

ConnectED: Past, present, future

Boola Katitjin (Building 360)
Murdoch University
Friday 15 to Saturday 16 August 2025

Program

Time	Activity
Friday 5-7 pm	HDR Workshop
Saturday 10.00 – 11.20	Opening Acknowledgment of Country Welcome to Murdoch University Panel Presentation
11.20 – 11.50	Morning tea
11.50 – 12.15	Parallel sessions
12.15 – 12.40	Parallel sessions
12.40 – 1.05	Parallel sessions
1.05 – 1.30	Parallel sessions
1.30 – 2.15	Lunch
2.15 – 2.40	Parallel sessions
2.40 – 3.05	Parallel sessions
3.05 – 3.30	Parallel sessions
3.30 – 3.55	Parallel sessions
4.00 onward	Sundowner Presentation of WAIER Awards

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WAIER Website: <https://www.waier.org.au/40th-waier-research-forum-2025/>
Forum 2025 Abstracts: <https://waier.org.au/archives/forums/2025/abstracts-2025.html>
WAIER Forum Archives: <https://waier.org.au/archives/forums/all-forums-index.html>

We wish to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on, the Whadjuk-Noongar people. We wish to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this region.

Welcome

This year we warmly welcome you to the 40th WAIER Research Forum, *ConnectED: Past, present, future*. The WAIER Annual Research Forum is a key activity of the Institute and has run since 1986. The Forum provides opportunities for beginning and established researchers to present their work and build collegial networks with colleagues working across Western Australia.

About WAIER

The key function of WAIER is to advocate for, and promote, educational research across Western Australia. We are a cross institutional organisation, with each of the five Western Australian universities, the Department of Education and Catholic Education represented on the WAIER Executive Committee. By means of collegiality amongst research colleagues, WAIER aims to strengthen a culture of collaboration among higher education institutions, government and private sectors and their research staff.

In collaboration with other Australian IERs, WAIER supports educational researchers through publication in our well-respected online journal, *Issues in Educational Research* (IER).

Our vision is to “Encourage and engage in educational research to inform and influence policy and practice”. This is achieved through four strategic pillars:

Inform – disseminate evidence-informed research to local, national and international audiences.

Engage – collaborate with educational researchers, practitioners, policy makers and research organisations.

Encourage – provide support and opportunities for early, aspiring and established researchers.

Influence – shape educational policy and practice.

By utilising these four strategic pillars, WAIER continues to raise the profile of Western Australian educational research and helps drive policy towards better outcomes.

Website address: <https://www.waier.org.au/>

Forum photographs

Please note that photos will be taken during the Forum and may be put on the WAIER website as part of the record of the 2025 Forum. If people have any objection to their photos being used in this way, they need to ensure that they contact a committee member at the Forum to make their wishes known.

Participants are requested not to take photos of *PowerPoint* slides during presentations. This can be disruptive to the presenter and participants and could be a breach of copyright.

Presentations of Awards

WAIER Postgraduate Awards 2025

The Western Australian Institute for Educational Research presents a number of Postgraduate Awards annually. The aim of these Awards is to recognise excellence in postgraduate student research in the field of education. The Faculty, School or Department of Education from participating WA universities selects an outstanding student researcher to whom this prize will be awarded.

Dr Stephanie Dryden Curtin University	PhD thesis 2024 <i>Understanding the impact of translingual discrimination on migrants' linguistic integration and emotional wellbeing in Australia</i> http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11937/96146
Dr Karen Nociti Edith Cowan University	PhD thesis <i>Place literacies emerging from the common worlds of place and children</i> https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses/2848/
Dr Eve Lucas Murdoch University	PhD Thesis <i>An Investigation of Classroom and Behaviour Management Pedagogy in Australian Initial Teacher Education</i> https://researchportal.murdoch.edu.au/esploro/outputs/doctoral/An-Investigation-of-Classroom-and-Behaviour/99100570156770789
Dr Salvatore Pietro de Luca The University of Notre Dame Australia	EdD thesis 2024 <i>The perception of Year 11 students in Catholic secondary schools towards Christian service-learning</i> https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/theses/430/
Dr Rikki James The University of Western Australia	EdD thesis <i>A study of the history of the curriculum for media studies in secondary schools in Western Australia from 1974 to 2024</i> https://doi.org/10.26182/awfa-p515

For previous Postgraduate award recipients, see the Archives page at <https://www.waier.org.au/archives/awards/postgrad-awards-all.html>

Research Grant 2025

WAIER is proud to offer the annual Research Grant of \$3000. The aim of the grant is to support educational researchers conducting research directly relevant to early childhood, primary, secondary, or tertiary education. This grant supports educational researchers who do not have ready access to funds or resources, and is specifically intended as seed funding to support researchers in the beginning stages of their career outside of a degree structure. The total grant money available is \$3000.

The winner of the WAIER Research Grant will be announced at the Forum.

2025 WAIER Early Career Award

The aim of this award is to recognise excellence early in an academic/research career and to encourage continuing contributions to research. The award is an incentive as well as an acknowledgment of early success and it is hoped that the person receiving the award would proceed to complete further research of excellent quality.

