Our Mission

The School of Education prepares people to be creative and responsive educators and researchers in a complex, diverse world. We engage in research that builds the knowledge, skills and capabilities required to promote equality, educational success and lifelong engagement in learning.

Our postgraduate courses are enriched and informed by the social, cultural and natural endowments of the Northern Territory and the opportunities presented by partnerships with local industry, community partners and international neighbours in Asia.

Our research program attracts high-quality postgraduate students and visiting scholars. We aim to promote a research culture that stimulates, challenges and engages professionals in a range of sectors including workplaces, communities and schools.

Education Research
One of the challenges which teacher education students and lecturers face is that associated with establishing connections with other teacher education students beyond their own university. University learning management systems typically group students according to year, unit, or course. In responding to this challenge Associate Professor Laurence Tamatea from the School of Education has led a highly experienced team, comprised of members from eight Australian universities, to develop the cutting edge Educationlinx.com website and content management system. Funded by an Australian Office for Learning and Teaching grant, Educationlinx.com offers students, lecturers and those with an interest in education the capacity to exchange knowledge and build academic and professional relationships no matter where they are located in the world. Educationlinx.com will now be put to use to enable Charles Darwin University external students, undertaking professional experience, to build relations with students from other regional Australian universities also undertaking professional experience.

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http://educationlinx.cdu.edu.au

The aim of the Living Archive of Aboriginal Languages (LAAL) project is, in conjunction with Indigenous communities, to publish a large online archive of fragile and previously unavailable vernacular literature, originally produced for educational purposes in Northern Territory schools which had bilingual programs. It includes a rich array of material on traditional ecological and cultural knowledge.

Partnering with CDU in this ARC-funded project is the Australian National University and Northern Territory Department of Education and Children’s Services. Cathy Bow manages it, and the chief investigators are Professor Michael Christie, Professor Jane Simpson and Associate Professor Brian Devlin.

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Pathways to teacher training in a remote Indigenous community: a MATSITI funded initiative

Associate Professor Sue Shore and Professor Peter Kell

Improving the prospects for remote Indigenous people to gain employment as teachers in their communities remains one of the significant challenges in teacher education. Addressing this challenge not only improves future education projects for children it also improves employment prospects for adults living on country. This project aims to develop a better understanding of the infrastructure, processes and practices required to enter, stay in and complete teacher training on country and make the most of the employment prospects open to them on graduation. The project draws on knowledge of past and current teacher training experiences in a Northern Territory remote community.

The experience of the School of Education at Charles Darwin is that Indigenous students participating in teacher education are generally more likely to be: women over 35 years; older than other non-Indigenous teacher education students; entering through alternative pathways into higher education; needing learning and teaching support; and needing financial assistance to undertake study. Students involved in remote Indigenous teacher training are atypical of most other teacher education students and their student experience has to be structured around a range of issues including: language and academic literacy needs; cultural and kinship obligations; community responsibilities; and seasonal and climatic conditions. Two key challenges emerge in these circumstances: customising programs for local need as well as professional registration and accreditation demands required of a national system; and, convincing systems, employers, colleagues and the public in general that remote residents graduating from these programs have met the National Professional Standards for Teachers.

Expected outcomes of this project include a profile of successful characteristics and shortcomings of community-based teacher education; exemplars of training pathways, funding models, and ‘sense of ownership’ practices that must become ‘business as usual’ in mainstream teacher education programs if those programs are to meet the needs of the Indigenous education workforce in remote communities; and a series of vignettes and responses from teachers living and learning in remote communities.

The project is funded by the More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teacher Initiative (MATSITI) and is being undertaken in conjunction with Department of Education and Children’s Services (DECS) staff including Sue Raeburn and Patricia Chisholm.

For more details on the national MATSITI go to http://matsiti.edu.au/

Visit the School of Education research page for more details on Pathways to teacher training in a remote Indigenous community.

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http://matsiti.edu.au/
Celebrating graduation

Celebrating trust to maximize school improvement. A case study of a primary school

Dr Jennifer Robinson

Dr Robinson’s study investigated a Northern Australian primary school’s working definition of trust, and how the community constructs trust through a two-part research question: What is trust? How is trust constructed? Through the data analysis process, two research sub questions emerged: What impact does trust have on leadership (and vice versa) in relation to learning and school improvement? What impact do rights and obligations have on trust? Using qualitative methods within a constructivist theoretical frame the study examined sixty semi-structured interviews collected over a two year period from the single case study site. Students, parents and staff provided in-depth perspectives of the ways participants made decisions to trust or not to trust and how the school collectively constructed trust. The three phases of analysis, Thematic Analysis, Grounded Theory and Membership Categorisation Analysis, rendered significant findings for schools and the national improvement agenda. The study identified Situated trust, Role trust, and School trust as tentative theory that directly informs school practice. Conclusions and the implications for policy, practice, and further research provide a start to operationalising these significant findings. The role of trust in all schools is widely recognised by academics, governments, administrators of education departments, and the general public as important. However, recognising this is only the beginning. Unless leaders do more than merely name trust in documents, there will be little change.


