

Editorial: Teaching and education research in a Web 2.0 world

I am delighted to write the editorial for the third issue of IIER for this year. The journal is enjoying much interest and increased submissions from national and international education scholars, who are working on a range of research issues and problems. A topic that has long captured my interest is the disparity of experiences of people's social and professional lives and the stability of traditional educational practices. This interest was reignited recently as I cleaned out a cupboard filled with old manuscripts and floppy discs (!!!) dating back to my PhD work. Incidentally, I also received my son's 2011 National Assessment Program – Language and Numeracy (NAPLAN) test results in the same week. The rapidly changing ways we do things today compared to only a decade ago are signalling the importance of information communication technologies (ICTs) in modern life based on convenience, speed, and (cost) effectiveness. This is in stark contrast with the ways in which our children are still experiencing school education. The discrepancy between modern life on the one hand, and school education practices on the other hand is, so it seems to me, an illustration of what Giroux (1993) and others (Anderson & Maninger, 2009; Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2010) perceive to be a long-standing problem in much of Western school and teacher education. The interplay between professional, cultural and social change practices and outcomes and the stability of school education practices and valued outcomes is likely to affect the prospects of future knowledge workers in significant ways. The tension that is created between the 'master narrative' (sometimes referred to as grand narrative), which is represented by the ways in which many teachers teach and school students are made to learn 'the curriculum content', and the ways in which this practice could affect the learning of 21st century knowledge and skills is the focus of this editorial.

Sitting by an open cupboard and sifting through long forgotten papers, I revisit the captivating writing of the French philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard (1984), who introduced the term 'master narrative'. This, he argued, is a normative procedure, more often than not implicit to a particular culture or way of life that specifies and controls social practices and inscribes them with values. Hence, the 'master narrative' of school and teacher education provides a script for 'good teaching' and 'good learning' in a stable, homogenous environment constructed by the dominant group in Western school education.

The master narrative operating in many schools and classrooms in Australia and elsewhere is, as current research attests (Conole, Brasher, Cross, et. al., 2008; Ertmer, 2005, Weller, 2011) disregarding the possibilities that ICTs provide for education and educational research, and instead is reproducing traditional pedagogical practices. The cultural reproduction of traditional classroom practices in a Web 2.0 world can be illustrated by two adapted extracts, one from a European grant submission and another from an Australian study.

Schools are slow to change. This is characterised by an inability of many schools to deal with internal conflicts and question traditional modes of

operation. For this reason there is a need for a teacher education to produce teachers who have the ability and volition to challenge a school's traditional practices and to develop a new teaching culture. Teacher education has failed to prepare teachers to confront some of the pertinent challenges of the teaching profession. Too often, the modes of thinking and acting acquired in teacher education are failing to take root in schools. Newly qualified teachers are more likely to be socialised into traditional pedagogical practices than to be prepared to change them. The central problem of teacher education is indeed that it is incapable of producing sufficiently powerful agency (Moilanen, Mäensivu, Nikkola, Rautiainen, & Rähä, 2011).

Similarly, Clarke (2008) has observed that many Australian history classrooms still operate in traditional ways, showing the occasional war movie that is made available to them through the school's video library. She explains that students are "sick of repeating topics and boring material" (p. 11). More importantly, a student in her study even observed: "The videos are shocking and some of the textbooks, too, are like from 1988, and that's how old we are" (Clarke, 2008, p. 7).

Cultural reproduction in school and teacher education, which Bourdieu (1977, 1990) termed 'habitual action', is problematic. Attempts to shift deep-seated cultural practices in formal education are often met with great resistance by members of the dominant group, subscribing to 'the master narrative'. The learning needs of 21st century knowledge workers are different from those of earlier eras and traditional pedagogy, coupled with traditional high stakes basic knowledge testing, such as the Australian NAPLAN testing regime, which is associated with the master narrative in schools, is no longer able to support learning processes and outputs needed by future knowledge workers, who need to be skilled problem solvers and creative innovators. What needs to be clarified is the role emerging educational technologies and pedagogies play in the fabric of practices in school and teacher education. As Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich (2010) explain.

It is time to shift our mindsets away from the notion that technology provides a *supplemental* teaching tool and assume, as with other professions, that technology is essential to successful performance outcomes (i.e., student learning). To put it simply, effective teaching requires *effective* technology use (p. 256) (emphasis in original).

Developing and voicing ideas that challenge the status quo and/or run counter to the normative practices and therewith challenge the presumed order and control are referred to as 'counter narratives' (Lyotard, 1984). Counter narratives are essential tools, providing a critique of the master narrative, often as a precursor to developing alternatives to the dominant discourse of the day. Two such counter narratives in teaching and learning provisions and educational research are the recent and rapid developments of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and eScholarships. Education scholars working with and within these counter narratives are challenging traditional 'habitual action' and cultural norms and practices, offering new models of education and education research, and enabling the construction of counter experiences of learning and scholarship realities.