The award is open to applicants who:

- have been awarded a Doctoral degree in the area of Education within the last five (5) years;
- are studying or working at a Western Australian educational institution (e.g., early childhood centre, school, TAFE, university, government or non-government agency); and
- register for the 2025 WAIER Forum, being held on 16th August, and submit an abstract for a presentation.

The winner of the WAIER Early Career Award will be announced at the Forum.

Information about past Early Career Award winners can be found at:
<https://www.waier.org.au/archives/awards/eca-all.html>

Panel presentation

Dr Sian Chapman **Chairperson**

Dr Sian Chapman is a Senior Lecturer at Murdoch University in Perth, Western Australia. Her research interests include education policy and practice, teacher agency and change, and understanding systemic difference through complexity theory. These concepts are explored across a range of topics including arts education, school diversity, teacher education and practice.



Dr Jian Zhao **The University of Western Australia**

Dr Jian Zhao is an early-career researcher at the Graduate School of Education, The University of Western Australia, and a visiting scholar at Hong Kong Metropolitan University. With a background in mental health measurement and assessment, and expertise in mixed-methods research, she has contributed to several projects exploring the mental health of Chinese international students in Australia, self-harm and suicidal behaviours of young people in Western Australia, generative AI (GenAI) and educational assessment, and the intersection of AI and mental health.

Dr Zhao has published widely in international peer-reviewed journals, including *Frontiers in Psychology*, *Frontiers in Education*, *Behavioral Sciences*, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being*, and *Education Research & Perspectives*. Her research interests encompass mental health measurement, coping strategies, and GenAI in educational assessment. She was awarded the UWA Grand Challenge 'Making a Difference' Grant in 2022 and received the Early Career Award from the Western Australian Institute for Educational Research (WAIER) in 2023.



Phillip Paioff **Paioff Consulting**

Philip is Managing Director of Paioff Consulting with over thirty years of education and training experience including work as a Head of Department and Advisor to the Director General of Education in Western Australia. He has also been a State Coordinator for the Principals Australia Institute and served as the Developer and Managing Consultant of Mt Lawley Senior High School's Aboriginal Excellence Program for 12 years, which has won a National Impact Award and two prestigious Premier's Awards for Excellence in Aboriginal Education.



Sophie Karangaroa
Curtin University

Sophie Karangaroa is of Ngāti Kahungunu and Ngāpuhi descent (Aotearoa/New Zealand) living on Wadjuk Noongar Boodja, Perth. She is a PhD candidate at Curtin University with a creative production and exegesis focusing on the journeys of Noongar university students. The creative component includes a web series centering the learning journeys of Noongar and Māori university students.



A/Professor Susan Beltman
Curtin University

Susan Beltman, PhD, is an Adjunct Associate Professor at the School of Education at Curtin University, Australia. Now retired, she lectured in Educational Psychology and Inclusive Education. Her areas of teaching and research interest include educator well-being and resilience, motivation, and programs involving mentoring and role models. She primarily conducts qualitative research. Her previous career was as a School Psychologist in government and non-government schools in Western Australia and Queensland.

Sue joined the WAIER Committee in 1994 and held the following leadership roles:

2000-2002 Coordinator of Research Seminars for WAIER

2003-2009 Secretary of WAIER

2010-2011 Vice-President of WAIER

2012-2019 President (first female president)

She received the WAIER Fellow Award in 2010 and became a Life Member in 2019 and retired from the Committee in 2021.



