Our Mission:

To improve educational outcomes for all learners, especially young people and those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

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Welcome to the summer issue of the IERI Newsletter. There has been much to celebrate in the Institute in the past six months, culmination in our best ever outcomes in National Competitive Grants. IERI members led seven successful applications, including one NHMRC Project Grant and TRIP Fellowship, three ARC Discovery Projects, one Future Fellowship and one DECRA. IERI members were also successful in receiving funding from the National Heart Foundation and were CIs on grants awarded to other institutions. See Page 9 of this issue for full details.

Over the past three months we have also welcomed several researchers to IERI. These include Professor Iram Siraj-Blatchford from the Institute of Education, London; Professor Edward (Ted) Melhuish from Oxford University; and Dr Bridget Kelly, recently appointed Senior Lecturer in Public Health, formerly of University of Sydney.

Iram Siraj-Blatchford is an internationally renowned scholar in the area of early childhood education. Iram will greatly strengthen IERI’s research profile in the area of childcare policy and practice and has been involved in advocating for quality childcare at the highest levels of government in the UK, including recently as a member of the House of Commons Select Committee for the Children’s Centre Enquiry report.

Ted Melhuish is a newly appointed Professor of Developmental Psychology at UOW. He has been Director of the Institute for the Study of Children, Families & Social Issues at the University of London.

He has undertaken research in 12 countries, including the Effective Preschool, Primary & Secondary Education (EPPSE) and the National Evaluation of Sure Start (NESS) projects.

Bridget Kelly is an outstanding early career researcher with an interest in the area of food marketing to children. Her current research examines how children are exposed to food marketing through a range of mediums and what the impact of this exposure is on children’s food attitudes, choices and consumption behaviours.

We will be profiling these members and their research in future issues.

On behalf of all IERI members and students, thank you for your support for our research in the past year. We look forward to continuing to work with you in 2014 to achieve our Mission. We wish you and your families a healthy and safe Christmas and all the best for a successful year in 2014.

Warm Regards,
Tony Okely
Evaluating the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME) Program

The Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience Program (AIME) was established in 2005 when 25 students from the University of Sydney volunteered to work with 25 Indigenous children from local high schools. Since 2005 more than 3000 mentors have been recruited to work with 3542 Indigenous school students in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria. The AIME Program is based on the recruitment of university students as mentors who provide advice and personal support to Indigenous school mentees from years 7 to 12. Its overall goals are to improve retention rates of Indigenous high school students to Year 12 and post school, to connect Indigenous students to university and employment. In 2011 the high school completion rate for AIME students was 88%, 36% of whom gained entry to university in 2011 (AIME 2011 Annual Report). Subsequently, in 2012, in an attempt to extend the Program’s reach, AIME initiated the AIME Outreach Program (AOP). The AOP varied from the previous form of program delivery: it was based on groups of students being mentored for three separate day-long sessions over three school terms rather than the weekly mentoring sessions offered over two school terms in the Core Program.

In October 2012 the Australia Indigenous Mentoring Experience Indigenous Corporation commissioned the University of Wollongong (UOW) to evaluate the 2012 AIME Outreach Program. The UOW team, in collaboration with the University of Western Sydney, undertook an evaluation of the AOP. The overall aim of the evaluation was to identify what it would take to replicate and expand the Outreach program across other university sites nationally.

To undertake the evaluation the research team employed a mixed-methods design of date collection, gather data via observations of program delivery; interview with program facilitators, mentors and mentees; review of AIME documentation and the design and conduct of a quantitative survey of mentees. This data collection process was guided by six key questions:

1. What are the achievements and impacts of the Core Program
2. What are the outcomes for participants (mentees) in the AIME Outreach Program
3. Have the objectives of the Outreach Program been achieved?
4. What is the capacity of the Outreach Program as an outreach educational mentoring initiative for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people?
5. What are current operational Outreach Program costs and what are the projected costs for expansion?
6. How can the Outreach Program be expanded?
After completing data analysis on the above collected information, the team concluded that the AIME Outreach Program is achieving positive results for participants (mentees) that are comparable with the Core AIME Program. AIME works successfully in a complex environment to make a difference in education and other associated outcomes for the Indigenous young people engaged in the AIME Program. Overall, the team collated five key findings:

1. In its first year of operation, the AOP reached its objectives of encouraging better school grade progression rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, compared with the national average.

2. The achievements and impacts of the AOP are comparable to those of the AIME Core Program, as measured by school progression rates, school completion rates and the AIME evaluation survey results. Outcomes from both programs are better than national average.

