

## Editorial

Education in the twenty-first century is about equipping students of all ages “to compete in the global economy on knowledge and innovation ... take advantage of opportunity and ... face challenges of this era with confidence” (*Melbourne Declaration*, 2008, p. 13). There is a strong commitment in Australia, as well as elsewhere, from Federal and State levels on developing reciprocal partnerships with low socio-economic and Indigenous communities. These commitments emerge in documents such as the *Bradley Report* and the MCEEDYA four year plan. The challenge is for education systems to respond comprehensively to government plans.

In 2000, the Australian Government published an “Initiative” statement, *Teachers for the 21st century: Making the difference*. The statement identifies the twenty first century context as “a complex and professionally demanding environment for work in education. Our society is in the middle of a number of significant social, cultural and economic changes, influenced by the revolution in information and communication technologies,...one of the central factors in producing the phenomenon of globalisation and the need for informed global perspectives”, (p. 8). Of great significance for education is that much of the international literature points to the conviction that the divide between higher and lower socio-economic learners will widen, with consequent gaps in literacy levels. While affluence will increase for many, disadvantages for others also are predicted to increase. This inequality already exists, particularly in Indigenous and minority communities and as a result of the “student flow” of migration and mobility (OECD, *Trends shaping education*, 2008, p. 13).

The literature extensively deals with the twenty first century trend and challenges of globalisation as it impacts on society, learners and the nature of education. One of the greatest challenges recognised is the rapid pace of globalisation, which means teachers and students are bombarded with consciousness of world events and processes happening in real time and interlinked through economies and media throughout the world. Educators will have to confront global environmental change, its management and critical uncertainties, in their curriculum as well as in the physical nature of learning environments.

The twenty first century trends of populations on the move, changing migration patterns and the complex environmental and social pressures that result are critiqued in various documents, (notably in *Stepping out into the real world of education*, 2009). In this text, Millwater and Beutel describe a new world of “multiplicities, diversity ... flux” (p. 17). This includes changing family structures. The changing social environments and cultural landscapes challenge today’s educators to determine new ways to link different kinds of families and communities with new learning realities in the education domain.

The articles presented in this issue contribute towards a commitment in education to seek new ways of meeting diverse challenges. We begin with presenting an article by Berman on the changing conceptualisations through the supervisory relationship of her doctoral research. In her article Berman reflects on the evolving of both structure and presentation

of a four tier conceptual framework and provides a framework for the support of completing doctoral studies. The suggestions and examples in her article are of great relevance to doctoral students and their supervisors.

In the second article, Gobby provides a description of the transformation in government advanced liberalism, by shedding light upon the Independent Public Schools government program in Western Australia. Gobby argues that while the IPS has provided increased empowerment for school principals, this has come at the cost of diminishing central administrative and human resources.

The third article by Hemmings, Hill and Sharp present comparative examples from the UK and Australia, on the challenges of professional learning and development among early career researchers in the less research intensive universities. The authors claim that neophyte researchers have varying needs and experiences, and the authors provide seven key suggestions for implementing strategies to ease the transition into independent research careers.

The fourth article by Hennessey and Dionigi examines primary teachers' understanding of cooperative learning, demonstrating that the level of teachers' knowledge inhibited their ability to implement cooperative learning in the classroom. In the fifth article by Kaniuka, Vitale and Romance we turn our gaze to educational leadership and school reform. The authors provide critique on the evaluative research design of randomised field trials (RFT) that is generally intended to influence educational decision makers. The authors argue that as an alternative, a multiple baseline design logic could generate real-world research settings which would be available to school staff in evaluating school based research.

In the sixth article Warner and Picard address the challenges facing Academic Language and Learning (ALL) academics working with students who have English as an additional language in higher education. The authors provide examples on how ALL academics provide a complementary role that articulates generic and disciplinary knowledge and comprehensively integrate international students in university learning and curriculum.

The seventh article by Xia, Fielder and Siragusa examines evaluation of curriculum delivery in an online learning forum among university science students. The study provides evidence of a positive correlation between active online engagement and learning achievement.

We hope that the seven articles presented in this issue will provide further debate on our current progression towards meeting the challenges of change and development in the twenty first century.

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