Editorial

It is with mixed feelings that I inform you of the decision to leave the Editorial Board of *Issues in Educational Research*. With it comes an opportunity for reflection about the formative training experiences inherent to the associate editor position and the possibility to acquire certain new skills. In 2009, I was invited to join the editorial team as an Assisting Editor, and later moved into the current role as Associate Editor. Working closely with the past and present editors of IIER provided wonderful on-the-job training opportunities, pertaining particularly to my understanding of the various phases of the publishing process and getting attuned to the breadth of issues facing educational professionals. I was fortunate to be part of a dedicated team that worked to enhance the reputation of the journal and see a substantial increase in submissions of manuscripts, which resulted in the publishing of three yearly issues of the journal since 2010. I am delighted with the achievement of the journal and grateful for the chance to learn much about the editorial process.

This issue provides an interesting collection of articles, illustrating the increasing international flavour of IIER and breath of topics currently explored by education professionals.

The first article by Chris Brown from the University of London, is a timely reminder of the need for what he calls 'evidence-informed policy'. He introduces the concept of 'knowledge adoption', which is defined as "the ways in which policymakers 'take on board' evidence" and argues that current practices need to be reviewed and improved. Brown explains that there are a number of key points at which research can assist policy makers. This encounter has been variously conceptualised as 'knowledge exchange' or 'knowledge mobilisation'. However, Brown posits that ideally the process should go further than simple exchange or mobilisation of knowledge, which is the primary reason for him to refer to it as 'knowledge adoption'. He presents not only an alternative knowledge adoption model, but also explains in great detail how this alternative model has been tested, outlining some implications for educational policy development.

The next article, authored by Jennifer Duke from Queensland University of Technology discusses affordances of and personal experiences with diary-based research tools for the collection of qualitative research data. In particular, she describes, in great detail, the design, piloting and evaluation of her working diary, which she used in her PhD study. Duke notes the development and testing of this ethnographic research tool illustrates the value of inclusive and participatory practice, providing much opportunity for reflection and reducing the power imbalance inherent in classical research. The intense preparation process and engagement with research partners makes possible "an in-depth look into the interactions" of study participants in a specific setting and context. This paper will prove to be useful for early career researchers and postgraduate students who, similar to Duke, may find the task of observation-based research "daunting" and search for an effective and efficient method to collect and record multiple observational data sets.

The article by Patrick Lim from the University of Western Australia and David Pyvis from Curtin University is an investigation of Singaporean science teachers' pedagogical practices, motivated by the need to respond to a call to reform teaching practices. Contemporary pedagogy should better align with student-centric principles outlined in the Singaporean policy document: 'Thinking Schools, Learning Nation' and ought to discontinue the use of "undesirable" teaching methods, such as drill-practice-and-tests. Lim and Pyvis note that the purpose of the 2006 Ministry of Education policy is to "use education to develop students into creative thinkers, life-long learners and leaders of change". They provide a number of verbatim accounts and helpful figures to illustrate how Singaporean science teachers attempt to overcome the challenges of what they call "pedagogical re-adaptation". They conclude that despite well-meaning policy initiatives such as 'Teach Less, Learn More', difficulties persist in changing teaching cultures. Teachers simply feel obliged to 'train students' to be successful test takers of unilateral high-stakes and externally administered examinations and to "deliver quality examination results", making it unlikely to achieve the goals of the Singaporean education policy.

Sasikala Nallaya from the University of South Australia presents a study that focuses on the measurement of change in English language proficiency levels of Malaysian teachers. She commences her paper acknowledging a global problem, namely the increasing need for non-English-speaking nations to develop an English proficient citizenry. Nallaya notes that there is a clear distinction between nations that use English as a means for communication in business and education and those that do not. She categorises them as 'inner' and 'outer' circle countries, explaining that English is seen as a Second Language (ESL) in inner circle countries, such as Malaysia and Singapore, whereas in outer circle nations English is perceived as a Foreign Language (EFL), such as China, Japan and Indonesia. This distinction is important because the study was conducted in a Malaysian context with ESL speakers. The study investigates multiple variables that contribute to change in English language proficiency. A particular focus is on the use of technology and its impact on proficiency levels of participants. Nallaya notes that technology may have multiple functions, on the one hand, it can provide a nexus between formal and informal learning of ESL among Malaysian teachers, and on the other, it has the potential of increasing interest and motivation in ESL learners.

Returning to Australian shores, Coral Pepper from Edith Cowan University and Sue Roberts from Murdoch University present findings from a former Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) project. The paper reports on the role of unit coordinators as leaders of learning in higher education (UCaLL). Pepper and Roberts explain that their aim was to generate narrative accounts from semi-structured interviews, interrogating unit coordinator's job satisfaction, opportunities and requirements of professional development and perceptions of leading learning. They mount an interesting argument, namely that the collection of 'just-in-time and just-for-me' narratives are able to contribute to academics' well-being and there with "support the criteria for 'good educational research'". Presenting three extensive vignettes and drawing from their construct of narrative themes, they illustrate how different unit coordinators perceive their role as leaders of learning in higher education. Their study

points to numerous specific challenges faced by unit coordinators, such as starting out as a novice unit coordinator, managing workload and complexity, complying with policy, improving quality and building rapport with students. A surprising finding is that experienced unit coordinators also experience challenges similar to those that are 'starting out' in this leadership role and there seems to be a lack of general institutional support for their role.

Finally, Richard Rose from West Texas A&M University draws attention to an interesting and global problem – the need for quality education and the lifting of teaching standards which has generated much debate in the US and elsewhere in recent years. His contribution of an American perspective of the issue is much welcomed and illustrates unique insights into the debates concerning performance pay schemes and their effects in a US context. Rose's contribution makes clear that the teacher merit pay debate is not only heated in Australia, but has, in fact, a polarising effect on the US public. To complicate matters further, the global financial crisis (GFC) has, so he argues, made it "less likely" that education departments and local districts are in a position to provide financial incentives to teachers that are deemed to be "high quality public school teachers". His study investigates whether "expensive pay-related motivators are as essential as current discussions [in the US] would suggest". The participants of this study were experienced masters level public school teachers, some of which identified themselves as 'totally committed to teaching' (TCT) in K-12 public schools, and others as 'not totally committed to teaching' (NTCT) in K-12 public schools. The NTCT group was open to opportunities for change and actively seeking employment in business and industry, whereas the former group (TCT) was committed to teaching and staying in the education sector. It is encouraging that his findings support what he calls a "now familiar story", namely that cost-free motivators, such as position respect and job security may prove to be more effective in attracting, inspiring and retaining quality teachers in the public education sector than costly financial incentives. This is an area that deserves our attention and as Chris Brown (the first paper in this volume) so poignantly notes, there is a great need for evidence-informed policy development.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my time at IIER and would like to thank my colleagues on the editorial board for their excellent work and willingness to help out with urgent review and/or copy editing tasks when needed. Although many are greatly pressed with time, they never refused a request for assistance. I am indebted to them for their commitment to IIER and excellent voluntary work.

Eva Dobozy
Associate Editor