3. On the basis of findings from both the qualitative and quantitative data, the AOP was assessed as having a positive impact on mentees. AIME positively impacted:
   a. The strength and resilience of mentees
   b. Mentee pride in being Indigenous
   c. Mentees making strong connections with Indigenous peers, role models and culture
   d. Aspirations and engagement for finishing school
   e. Aspirations for continuing to further study
   f. School retention rates

4. While the Core Program has benefits such as the development of mentor-mentee relationships over a longer period, the AOP can access a wider group of school students and fits well with school scheduling.

5. On the basis of AIME financial modelling on cost per mentee, the AOP costs are comparable.

Based on these key findings, the team comprised some recommendations for AIME:

1. Develop a clear strategy for AOP expansion

2. Continue to train, develop and support AIME staff ensuring that all training requirements are met prior to the program expansions, and that training and development is consistent across the programs.

3. Continue to train and develop AIME volunteer mentors (university students) and that training is consistent across sites

4. Make changes to curriculum and program delivery

5. Conduct ongoing research and evaluation that continues to critically engage with the program and which is conducted independently.

*The information in this article was obtained from the Final Report – Evaluations of the AIME Outreach Program. This report was prepared by the AIME Evaluation Team, which comprised:

1. Personnel for the contracted university (University of Wollongong): A/Prof Valerie Harwood, Dr. Sarah O'Shea, Professor Kathie Clapham, Professor Jan Wright, Dr. Lisa Kervin, Ms. Nicoli Humphry, Ms. Samantha McMahon, Mr. Michael Hogan and

2. Sub-contractor, Dr. Gawaian Bodkin-Andrews, from the University of Western Sydney.

More information about this evaluation can be found at http://ro.uow.edu.au/ahsri/216/.
To keep up to date with AIME visit the AIME website: http://aimementoring.com/
To see the latest episode of AIME TV, featuring UOW Graduate - Jake Trindorfer
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6QkePK8gxKM&feature=c4-overview&list=UUDL9R_msYDYyHF7Ix0NEYow
Motivation and Self-Determination within Physical Education

Motivation or self-determination is a popular area of research within physical education, due to the strong association and relationship with various cognitive, psychomotor and affective outcomes within activity-based settings. Often this motivational research is focused on aspects that a teacher can manipulate or modify within their instruction in an attempt to enhance the motivation of their students and in turn influence the level of learning within a physical education setting. A key teacher related factor that can facilitate higher levels of motivation is the social context. The social context is viewed as how supportive a teaching and learning setting is perceived by students and is the only aspects within an educational setting that can be influenced by the teacher. Therefore, it is integral in the teaching and learning domain.

With this in mind, Dr. Dana Perlman from the School of Education, set out to further understand and examine the influence of the social context, based within Self-Determination Theory, on a variety of educationally relevant outcomes for secondary physical education students. Dr. Perlman has focused his research into understanding (a) the applied benefits of engaging students in various social contexts and (b) the degree by which teachers can apply the theoretical and practical elements of a motivationally-supportive setting. As a result of his research, Dr. Perlman has provided evidence that secondary physical education students engaged in a highly supportive social learning context will report and engage in significantly higher levels of in-class physical activity, game performance, game involvement, as well as report being more motivated and demonstrate socially responsible and inclusive behaviours.

Furthermore, his research has demonstrated that both physical educators and organized sport coaches can be provided professional development that can enhance their motivationally-supportive instruction without detracting from the educationally relevant material. Dr. Perlman uses both qualitative and quantitative measures to conduct his research as he argues that this mixed method approach allows for greater understanding of the degree by which interventions work and what elements within the intervention facilitated those results.

Contact

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Dana Perlman is a senior lecturer and director of the Physical and Health Education program in the School of Education at the University of Wollongong. In addition, he is the coordinator of the Pedagogical Laboratory for Physical Education and Sport. Before coming to UOW, he taught in the United States at Kent State University and Washburn University. In addition, Dana has experience as a secondary health and physical education teacher in Connecticut. He received his Bachelors degree in Physical Education with a minor in Health Education from the University of Idaho. During his three years of public school teaching Dana earned his Masters degree in Educational Leadership from Central Connecticut State University. Finally, he returned to the University of Idaho to complete his Ph.D. in sport pedagogy under the supervision of Professor Grace Goc Karp. Research interests focus in the area of student motivation within (a) teacher preparation and (b) curricula interventions, specifically Sport Education.
For decades, debates have raged around the issue of whether and how knowledge about language might impact on writing achievement, yet surprisingly little research has been conducted into the relationship between metalinguistic understanding and writing development. Bernstein (1971), in his seminal work in the sociology of education, argues that educational failure is primarily a linguistic failure, suggesting that educational challenges result largely from a lack of access to the discipline-specific language resources needed for academic achievement. In response to such concerns, curriculum policy internationally is emphasizing the explicit teaching of knowledge about language in schools. In Australia, the new Australian Curriculum: English (AC:E) requires that students demonstrate knowledge about language (i.e. metalinguistic knowledge): ‘a coherent, dynamic, and evolving body of knowledge about the English language and how it works’ (ACARA 2009: 6). In the context of national and international concerns about standards in writing, there is a pressing need for a more informed understanding of the ways in which students become competent, creative, flexible and independent writers.

