochialised in relation to times, places, divisions of labour and expertise. The paper illustrates these points by means of recent collaborative research in health. Some questions arising out of this discussion are:

Conceptual/epistemological questions: What, when and where is education?

- How are the category boundaries around educational sectors constructed and maintained?
- How have they been constituted historically, under what conditions and with what effects? How do these histories continue to shape the way we think about education?

- What are the vocabularies through which we name and frame education and its 'other' ie what is and is not education? How can we grasp the implications of Seddon's (2010) term 'educational work'?
- In particular, how are these boundaries challenged through shifts in conceptions and borders of the nation state, challenges to space-time relations, access to information and communication through digital media, and so on?
- How can we conceptualise futures for education outside of the current forms of categorisation and attendant modes of policy and institutional control? Can conceptions of complexity and particularly of emergence offer ways to re-think the spaces and places of education and of 'educational work'?

Policy and governance questions

- What questions are there about participation in education that cross the educational sectors?
- How and why does the dividing of education research into jurisdictions matter in terms of the accumulation of knowledge about big educational questions, expertise, influence, access to research funding?
- Where is education done in sites other than schools, colleges and universities and how can the education research field respond to the expanding borders of educational practice? Who does it? What is the nature of the knowledge and the practice?
- What is the role of the knowledge and expertise of education research in arenas of professional learning, within the school teaching profession, in other education-related professions and in professions such as health, where educative work becomes increasingly part of the professional's work?
- How can research on educational work in non-educational settings be recognized, resourced and fostered?



Paper 4. Locating Australia: Australia's place: global, regional, local

Johannah Fahey and Jane Kenway

This paper addresses the processes of globalization in relation to questions of Australia's place in education research. The paper draws from the ARC Discovery project called *Moving Ideas: Mobile Policies, Researchers and Connections in the Social Sciences and Humanities - Australia in the global context* (2006-2009). This project explored the ways that ideas travel and how knowledge transforms through travel. One aspect of the study was the critical examination of various research policies around the world that are associated with moving ideas and moving researchers. These are often coupled with notions of 'brain drain-gain/mobility' and 'diaspora'. A second focus was on the mobility biographies of globally mobile intellectuals with various links to Australia and on the implications of their mobility for their ideas, politics and national and trans-national identifications. It is our view that the actual experiences and insights of such people have the potential to enhance researcher (academic) mobility policies. A third concern has been to address the question of what it means to globalise the research imagination. In addressing this question we have drawn on leading researchers from around the globe who undertake research on globalisation itself. The paper to follow draws from selected publications associated with this project. The book

from the project, to be completed mid 2010, is titled *Moving Ideas and Mobile Intellectuals*. Some questions arising from this work are:

Global

- What are the links between globalisation, the nation state and educational research?
- What does it mean to globalise research and how is this related to the nation state?
- How might educational research address global issues such as the environment, war and violence, poverty and refugees?

Regional

- How can Australian educational research take into account other nation-states in the region (eg. Indonesia)?
- How can Australian educational research take into account other regions in the world (eg Europe)?

National

- How can Australian educational research challenge narrow versions of 'the national interest'?
- What does it mean to 'deparochialise' (Appadurai 2000) Australian educational research and how is this related to the nation state?

Sub-national

- What are the links between Australian Indigenous knowledges, the nation state and educational research?
- What are the links between Australian Indigenous knowledges, the nation state, educational research and other Indigenous knowledges in the region or the world?



Paper 5. Digital media, technologies and scholarship: eResearch in educational inquiry

Lina Markauskaite

The increasing research and influence of digital media on knowledge, knowledge production and utilisation and on research processes present some fundamental challenges to education research. Markauskaite's paper discusses recent developments in digital media, research technologies and scholarly practices that are known under the umbrella term of 'eResearch'. Drawing on conceptual ideas of digital materialism, epistemic artefacts and epistemic tools, this paper shows how the digital inscription of knowledge and knowing could change the nature of knowledge work in educational research and inquiry. The paper argues that eResearch challenges the conventional divide between 'monological' and 'dialogical' research practices and provides opportunities to create 'trialogical' ways of inquiry. These trialogical practices involve not only the collaborative development of answers to research questions, but also require explicit attention and development of new digital epistemic infrastructures - digital resources, software and conceptual tools and social structures. Some questions arising from this paper are:

Data-related challenges

- eResearch potential to solve more global and more complex educational issues fundamentally rests on the possibilities to create share, integrate and access data resources.
- How to create data sharing culture and infrastructure for educational research and inquiry?
- Who should take the leadership and responsibility for creating and maintaining new digital data infrastructures that cross existing institutional divisions?
- How to document preserve the contextuality of data and achieve sufficient level of integrity among educational datasets?
- How to solve data security and confidentiality questions?
- How to overcome the fundamental tension between the commitment to open access to data and human ethics?
- What kinds of ethical norms and moral responsibilities should underpin ones work with digital data?

Cultural-epistemological challenges

- eResearch is a trans-disciplinary research field in a deep ontological and epistemological sense.
- What kinds of knowledge and understanding do educational researchers need in order to be able to harness the potential of new data-rich research methods?
- What kinds of methodological expertise do educational researchers need in order to be able to research virtual learning phenomena?
- How could educational researchers utilise new possibilities for representing and disseminating research data in digital spaces and embrace new models of scholarly publishing?
- How could education embrace new ways of educational knowledge building, such as teacher innovation and inquiry, collaborative innovation and collaborative research networks?



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Participating Universities and Associations

The following institutions and associations supported the National Educational Research Futures Summit by nominating members to attend and paying registrations. Eighty people attended, comprising a balance of senior and early career researchers from a variety of fields and backgrounds.

Australian Catholic University	The University of Auckland
Avondale College	The University of Queensland
Charles Darwin University	The University of Sydney
Charles Sturt University	The University of Wollongong
CQUniversity Australia	University of Adelaide
Curtin University	University of Ballarat
Deakin University	University of New England
Edith Cowan University	University of New South Wales
Flinders University	University of Newcastle
Griffith University	University of Notre Dame Australia
HERDSA	University of South Australia
James Cook University	University of Southern Queensland
La Trobe University	University of Sydney
Monash University	University of Tasmania
Murdoch University	University of Technology, Sydney
Queensland University of Technology	University of Western Australia
RMIT University	University of Western Sydney
University of New South Wales	University of Wollongong
Southern Cross University	Victoria University