Program of parallel sessions

10 AM	Level 4, Room 003 Opening: President of WAIER, Dr Sian Chapman Acknowledgment of Country Welcome to Murdoch University:				
10.15 - 11.20	Panel Presentation: Chaired by Dr Sian Chapman				
11.20	Morning tea – Level 3				
	Room 3.002	Room 3.028	Room 3.030	Room 3.032	Room 3.034
11.50	Ren-Hao Xu & Andrew Norton The response of universities to Australia's Job-ready Graduates	Julia Robertson, et al. e-mentoring on the motivation and engagement of underachieving gifted students	Janean Robinson Through the ages: An educational ethnographic research journey with WAIER	Maria Outtrim Challenges faced by female principals in Catholic composite and secondary	Adrianne Evans and Siobhan Unwin <i>Microsoft Teams</i> : Building an interactive learning community
12.15	Silvana Ilievska How 35 to 55 year old women navigate undergraduate studies in an Australian university	Maryam Alyousef, et al. Mentoring programs for gifted students: Practices, perceptions	Evalena Lowe, et al. A study on physical, emotional, and verbal aggression towards teachers	Amy Austen Vision statements according to principals	Yogi Saputra Mahmud, Jennifer Shand, et al. From screens to classroom scenes: Teacher agency
12.40	Christa Snyman, et al. Crossing borders: Narratives of migrant teachers in times of shortage	Tahnee West, et al. Empowering girls in science, technology, engineering and mathematics	Thomas Quinlivan, et al. The missing human link in The Australian Professional Standards	Nimi Mammen The hunt is on... CALD leaders in Australian schools: A review of the literature	Phan Phuong Thao Nguyen Informal digital learning of English: Experiences of EFL learners
1.05	Larysa Chybis Ukrainian migrant teachers' professional transition experiences in Australia:	Shyam Drury Australian primary teachers' experiences of overcoming mathematics teaching anxiety	Sandi Fielder, et al. Connecting present conditions for permission to teach across two jurisdictions	Olivia Johnston Class ability grouping practices in Australian secondary schools	Bobby Victoria Cooper et al. The engaging online learning environment in higher education
1.30 – 2.15	Lunch				
2.15	Allison Bell Allyship, reconciliation, and the global significance of ancient Australian art	Richard Gordon, et al. Opportunities of mixed methods recruitment in research	Ali Hayes Refugees' experiences of accommodation and discrimination	Sandi Fielder and Ben Jamieson Connections that support early career transition	Kim Andreassen, Lauri Parr et.al Creating mentally healthy futures for WA youth
2.40	Rikki James Why media literacy is more important today than it has been for our 21st century learners	Fatema Razmin Perceptions and practices of individualised teaching for students with learning disabilities	Thi Ngoc Man Nguyen, et al. Vietnamese migrant women in Australia: Perceptions	Sophie Eddie et al. Identifying barriers to parental engagement with early intervention services	Jeannine Wishart, et al. <i>Nature cuddle books</i> as therapeutic literacy tools in childhood cancer care:
3.05	Tamara Reads Tortured poets and rap battles: A Spotify-wrapped approach to exploring poetry	John Shenton, et al. Educational activities and its effects on long-term prisoners' mental well-being	Katherine Stevens Student wellbeing and primary to secondary school transition	Kathryn Dehle, et al. A method to connect past experiences to present recollections	Salvatore De Luca The perceptions of Year 11 students in Catholic secondary schools
3.30	Emily Lockhart Discussion based teaching in health education	Kim Andreassen What is included in consent?: Accessible consent education for young people	Karen Nociti Feminist pasts, presents and futures in early childhood education		
4.00 onwards	Sundowner: Post graduate Awards, Early Career Award, WAIER Research Grant, WAIER Fogarty Postgraduate Prize, Fellowship Award				

HDR workshop

Friday 15th August 2025

4.30	HDR Workshop registrations open
HDR pre-forum workshop 2025 Building 360. Level 3, Room 3.028 5.00 to 7.00 PM Hear from the Experts! This HDR workshop will feature presentations from colleagues who have recently completed their doctoral studies at WA Universities. Learn first-hand what contributed to their success, how they overcame barriers, and what advice they have for those who are still on the journey. Participants will have the opportunity to ask questions and network with other HDR students. 7.00 Dinner at a local venue for those who wish to continue conversations. Facilitated by Dr Cindy Ann Smith Curtin University cindy.smith1@curtin.edu.au	

Each participant will receive a participation certificate for attendance that identifies AITSL standards.

Parallel sessions

The abstracts of presentations are set out here in alphabetical order according to the name of the first author. They can also be found on the WAIER archive site at <http://www.waier.org.au/archives/forums/2025/abstracts-2025.html>

A Chairperson will be appointed for each session. The Chair's duties will be to open the session on time, to facilitate questions from the audience in the latter part of the session, to ensure that the session finishes on time and to formally thank the presenter.

There is no change-over time between presentations. Presenters need to load their computer files before the sessions begin, i.e., before 11.20 am, 1.20 pm or 2.50 pm.

Abstracts

Mentoring programs for gifted students: Practices, perceptions, and a proposed model

Maryam Alyousef, Cindy Smith and Meg Gerry

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Appropriate education is a right of all children; however, effective support is often overlooked for gifted students. Mentoring can be an effective method of support to help gifted students harness their capabilities to achieve their goals, but existing mentoring programs often lack research-based models and frameworks. The aim of this research is to develop a comprehensive framework to facilitate the planning and implementation of successful mentoring programs for 15-17-year-old gifted students. This presentation will describe the current practices of mentoring programs for gifted students according to current literature. Next, the data collection methods for the current study will be described and discussed. This data will help to identify key characteristics of effective mentoring for 15-17-year-old gifted students and used to develop a research-based model to develop effective programs for this population. Discussion will include next steps of the study and implications for support of gifted students overall including the holistic development and realisation of gifted students' full potential.

What is included in consent? Accessible consent education for young people with disability (12-16 years)

Kim Andreassen

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Australia's consent education aims to prevent gender-based violence, but often fails to be inclusive and accessible, particularly for young people with disability. The absence of comprehensive, high-quality teaching resources leaves people with disability without the necessary tools to navigate consent safely and confidently. This presentation introduces the early stages of a PhD project aiming to create accessible consent resources for young people with disability aged 12-16. In an attempt to move beyond a simplistic "yes" or "no" framework, this research explores the deeper skills and understandings essential for meaningful best practice consent education. Engaging with an expert stakeholder advisory group allowed for discussion centred on two key questions:

1. What constitutes best practice standard consent education?
2. What skills are necessary to effectively teach best practice standard consent education?