With these concerns in mind, Associate Professor Honglin Chen, in conjunction with Dr. Pauline Jones, sought to study and explain the relationship between learners’ metalinguistic understanding and development in writing. To undertake this research the team started with a small pilot study, with one primary school class and one secondary school class participating. The students chosen to participate were selected according to their writing levels – Good, Average or Weak – with two students nominated by their teacher from each level. The researchers took a case-study approach to their methodology, and collected data in the form of student work samples, classroom talk and lesson observations. Each writing session was video-recorded, with additional records taken as field notes and still images. In order to identify the role of metalinguistic understanding in expanding students’ meaning-making potential with respect to writing, two writing samples by each of the participating students arising from the observed lessons were collected and analysed for evidence of students’ uptake of learnt grammatical concepts.

Analyses yielded some interesting results for the research team. The findings of the study demonstrated that the students developed emerging understanding of the focused grammatical concepts: clause constituents. Their metalinguistic talk in the interviews and their writing tasks demonstrated some evidence of their development with respect to the concepts. There was evidence that the metalinguistic concepts were beginning to merge with the students’ existing understandings of language, followed by an increased performance in their writing. However, there needs to be more data and possibly a longitudinal study to validate the relationship between them.

An important insight gained from these findings is that developing knowledge about language is more than mere accumulation of knowledge and skills. These findings demonstrated that there were varying degrees of strengths and weaknesses in the development of concepts.

This study is a pilot study of an ongoing project investigating the relationship between explicit teaching about language and its uptake by students. The next step for the researchers is to undertake this study on a larger scale. The findings of the research have potential to improve literacy experiences and outcomes for all students.

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Honglin Chen is an Associate Professor in TESOL and Language Education. She has extensive teaching and research experience in second language learning and development, second language teaching methodology, curriculum development in EAP (English for Academic Purposes), CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning), educational linguistics, and language and literacy education in the preparations of teachers to work with culturally and linguistically diverse students. A/P Chen is a chief investigator on three Australian Research Council funded projects investigating relationships between literacy research, policy and practice, and provisions of community language programs in Australia. She has a keen interest in developing an interdisciplinary approach to understanding literacy and language learning within the contexts of national curriculum reforms in the fields of English and Languages. Her research to date has centred on advancing understanding of how all students, native English speaking and second language, in school and tertiary contexts, can raise their literacy and language achievements. This research agenda (since 2009) has been supported by 3 ARC Discovery/Linkage, and 1 University wide competitive granthe is taking part in other research projects lead by professors and lectures at UOW, UNSW and UTAS.
Janine Delahunty is a PhD student in the School of Education, nearing completion of her studies. Her current research interest is in the online learning environment, particularly in relation to forum discussion in fully delivered online subjects. She is interested in how participating in online forums impacts the teaching-learning experience for both online students and instructors. Especially important in her research is how interaction contributes to building a sense of community, and the extent to which this enables cooperative and collaborative discussion, and importantly, the flow-on to learning. She commenced her PhD studies in 2010, under the supervision of Dr Pauline Jones and Dr Irina Verenikina. In 2011, Janine was runner-up in the UoW Three Minute Thesis competition, which was a very worthwhile, even if challenging experience.

Janine began university in 2002 'to see if she liked it' and has been studying ever since. In fact her time at university has overlapped at various times with each of her three children, who have all since graduated. Beginning with a Bachelor of Arts, she majored in Italian and English Language and Linguistics and, after graduating in 2007, her interest in TESOL led her to do a Masters in Education specializing in TESOL. It was during this time that she enrolled in some online subjects to bring forward her graduation date.

Janine hopes that her research will provide some 'visibility' into the nature of online discussion which will help to inform educators when designing, planning and implementing online courses. This experience then sparked her current interest, a motivation largely stemming from how the learning benefits she had experienced during face-to-face class discussion might be simulated in online classes.