Postgraduate presentations

As part of the regulations for confirmation of candidature, CDU postgraduate candidates are required to complete a presentation on their research proposal. 2012 was a busy year for candidates and supervisors with much ensuing celebration as they moved to the next stage of their research journey. We wish them all well.

Classroom behaviour management problems in Middle School: teachers’ perceptions

Anne-Marie Marias, PhD candidate

The behavior of adolescents in schools is an ongoing concern to both teachers and the general public. According to a 2004 report from the Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, it is actually a matter of national significance. Despite extensive documentation on classroom behavior management (CBM) strategies, a number of teachers continue to struggle with managing groups and individuals. As a result valuable teaching and learning time is lost, with serious consequences for students’ moral and academic progress. The 2009 results from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) show that performance in Australia has either declined or stagnated over the past 10 years. The research on school/classroom effectiveness is also well documented. It helps us to understand the characteristics of good schools and good classrooms but it does not tell us how to create them. This is the domain of school improvement research. This study examines teachers’ experience of classroom behavior in the middle years of schooling. It aims to understand why teachers continue to experience problems in this area, despite the extensive documentation on successful CBM techniques.
Adult education and community capacity building: the case of African-Australian women in the Northern Territory

Susana Saffu, PhD candidate

Migration is a major topical issue in Australia with Sub-Saharan African women migrants to the Northern Territory playing an increasingly significant role in community capacity building. This influx has generated a range of government and community responses to build these African women’s capacity to integrate into the community through various forms of education.

Susana’s research provides insight into the experiences of a group of 24 Sub-Saharan African women migrants and refugees. During her presentation she expanded on the impact and role of education on women’s migration and on their post-migration experiences as they rebuild their lives in their new country. In her presentation she provided some examples of the rich and moving stories that she has collected for her doctoral study. Susana is herself a migrant from Ghana, and is currently an academic at Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education.

How do student-selected assessment methods affect their attainment of key learning outcomes among primary school students

Katarina Fletcher, PhD Candidate

Katarina was born in Sweden and a teacher at Essington School, Darwin. Katarina’s doctoral presentation provided fascinating contrasts to the development of school based assessment in Finland and Australia, arguing of Australia’s new moves into National Curriculum, NAPLAN and ‘My School’ that ‘...there is an alternative’. During the presentation Katarina stated that ‘in order for students to achieve educational goals, it is vital that teachers reflect on their practice and engage students in the assessment process’. Katarina demonstrated that there are multiple advantages in democratising primary school assessment, with improved learning outcomes being just one of the gains. Additionally, and probably more significant is the involvement of children as active decision-makers and facilitators of their own learning.
Postgraduate presentations continued

Risky Business: challenges and experiences of preservice teachers undertaking professional experience

Jenny Buckworth, PhD candidate

A national education system with agreed learning outcomes for all Australians presents particular challenges for teacher education at the national level. With recent changes in teacher education a new regulator guarantees high quality professional development for teachers and school leaders, collaboration across jurisdictions and engagement with key professional bodies. The approaches used by various tertiary institutions will provide improved transparency and potentially greater unity across the country. However this study directs our attention back to the individual preservice teacher and how they are navigating change at very challenging times in their lives. The aim of the study is to explore the emergent challenges and experiences of preservice teachers as they undertake the professional experience component of their award and the meanings they attach to those challenging instances during ‘the practicum’. Specific research questions include: How do preservice teachers describe the challenges or difficulties that they face during professional experience? What are the experiences and meanings that preservice teachers ascribe to these circumstances?

Common discourses in science: implications for teaching and learning

Janice Crerar, PhD candidate

This research provides a contribution to the ongoing debate on gender and science and science education. The research focuses on the relationship of women science teachers to science and science education through analysis of their discourses on key science issues and school science documents, including text books and curriculum documents. The theoretical frame for the thesis is poststructuralist feminism using feminist standpoint theory as the perspective to inform the methodology. The research will be conducted in an online environment using online web facilities, group discussion of key issues in science and science education as identified in media, school curriculum, school texts, popular science journals and multimedia sources and engagement with stimulus materials introduced by the researcher.