This presentation will share insights from this discussion with sector professionals and experts on contextualising consent and defining standards and skills for best practice. By expanding the conceptualisation of consent, it is hoped we can foster a more inclusive, accessible, and practical approach to designing and developing relevant, accessible educational resources that empower young people with disability and support those with low literacy, English as an additional language, or from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Creating mentally healthy futures for WA youth

Kim Andreassen, Lauri Parr and Charlene Carlisle

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The *Act Belong Commit Mentally Healthy Schools* program embeds well-being into school communities through a whole-school approach. It supports resilience, reduces stigma, and fosters open discussions about mental health using comprehensive strategies, resources, and toolkits tailored to the demands of modern education. In this presentation we will explore how Act Belong Commit is using research to enhance youth well-being in Western Australia. We will share practical strategies that promote mentally healthy behaviours and drive lasting change. Additionally, we will highlight *Mindful Movement*, which delivers trauma-informed yoga and mindfulness education, including *Deadly Minds*, a program co-developed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Curtin University's 'Our World in Photos' project will also be discussed particularly how it uses a strengths-based, trauma-informed approach to engage remote Indigenous children in the Kimberley through Photovoice.

These innovative methodologies and approaches boost confidence, cultural expression, social connectedness, and emotional resilience while enhancing schools' capacity to support youth well-being. By integrating these programs, we empower students with lifelong skills to navigate mental health challenges and foster healthier communities. Thereby creating tangible change and equipping students and staff with lifelong skills to navigate mental health and wellbeing.

Vision statements according to principals

Amy Austen

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Vision statements have been used in school strategic documents since the 1990s, with the emergence of organisational vision being identified as an integral aspect of educational improvement and school effectiveness (Kantabutra, 2023). Vision is integral to a principal's skills and a cohesive cultural environment (Deal, 2016; Fullan & Quinn, 2016b; Kaplan & Owings, 2013) and must be formalised and communicated to have an impact (Allison, 2017; Kantabutra, 2010; Kantabutra & Avery, 2010; Kirkpatrick, 2017). Vision statements codify a vision, formalise it and enable leadership to communicate it (Duberstein, 2021; Erdos, 2011; Kurland et al., 2010). It is the content and fidelity to vision statements that have been found to influence the cohesion of school culture and leadership (Baildon & Arabi, 2023; Fullan & Quinn, 2016a; Kaplan & Owings, 2013). However, the exact nature of a vision statement is misunderstood in literature and practice (Bialik & Merhav, 2020; Fullan & Quinn, 2016b; Gurley et al., 2015). This misunderstanding could be due to the limited research on vision statements that focuses on design and content within strategic management literature, not the development or enactment of vision statements within a school context (Allison, 2017; Olusola et al., 2022).

Adopting an interpretivist approach, this study aims to generate data on the perspectives of principals of Western Australian independently governed Protestant schools on the development and enactment of vision statements, thereby filling this gap. This study, employing a basic qualitative design, has thus far conducted six semi-structured interviews. The data generated has been initially analysed using the Corbin & Strauss (2016) approach to open and axial coding to develop a conceptual ordering of data. Initial analysis has found three early concepts: uncontrollable external influences on the development of vision statements, the role of principals' internal emotional world, and the vision statement being at the core of decision-making. The early discussion focuses on how the development and enactment of vision statements differ in these schools compared with companies.

Reframing art history: Allyship, reconciliation, and the global significance of ancient Australian art

Allison Bell

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This presentation explores how education policy and curriculum reform can serve as powerful tools for allyship and reconciliation, particularly through the repositioning of Aboriginal Australian art within global art historical narratives. Recent archaeological and scientific evidence places ancient Australian rock art among the earliest known creative expressions of humankind. However, current Visual Arts and HASS curriculums, despite cross-curriculum priorities, often fail to reflect this significance in specific, place-based ways. Both ACARA and SCSA broadly encourage engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures but frequently omit direct reference to sites of global importance such as the Murujuga petroglyphs or Gwion Gwion paintings. This lack of specificity leaves a critical gap that educators, especially in Western Australia, must address.

This presentation argues that reframing our approach to art history education requires moving beyond tokenism to embed real cultural knowledge: naming Country, celebrating sovereignty, and acknowledging Aboriginal Australians as the world's first artists. By critically analysing curriculum structures and offering practical reform strategies, it encourages educators to centre these narratives in their classrooms. In doing so, we not only enrich cultural pride and understanding but contribute actively to reconciliation and position students as respectful inheritors of Country and its deep creative legacy.

Ukrainian migrant teachers' professional transition experiences in Australia: "How do non-native speakers manage to become teachers?"