Janine Delahunty - Postgraduate Student

Dr. Mark Freeman grew up in the Illawarra region. He has received a Bachelors of Information and Communication Technology (Honours) and a PhD form University of Wollongong. His doctoral research examined the relationship between human-computer interaction and e-commerce systems. Recently with a passion for academic teaching, Mark returned to studies and obtained a Master of Education (Higher Education). Mark is a lecturer in the School of Information Systems and Technology in the Faculty of Engineering and Information Sciences and has been lecturing since 2008. He was nominated and awarded for his excellence in teaching. He is also responsible for coordinating Industry and Community Engagement for his school. Mark's research is concerned with human-computer interaction, particularly the adoption, use, cognitive load and learnability of technologies. He has published his work in journals and at a number of international information systems conferences. Other research areas of interest include community informatics and social networking technologies. Mark's research supervision and current projects are in the areas of: technology-enabled learning, including how technology can be used creatively as a motivator for intrinsic engagement; Human-Computer Interaction with on mobile systems (particularly touchscreen based interaction); Usability of online and mobile systems; and how social networking can be used as a method to influence and educate.
IERI has had extraordinary grant success this year and we wish to congratulate the following researchers:

**Tony Okely**, with UOW colleagues **Dylan Cliff**, **Rachel Jones**, **Marijka Batterham**, **Ngiare Brown**, **Simon Eckermann** and external collaborators **Stewart Trost (UQ)**, **Donna Berthelsen (QUT)**, **Jo Salmon (Deakin)**, **John Reilly (Strathclyde)** were awarded funding totalling $1,064,324 over 4 years. Their project is titled: Increasing physical activity and reducing sedentary behaviour in early childhood: A group randomised controlled effectiveness trial. This is the largest funding ever received for a NHMRC Project Grant with UOW as the lead organisation!

**Irina Verenkina** and **Lisa Kervin** with collaborator **Collette Murphy (Trinity College Dublin)** were awarded a Discovery Project Grant totalling $126,000, for their project which aims to investigate the inter relationship between the technologies and imaginative play in the early years.

**Sue Bennett**, with collaborators **Lori Lockyer**, **Gregor Kennedy**, and **Barney Dalgarno (MacQuarie)** were awarded a Discovery Project Grant totalling $180,531 for their project that will focus specifically on how students interpret online tasks set by their teachers, how they complete those tasks by tracking their activities in real-time.

**Valerie Harwood**, **Paul Chandler** and **Sarah O’Shea** were awarded a Discovery Project Grant totalling $211,293 for their project that aims to build on research with the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME).

**Valerie Harwood** received the Future Fellowship, totalling $848,508 for her project that aims to improve aspirations for educational futures in LSES early childhood settings.

**Dylan Cliff** was awarded a Discovery Early Career Researcher Award totalling $392,459 for his project investigating the associations between physical activity and screen-based entertainment and cognitive and psychosocial development in preschool children.

**Paul Chandler** is a CI on a recently announce ARC linkage grant. This project, led by Sandra Jones, also involves other IERI associates who are members of the Centre for Health Initiatives (Don Iverson and Peter Caputi) and was awarded $460,519 for their project entitled “Turning passion for sport into an opportunity to improve child health in remote communities”.

**Tony Okely and Rachel Jones** were awarded a Community Engagement Grant for their project, ‘Development of a fundamental movement skill program to enhance motor skill development and physical activity among children aged 1-3 years’.

**Anne-Marie Parrish** was awarded the Vanguard Grant, the National Heart Foundation’s new scheme that provides funding to test the feasibility of innovative concepts in public health. These are prestigious awards with only 13 awards nationally. Her project titled “Stand up for health” was funded $75,061.

**Anthony McInknight and Paul Chandler** were awarded a UOW Community Engagement Grant for their project, ‘The Elders Report into Preventing Self-harm and Indigenous Suicide’.

**Sue Bennett** and Dr. **Shirley Agostinho are CI’s on a Discovery Project Grant led by Lori Lockyer from MacQuarie University.** The team was awarded $269,825 for their project that aims to characterise and identify differences in how novice and expert teachers approach the design of learning experiences for their students; capturing expert design processes through practice examples.

There were several IERI members that were also the recipient of prestigious awards and publications. IERI would like to congratulate the following members:

**Wendy Nielsen** who, along with her colleagues **Anthony Clarke (UBC)** and **Valeria Triggs (Regina)** have recently published a paper on the role of cooperating teachers (those who supervise pre-service students during PEx or practicum) on teacher education in the Review of Educational Research. This is a significant achievement as it is the first time that an IERI researcher has published a paper in this journal. The Review of Educational Research is widely regarded as the top education journal in the world.