Becoming an EFL teacher: teaching practice of prospective English foreign language teachers in Surakarta, Central Java, Indonesia

Ratih Koesoemo, PhD candidate

This research investigates prospective English Foreign Language (EFL) teachers’ experience of the ‘teaching practice’ components of their pre service teaching degree and how preservice teachers’ experiences either resonate with or contradict current policy regarding Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Indonesia. Research design includes interviews with prospective EFL teachers during micro teaching and field experience in their undergraduate program, and analysis of their reflections in the context of current policy regarding TEFL in Indonesia.
Postgraduate presentations continued

“Why don’t I ask for help?” Factors influence academic help-seeking among primary students in Jakarta, Indonesia

Ratna Dyah Suryaratri, PhD candidate

Many students encounter academic difficulty when they are trying to understand new materials, and undertaking in-school tasks, doing assignments and doing homework. When students face these issues, it is useful for their learning if they are first aware of the need for assistance. When students seek assistance from someone else they are not only able to potentially resolve their immediate problems but they are also in a better position to improve their problem solving skills, and their learning. Students that engage in such academic help seeking will be more able to solve similar problems where they need academic help in the future. The general purpose of this research is to gain a better understanding about the nature of academic help seeking in academic settings in Indonesia. This study aims to find out why some students are reluctant to seek help when they need it the most. Specifically, it will explore factors that influence academic help seeking behaviour among students in primary school in Jakarta Indonesia.

Primary school students experience of their school

Deasyanti Adil, PhD candidate

Schools aim to achieve a number of things. At the society level, they are about ensuring that graduates of schools are able to contribute to reproduction of society, and that individuals have the skills to do this. At the individual student level, schools provide graduates with the skills they need to live, survive and contribute to society. The educational outcomes provided by schools are therefore focused on personal development, which include academic development represented by academic achievement. Schools, teachers and students are increasingly under academic pressure and this is referred to as ‘academic press’. ‘Academic press’ is defined as the extent to which school members (teachers and students) conform to specific academic standards and experience a normative emphasis on academic excellence. Pressure to increase academic achievement exists in most countries. This research will explore how primary school students experience their school. This will help identify what factors of the learning environment impact on students’ feeling about school experience, focusing on how students’ perceive ‘academic press’ and school social climate.
News and Events

School of Education Writing Retreat

The School held a Writing Retreat in late December 2012, travelling to Mary River Wilderness Retreat an hour and a half east of Darwin. Prior to beginning we identified a number of goals to achieve and helped each other to keep them at the forefront of our planning over the three days. Staff had a number of reflections about the event and advice for others contemplating a retreat:

- set achievable goals within boundaries of time
- be realistic
- write down goals, make a personal and public commitment.
- publicise the activity among peers, this will help increase your commitment to writing
- move away from the initial programme structure, creativity will flourish
- listen and watch how experienced researchers work to gain valuable insight
- relax together, gather by the pool, enjoy the sense of ‘community’ created by the harmonious living arrangements your bungalow provides
- work together, staff and students engaging to share ideas promotes robust writing
- allow yourself the freedom to write in your own time, create a loosely structured programme
- work when it suits, be flexible
- pick from a number of spaces to do your writing, you’re no longer confined to a conference room or office space
- I can talk to myself, but here I need to produce writing

Where professional conferences provide important opportunities to collect feedback, network and develop ideas, the writing retreat provided an inspiring space to sit down, stretch your legs and mind, and produce some valuable and dynamic written work. Instead of just discussing and consuming ideas, the writing retreat at Mary River afforded students and researchers an opportunity to turn ideas into palpable and tangible work.

Collaborative activity in China

Associate Professor Greg Shaw 2012 International Activity

The School of Education has conducted substantial research in Asia, which has led to the development of important longstanding partnerships with the people and institutions of China and Indonesia. Associate Professor Greg Shaw has been involved in this sector over a 12-year period and has built a reputation as a consultant and researcher with Chinese partner institutions. This includes visiting scholar appointments with the East China Normal University International Institute of Teacher Education and Xinjiang Normal University. Greg has appointments as Professor of Rural Education with the UNESCO International Research and Training Centre for Rural Education (INRULED), Beijing, China and Professor of Education Xinjiang Normal University (Urumqi, China)

In 2012 Greg attended the Third International Congress on Technical and Vocational Education and Training: Building Skills for Work and Life, Shanghai, 13-16 May 2012. This opportunity was sponsored by UNESCO and provided a chance to conduct other professional development activity with Professor Zhou Nanzhao, Director, International Center of Teacher Education, East China Normal University (ECNU). During 2012 and into 2013 A/Prof Shaw hosted visiting academics from the Faculty of Elementary Education, Xinjiang Normal University, to further teaching and research collaboration with the School of Education at CDU. Additionally he supervised research with Prof Shuling Li and Prof Peiying Guo, two Chinese Visiting Scholars from Shaanxi University of Science & Technology, Xi’an, China who arrived at CDU in June 2012 for a year.