Larysa Chybis

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Despite Australia's long migration history, highly qualified migrants frequently face significant hurdles to their professional goals. Many are forced to accept jobs below their qualifications or abandon their careers. This research aims to explore Ukrainian migrant teachers' experiences in Australia to better comprehend the problem of non-native English-speaking teachers and to promote their transition into the Australian professional environment. The project involves Ukrainian migrant teachers holding masters or specialist degrees from Ukraine or a post-Soviet country and having worked as educators in secondary or tertiary educational institutions overseas. The study employs a narrative auto-ethnographic approach to underscore the participants' personal stories.

The researcher, belonging to the participants' cohort, investigates the subject from an insider perspective. Narrative interviews have been used as the primary method of collecting data along with artefacts, documents, and memos. The study highlights the Ukrainian migrant teachers' professional transition in Australia, emphasising the significance of cultural diversity in the pedagogical professional environment and non-native English-speaking teachers' potential contribution to Australian education. The project seeks to

foster relevant policy changes to ease migrant teachers' qualification recognition and employment. The research findings will benefit other migrant communities encountering similar obstacles and inform appropriate organisations of the existing situation in the field.

The engaging online learning environment in higher education

Bobby Victoria Cooper, Cindy Smith and Sonja Kuzich

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The delivery of online learning in higher education has increased rapidly since 1990 (Stone, 2019; Chen, Dobinson & Kent, 2020a; Mulla, Munir & Mohan, 2023) due to rapid increases in technology (Stone, 2022). The term "student engagement" is often used as a proxy for quality learning and teaching (Yang & Ghislandi, 2024) with engagement being linked to academic success (Thornton et al., 2023; Vezne et al., 2023; Ferrer et al., 2022), including such aspects as the effort, time and energy that students put into their studies (Hazzam & Wilkins, 2023), and is essential for quality online learning (Ntlabathi, Makhetha-Kosi & Mayaphi, 2023; Hazzam & Wilkins, 2023). Higher education institutions must provide effective and engaging online environments for their students (Humphries & Clark, 2021; Stone & Springer, 2019) and lecturers should be supported to be able to effectively design and maintain those engaging online environments (Ntlabathi et al., 2023; Getenet & Tualaulelei, 2023).

There is a vast amount of research on what students find engaging in higher education online learning. However, the focus of this research is effective support of lecturers to gain skills and knowledge for effective online learning. This presentation will discuss the findings from a systematic review that investigated the question "What online teaching frameworks are currently available for lecturers who teach online?" The audience will have the opportunity to discuss the findings through group discussions with peers.

The perceptions of Year 11 students in Catholic secondary schools towards Christian service-learning

Salvatore De Luca

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This study explored Year 11 student perceptions towards Christian service-learning (CSL), including perceived benefits, challenges, and impacts of participating in a CSL program. The epistemology underpinning this predominantly qualitative, instrumental case study research was constructivism and the theoretical perspective was interpretivism, specifically symbolic interactionism. Data was collected using a structured online questionnaire of 261 Year 11 students across four Catholic secondary schools in Western Australia, focus group interviews involving 26 Year 11 students from the four schools, document search, semi-structured interviews with a key informant within each school, and a researcher reflection journal. The Year 11 students identified four key understandings of CSL and perceived benefits such as personal growth, connection with others, leadership development and civic responsibility. The students also noted challenges with time constraints, reflection requirements, and logistical barriers. They proposed seven improvements, including the inclusion of CSL within school time, support from school staff, and integration within the curriculum.

This research is the first study of student perceptions towards CSL in Catholic secondary schools in Western Australia. As a result of this study, eight recommendations are made, to Catholic Education Western Australia, Catholic secondary school principals, and Catholic secondary school staff members. These recommendations form a framework intended to guide and enhance the delivery of CSL in Year 11 across Catholic secondary schools in Western Australia. The framework could also be relevant for other year levels and could inform CSL and service-learning at a national level.

Pulse checks: A method to connect past experiences to present recollections to inform future teacher preparation

Kathryn Dehle, Helen Dempsey and Liana Luyt

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How can researchers effectively capture experiences that stand out for pre-service teachers over time? This presentation will highlight how the use of pulse checks, during a longitudinal research project, enhanced data collection. To gain insight into innovations in Initial Teacher Education, a longitudinal study investigated the rich perspectives of pre-service teachers (the participants) undertaking extended professional experience. This study was grounded in the Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) theoretical framework with use of a case study method. As the purpose of the study was to understand how the role of extended time in professional experience contributes to effective and sustainable teacher preparation, it was important for the researcher to understand participants' experiences that were meaningful to them within the ebb and flow of their extended professional experience.

Pulse checks were an effective means to track participants' experiences over time, and to enhance participant recollection of prior events. This strengthened the accuracy and depth of data collection. Capturing participants' experiences in real time in this study has revealed such themes as the impact of support from placement schools and ITE providers at critical times, participants' strategies to manage challenges and how peers, friends and family affect participants' experiences in extended professional experience. This insight not only informs future professional experience programs to facilitate enhanced pre-service teacher outcomes within the contemporary demands of teaching, but also highlights pulse checks as an effective research tool.