Whereas the master narrative of formal education involves traditional teacher-centric and content-driven practices that result in easily testable knowledge outputs through avenues such as NAPLAN that typically compare lower-order knowledge and skills acquisition by students as a measure of success, MOOCs challenge this normative and authoritative practice on a number of fronts. McAuley, Stewart, Siemens & Cormier (2010) note:

A MOOC builds on the active engagement of several hundred to several thousand ‘students’ who self-organize their participation according to learning goals, prior knowledge and skills, and common interests. Although it may share in some of the conventions of an ordinary course, such as a predefined timeline or weekly topics for consideration, a MOOC generally carries no fees, no prerequisites other than Internet access and interest, no predefined expectations for participation, and no formal accreditation (p. 4).

Similarly, eScholarship or digital scholarship “can be viewed as a convenient shorthand to contrast with traditional, ‘analogue’ forms of scholarship” (Weller, 2011, p. 2). However, the significance of eScholarship, similar to MOOC learning and teaching, is that it is ‘open’, ‘networked’ and of course, ‘technology-mediated’. Therewith, MOOC learning and teaching and eScholarship are providing a counter narrative, challenging entrenched norms and practices in formal education and scholarship. The need to understand the implications of these counter narrative models for school and teacher education inspired me to participate in this new form of networked learning and sign up to the 2011 CHANGE MOOC – #change11 as a learner and researcher.

It is without question that the education community needs to embrace the possibilities that the ICT-isation (Rush, 2008) or ‘digital turn’ (Buchanan, 2011) present to the field of education, especially as the Australian government’s recently released a ‘Cyber White Paper’, published on the ‘cyber white paper website’ acknowledges the need for “the digital proficiency of teachers” and “the use of innovative digital teaching and learning tools” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011, p. 9). Yet, as Australia is in the process of developing its technological infrastructure, the National Broadband Network (NBN), in some of the OECD member countries, the initiatives for developing sustainable infrastructure to support educational technologies still remain compromised through their absence in national policies and curriculum guidelines.

It seems that on the policy front, the non-traditional, open, student-centred and technology-mediated teaching and learning provisions are no longer perceived as ‘counter narratives’. The question remains: When will education research be able to report wide-spread and sustained behaviour change in school and teacher education across the nation? Rather than storing papers in cupboards and on floppy disks, CDs or flash drives, many of us grapple with collaborative cloud work and cloud storage options, hence needing to solve the problem of empty cupboard space, previously occupied by physical work-related treasures.

In this last issue of 2011, we present five articles which jointly encompass the broad range of research topics represented in the journal. We begin with an article by Bryer and Signorini which reports on their study investigating fourth year pre-service teachers' ability to effectively respond to internalising problems experienced by primary students. They present evidence for the argument that teacher education remains ill-equipped for providing pre-service teachers with the necessary skills through which to assist in the wellbeing of students. The authors believe that systematic in-service training and assisting pro-social and strength building school based approaches is necessary for raising the capacity of pre-service teachers in dealing with student health issues.

Matthew Etherington presents a small scale focused study of the practicum experiences among second-career teacher-students in Canada. Drawing on the Pygmalion principle he demonstrates that the older second-career student-teachers show elevated expectations of themselves in dealing with various practicum learning tasks and that this may in turn reflect upon their supervising teachers' expectations and attitudes. We continue our focus on pre-service teachers in presenting the last article for this issue.

The third article by Noella Mackenzie, Brian Hemmings and Russell Kay turns to the issue of literacy learning and teaching in the first year of school. The authors investigate teacher attitudes towards the learning of writing and the influence of teaching experience upon such attitudes. The authors discuss the implications of inexperience affecting attitudes towards early writing and the need for developing integrated educational philosophy as part of teacher professional development.

Ann Power addresses collaborative pedagogy that is driven by a teacher's single initiative to implement wiki technology through professional learning. The case study describes the evolution of a learning community that actively engages in pedagogy that is openly shared by the teaching collegiate and which enhances the quality of learning in her classroom.

In the fifth article Patricia Weekes reports on a voluntary tutorship program administered in support of refugee secondary education level students. The article discusses some of the challenges facing voluntary teachers working on the program, particularly in building communication through aligned partnership with schools.

We are excited to be able to offer a wide range of high quality articles, inspiring and stimulating debate and discussion around formal education and educational research issues.

On behalf of the editorial team, we wish you a productive end to the working year and a peaceful festive season.

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Editor

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