From this diverse activity, Greg has established a research focus on education for rural transformation including a book chapter in the Swedish/UNESCO-INRULED edited publication Strategies to Achieve Balanced Inclusive Educational Development: Equity-Quality-Internationalization, (Chinapah, V., Wang, L. (Eds. 2012).
International Students in the Asia Pacific

Mobility, Risks and Global Optimism

Peter Kell and Gillian Vogl

This book documents the growing mobility of international students in the Asia Pacific. International students comprise over 2.7m students and it is estimated by the OECD that this will top 8 million in 2020. The great majority of them are students from the Asian countries who study in Europe, North America and Asia. In addition, countries such as Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong are becoming “education hubs” and are proposing to attract international students. Over 42% of international students come from Asia and this number is predicted to continue growing with the strong presence of students from China, India, Korea and Japan continuing to seek higher education opportunities abroad. A younger population, a growing middle class and shortages of quality education providers in the Asia Pacific region means that this mobility will be a feature of the future.

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Connecting with science education

Robyn Gregson

This text book engages students in science learning by connecting theory to practice and demonstrating practice through in-depth experiments. Part 1 of this text focuses on building knowledge of theory for teaching science to children from early childhood through to the middles years, with an array of activities designed for pre-service teachers to use. Part 2 connects the experiments to the theory. This includes 5 experiments, each with multiple learning areas and each adjustable for older and younger learners, which clearly links back to the theory in part 1.

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Research and research grant activity

- A/Prof Brian Devlin began work as Chief Investigator on an Australian Research Council LIEF Project (LE120100016), A Living Archive of Australian Indigenous Languages, along with Professor Michael Christie (CDU) and Professor Jane Simpson (ANU). This $430,000 ARC grant, which became available in March 2012, is supplemented by grants of $100,000 from NT DECS and $75,000 from CDU as well as 75 days of in-kind support.

- Professor Peter Kell, Associate Professor Ruth Wallace, Therese Kersten and Lorraine Sushames successfully tendered for a UNESCO funded project Steps to the future. http://stepstothefuture.cdu.edu.au/

- Saraswathi Griffiths-Chandran won a NAPCAN NT MicroGrant Playing and socialising in natural places and spaces ($2,000) to facilitate play spaces and resources for Young Children and their families from immigration detention centres.

- Greg Smith secured a grant in the 2012 LEBA Small Research Grants Round for the project: Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM): Pedagogical content knowledge in the Physical Sciences. The project investigates science teachers' conceptions of inquiry based pedagogies in selected Northern Territory schools.

- Jenny Buckworth successfully secured a Northern Territory Research and Innovation scholarship ($2,500) for her project titled ‘Effectiveness of various models of preservice teacher placement’

- Sue Shore and Peter Kell successfully secured a grant with the More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teacher Initiative (MATSITI) for an action research project titled Pathways to Teacher Training in Remote Indigenous Communities ($50,000).

- Steve Thornton and Dr Julie Clarke secured Flinders University Faculty funding for Project ATOMIC: Assessing Transfer of Mathematics in Children ($10,000).

- Peter McDowell coordinated research activity and submitted final reports for two national research projects: Teaching Teachers for the Future – Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) Preservice Teacher Education Student Survey and Teaching and Teachers for the Future – A Most Significant Change Approach.

Projects initiated in 2012

- Dr Gretchen Geng received ethics approval for her project the Impact of Australian Study Experience on English teaching among Chinese University lecturers.

- Dr Sue Smith gained ethics approval for her School of Education Small Grant Mindfulness @ SMS: a pilot study to promote sustainable health and wellbeing practices in a Middle School and has begun working with teachers on the Sanderson project.

- Dr Sue Shore gained ethics approval for the School of Education project: Pathways to teacher training in remote Indigenous communities.

- PhD candidate Ratih Koesoemo gained ethics clearance for her study ‘Becoming an EFL teacher In Central Java: The experience of “teaching practice” components in pre-service teacher education’.
Publications

Books


Book Chapters


Journal Articles


**Conference papers**


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