Australian primary teachers' experiences of overcoming mathematics teaching anxiety

Shyam Drury

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Anxiety is a major inhibitor for the effectiveness of primary school teachers in delivering effective classroom instruction (Ashcraft & Krause, 2007). It also has a detrimental effect on teacher's overall wellbeing and likelihood to remain in the profession (Ahmed, 2018; Stoehr & Olson, 2015). Furthermore, it has been shown that mathematics anxiety held by teachers may be passed on to students, subsequently negatively impacting their learning (Beilock et al., 2010; Chang & Beilock, 2016). In this project I have interviewed 11 primary school teachers from across Australia, from all three sectors. All the participants were successful in significantly reducing their anxiety around the teaching of mathematics. I am performing phenomenographic and narrative analysis on the interview transcripts and categorising the different ways in which these teachers experienced a reduction in their mathematics teaching anxiety. I will present a brief overview of my research methods and initial findings together with potential implications for teachers, school leaders and policy makers.

Identifying barriers to parental engagement with early intervention services: Insights from parental perspectives

Sophie Eddie, Cindy Smith and Darren Bryant

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Early childhood development directly shapes children's life trajectories, particularly for those growing up in disadvantaged contexts. While existing research highlights the importance of early intervention in improving child outcomes and narrowing developmental

gaps, limited attention is given to understanding why some parents do not access available services for their child, even in well serviced communities. This presentation will discuss preliminary findings of a systematic literature review which investigates current literature regarding the psychological and emotional barriers parents face, including stigma, fear, and denial. This includes literature findings regarding the types of support that may be most effective to support parents obtaining early intervention services for their children.

Microsoft Teams: Building an interactive learning community

Adrianne Evans and Siobhan Unwin

Curtin University

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Across the education sectors in Western Australia, the Microsoft 365 Suite, particularly Microsoft Teams, has become a key tool for teachers, school administrators and students, facilitating asynchronous communication and learning. This presentation will demonstrate how Microsoft Teams can be utilised in initial teacher education (ITE) to build a community of learning, showcasing a range of interactive tools that exemplify contemporary educational practices.

At Curtin University, Microsoft Teams has been integrated within a professional experience unit to build capacity among pre-service teachers, preparing them for system-wide readiness with a key digital educational tool. In 2024, a pilot program was launched trialing student engagement with online learning, featuring a custom-developed Teams class that integrates apps from the Microsoft 365 suite, learning modules, formative assessments, and channels. Findings from this pilot indicate a significant increase in student engagement and communication, suggesting that such integration can be valuable for tertiary institutions in course delivery for online or remotely delivered classes.

Connections that support early career transition: Navigating the realities of the workforce shortages while supporting initial teacher candidates

Sandi Fielder and Ben Jamieson

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What makes a school-university partnership work? How do these connections work in practice and support early career transition? In this presentation, we share the development of an innovative pilot program between a school and a university with a unique focus on supporting pre-service teachers with their transition into the workforce and future careers. With the teaching profession undergoing ongoing reviews, critiques and media discourse around the quality of teachers and initial teacher education, this partnership sought to develop a sustainable approach to enabling the future workforce. Partnerships between schools and universities play a critical role in initial teacher education. Growing and sustaining these partnerships is critical and often relies on personal connections and stakeholder involvement. Developing mutually beneficial relationships is critical in times of change and workforce shortages (Farnan et al., 2019), and schools and universities need opportunities to intentionally innovate and collaborate with these partnerships.

Utilising a communities of practice approach (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), pre-service teachers were located at a single school site over a two-year period, allowing them to develop a deep understanding of the school context and culture. Following placement periods, pre-service teachers were offered opportunities to undertake limited registration and casual relief teaching within the school, moving them from peripheral members of the community to being situated learners. The school provided a scaffolded approach to support this transition. We reflect and share from an autoethnographic position how this partnership and pilot has been developed and implemented over the initial twelve months of the program. We reflect on successes and challenges, and how this pilot can be expanded in the future.

Lessons to be learnt: Connecting present conditions for permission to teach across two Australian jurisdictions

Sandi Fielder, Alison Hilton and Helen Dempsey

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The worldwide teacher shortage is widely discussed in the media, schools and with politicians. One strategy to help fill the void in Australia is to use pre-service teachers. The permission to teach is not a new phenomenon; however, how policy and conditions exist in each state in Australia vary considerably. How do pre-service teachers navigate the world of permission to teach? What are the conditions and concerns expressed by those in this setting?

This presentation examines the conditions that exist in two separate but contextually similar jurisdictions within Australia. Both jurisdictions discussed in this presentation have a history of granting permission to teach, particularly in rural and remote areas. Comparing policy, conditions and support materials from Teacher Regulatory Authorities provides insight into how pre-service teachers are informed about the conditions that exist. Join with me as we explore the gaps and overlaps of information and communication available to pre-service teachers as they navigate this complex space between university study and employment in a school.