**Stuart Johnstone** was awarded the Vice-Chancellor’s award for outstanding achievement in research commercialisation for his project ‘Focus Pocus’ - the world’s first evidence based neuro-cognitive training tool for the improvement of behavioural control in children with ADHD.

**Steven Howard** was presented an “Australian College of Educators (ACE) Illawarra/South Coast, Certificate of Recognition Award” for his contribution to the community through education.

**Jonelle Uptin** and her supervisors **Jan Wright** and **Valerie Harwood** won the prestigious AARE Springer Award for 2014, with their paper entitled “It felt like I was a black dot on white paper”, examining young former refugees’ experience entering Australian High Schools.
IERI Seminar Series

Since beginning, IERI has conducted a Seminar Series on Wednesday lunchtimes highlighting presentations from visiting Australian and international academics. The Seminars are a great opportunity to hear about current research activity from around the world. Everyone is welcome to attend and a light lunch is provided.

The second half of 2012 began with a presentation from Dr Ellen De Decker, from Ghent University in Belgium. Her presentation was titled ‘The Toybox Project: An intervention to decrease preschoolers’ sedentary behaviour’. Dr De Decker’s research focused on developing an intervention to change different energy-balance related behaviours for the prevention of overweight and obesity in children between 4 and 6 years of age.

Dr. Clare Painter from the University of Sydney led the next seminar, titled ‘The interplay of word and image in children’s picture books’. This presentation outlined a framework for the analysis of picture books with the aim of better understanding how they work to apprentice young readers.

Dr Brian Timmons, McMaster University (Canada), led the next seminar titled ‘Experiences at the child health & exercise medicine program: from lab bench to park bench’. This presentation outlined some of Dr Timmons current areas of research activity, including physical activity during the early years, metabolic adaptation to exercise, and the role of exercise as an anti-inflammatory therapy for children with a chronic inflammatory disease.

On September 16, a joint seminar was held with Dr Albert Ziegler, University of Erlangen-Nuremberg and Dr Heidrun Steoger, University of Regensburg, Germany. Dr Ziegler’s presentation titled ‘Student perceptions of high-achieving classmates’, discussed a study investigating the expectations of 2000 students in relation to highly achieving peers in Australia, Korea, Peru and Vietnam. While Dr Steoger’s presentation, titled ‘CyberMentor: an e-mentoring program for girls in STEM’, discussed ongoing research on the CyberMentor - an e-mentoring program which brings together, one-to-one personal women mentors with 800 girls (age 12 to 18) who are interested in the sciences.

Presenting a joint seminar, Professor Iram Siraj-Blatchford and Professor Ted Melhuish, both from the University of London, discussed various elements and findings of their longitudinal study of disadvantaged children who have achieved academic success.

This scintillating discussion highlighted the 13-year research project which seeks to ‘unpack’ the influences on the trajectories of children performing ‘against the odds’.

Associate Professor Kay L. O’Halloran, Curtin University (Perth), led our next seminar, titled ‘Digital approaches to analysing and interpreting multimodal phenomena’. She provided an overview of the development of digital tools and techniques for understanding multimodal semiosis.

Our next presenter was Dr Elisabeth Duursma, from the University of Groningen (the Netherlands). Her seminar, titled ‘Family home language and literacy with special emphasis on the role of fathers’, focused on and explained two research projects being undertaken. The first is a tutor reading program called Book Buddies; and the second, a study investigating the impact of low-income American fathers’ involvement has on child development and rearing.

Dr Diane Horm, the Director of the Early Childhood Institute at the University of Oklahoma, led our next seminar titled ‘Educare: an early childhood program model with embedded research’. This presentation reviewed the Educare program model of early years childcare. Dr Horm presented research findings, and outlined the randomised clinical trial currently being implemented.

In addition to our presentations by visiting academics, two further seminars were conducted. The first was led by Mrs Vicki Wallace from the Research Office at Wollongong University. Her presentation, titled ‘Taking your research to the public: Using the media to its best advantage’, explained ways researchers can better profile their research. Finally, IERI’s own Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Dr Stewart Vella, led a seminar titled, ‘Organised sports participation and healthy development of children and adolescents’. In his presentation Dr Vella explained the findings from his recent research projects on the health and psychosocial outcomes of participation in organised youth sports.

To receive information and invitations for upcoming seminars in this series please contact koborn@uow.edu.au. For information about IERI or the seminars series or to download previous presentations please see the IERI website: www.ieri.uow.edu.au/
RECENT PUBLICATIONS


Perlman D. Amotivated by Being a Supportive Teacher. Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy., Accepted 24 July 2013.