The travails and opportunities of mixed methods recruitment in research: Field-based insights, ethics and innovation

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Human participant recruitment is often a critical part of the research process. However, this aspect of research method is often glossed over in the literature, despite being common to all research approaches involving human participants. In this study, which explored how preservice teachers view the importance of media literacy pedagogy in teaching, we surveyed and interviewed a cohort of Gen Z BEd. students drawn from across three public universities in WA. Recruiting from this mythical cohort of digital natives proved onerous, and we report on the pragmatics of implementing the research design and its data collection phases. Traditional participant recruitment methods, which have been systematically employed for decades in some cases, are often unquestioned. Similarly, problem-solving skills are key to developing a researcher's sense of self-efficacy to overcome unforeseen challenges to research design plans.

We report that in the postdigital era, conventional participant recruitment methods appear to have become less effective for some cohorts of participants. Because participant recruitment often occurs in crucial early stages of a project, challenges can affect the doctoral candidate's self-efficacy and resilience. However, positivity is key, bootstraps are pulled, and agile recruitment solutions can be found.

Refugees' experiences of accommodation and discrimination: Implications for learning environments in tertiary settings

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Despite an increase in the number of people from a refugee background settling in Australia, this group continues to be under-represented in higher education. This under-representation suggest that more can be done to make university education more accessible and inclusive. The assets that refugees possess and can utilise to successfully participate in

and complete higher education are insufficiently elaborated. This presentation, therefore, elaborates on a key finding of this study, specifically the impact of multicultural diversity in Australian society on the successful higher education participation of refugees in Australia. The concepts of cultural and social capital, habitus and field, as articulated by Pierre Bourdieu, are used to interpret qualitative data collected during in-depth interviews with refugee-background participants. The findings suggest that facilitating social diversity within and outside of the classroom allows for people from a refugee background to maximise the utilisation of these assets.

Classic grounded theory methodology: How 35 to 55 year old women navigate undergraduate studies in an Australian university

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This study aims to generate theory on the perspectives of women in higher education in Australia aged 35-55 in their final year of an undergraduate business, teaching, or nursing degree. By providing insights into students' experiences, the theory will contribute to existing literature on mid-life transition for women, including equitable access opportunities to higher education, a review of services offered at Australian universities, and assist with government planning for these sectors.

The theory generated from this study will be beneficial to practitioners and policy makers in higher education, by providing explicit information on study requirements for 35 to 55 year old women entering these professions. Higher education providers in Australia may benefit from information that may influence reviews on policies and services catering specifically to this cohort. These include childcare on/off campus, counselling, GP services, family-friendly and cohort age-specific social networking campus groups, online and in person, special consideration policies relating to timetabling, compulsory attendance, and individual participation marks. Furthermore, healthcare, education, and corporate sectors will benefit from insights resulting from this theory. These insights may be relevant to workforce planning, budget, employment opportunities, and incentives (scholarships, internship programs) for women returning to the workforce or who are keen on a career change.

Why media literacy is more important today than it has ever been for our 21st century learners

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Championed by the late Barrie McMahon, the introduction of media studies in 1974 was pitched as a way to engage bored secondary students through the process of 'learning by doing'. This premise however, created challenges which would play out over the next five decades. WA media teachers felt like the 'poor cousins' to teachers of long-established subjects in the WA schooling system. Teachers of these subjects however were highly valued by schools, society and parents alike, their jobs were stable, promotional positions were attainable, and through this privileged position they had power to influence the WA schooling system through this dominance.

In the pursuit of position and legitimacy, WA media teachers worked to develop the subject from a utilitarian tradition into an academic tradition, by securing its place as a tertiary entrance subject. As such, the development of WA media studies can be interpreted in terms of its wider conflict both within and between subjects over status, resources and territory in the WA schooling system over the last 50 years. In 2025, a renewed focus is afoot, based on increasing the uptake of media studies in WA primary schools with the aim to prepare students for a rapidly changing digital world, by developing their critical media literacy.

Class ability grouping practices in Australian secondary schools: Characterising changes to practice from 2023-2025

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The practice of sorting students into classes based on their 'ability' is prominent in Australian secondary schools. However, international research has emphasised that class ability grouping exacerbates social inequality without improving overall academic outcomes. It may not be the intent, but in reality, class ability grouping segregates students according to their race, class and disability, and limits the achievements of minoritised students. International research abounds, but schools need local evidence to inform changes that improve equity and inclusivity in class grouping practices.

The Class Ability Grouping Study commenced in 2023 to find out what practices are being used in Australian schools from Years 7-9 and how they are shaping student outcomes. The project received seed funding from a WAIER research grant in 2022 and was built into a longitudinal study with survey and interview data collected. Changes to class ability grouping were evaluated in the 23 participant schools in Western Australia and Queensland which were retained in the study from 2023-2025. This presentation will overview findings that characterise these changes. The discussion will include preliminary suggestions about how and why changes took place, and how this research might be used to inform further improvements to practices.

Discussion based teaching in health education

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Health education is critical in imparting health literacy to children and developing community health and wellbeing. The effectiveness of the teaching learning interaction in health education classes depends on the teacher employing effective teaching methods, facilitating student deep understanding, critical thinking, and the development of skills, beliefs and attitudes. Health education teaching differs from other learning areas as it addresses controversial and sensitive topics in class. Little research has been conducted regarding the preferred teaching methods of health educators and their ability to employ these teaching methods effectively in the classroom.

In this presentation, I will present findings from my doctoral grounded theory study to explain the preferred teaching methods of health teachers. This study determined that the preferred teaching method of the teachers delivering health education in WA is discussion-based teaching. Our findings show that teachers report preferring a discussion-based teaching approach, even though the health curriculum advises a critical inquiry approach while many Australian schools currently promote explicit teaching. Effective teaching practices need to be interrogated to support teachers, so how do we do this in a way that provides clarity for teachers and ultimately produces the best outcomes for young people?

A study on physical, emotional, and verbal aggression towards teachers by students in Western Australia

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The media in Australia gives the impression that violence against teachers is prolific and increasing. However, there is minimal research on physical, emotional, and verbal aggression towards teachers by students (PEVATTS) in Australia, more specifically in

Western Australia (WA). The results from this PhD aim to provide important foundational research on the frequency, forms, impacts, support, training, and prevention of PEVATTS in WA. The research project employs an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, comprising four stages. The first stage is an integrative review that examines the literature and research on PEVATTS in Australia over the past decade. The second stage is an autoethnography of the primary researcher's individual experiences with PEVATTS. The third stage involves an online survey that collects data on the frequency and forms of PEVATTS, training teachers have received in managing challenging behaviour, how confident teachers feel in managing challenging behaviour, how supported teachers feel regarding PEVATTS, and the impacts it has had on teachers. The fourth stage is a World Café, where teachers collaboratively share knowledge to develop practical solutions for training, support, and prevention of PEVATTS in WA. The research from this PhD has the potential to inform effective interventions that benefit teachers, schools, and the broader community.

From screens to classroom scenes: Teacher agency in post-pandemic digital teaching

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Recent studies have begun shifting focus from teachers' pandemic-induced remote teaching experiences to the return of the classroom scenes, highlighting how those experiences have shaped teacher development and agency (Mansfield et al., 2023; Smith et al., 2025). Building on this growing body of literature, this study explored how nine Indonesian EFL teachers exercised agency in post-pandemic digital teaching. Using narrative inquiry, it gathered their experiences through semi-structured interviews with visual prompts. Data were analysed thematically following Braun and Clarke's (2022) approach, generating two key themes. The first theme, "purposefully sustaining digital tools to enrich in-class learning," emphasised teachers' purposeful efforts to retain digital tools employed during the distance teaching period to enhance their in-person learning. The second theme, "thoughtfully moderating digital tool use to prioritise in-person learning", revealed teachers' deliberate adjustment on their technology use, prioritising pedagogical relevance and addressing concerns about student development. This study offers insights into the lasting impact of the pandemic on teacher agency and highlights the importance of valuing teachers' lived experiences in shaping the future of digital teaching.

The hunt is on... CALD leaders in Australian schools: A review of the literature

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Australia and other developed nations have been experiencing increased cultural and linguistic diversity (CALD) within their populations. This increase in diversity has been attributed to the influence of globalisation and accompanying immigration. This review of literature explores the concept that despite rising cultural and linguistic diversity (CALD) in Australian school students, teaching, and non-teaching staff, the same trend does not appear to be mirrored in school leaders. The literature review revealed that although substantial research focuses on CALD students' diverse learning needs, the proportion of studies conducted on CALD teaching professionals' workplace positionality, leadership aspirations, recruitment processes, and experiences was limited (Matschiner, 2022). Some key themes highlighting challenges for CALD teachers include existential norms, attitudes and perceptions, affective and effective factors, acceptance and belonging, and equity, which are all needed to create workplace cultural sustainability. Through the literature review, this presentation questions the multiculturalism among school leadership despite the gradually increasing CALD population among teaching professionals and factors that could support them in their aspirations. Where art thou, CALD leaders, in Australian schools? ... The hunt is on!

Informal digital learning of English: Experiences of Vietnamese EFL learners

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Technological advances have offered unprecedented opportunities for language learners to learn a foreign language outside the classroom. This form of learning, known as informal digital learning, is referred to as informal digital learning of English (IDLE) when the target language is English. While previous research has highlighted the positive relationship between digital technologies and informal language learning, it has overlooked the range of contexts where IDLE takes place. Therefore, it is timely to examine the context-specific nature of IDLE among a specific group of language learners by exploring the experiences of IDLE among English language learners in Vietnam.

Adopting a qualitative case study design, this research employs multiple data location methods to triangulate the collected data. The methods include an initial semi-structured interview, a two-week collection of learning artefacts and a follow-up semi-structured interview. Participants are English as a foreign language students who learn to become an English language teacher at a public university in central Vietnam. Data will be analysed using thematic analysis within the Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) framework. Findings from this research will provide insights into how social, historical, and cultural factors shape IDLE practices in a specific national context.

Vietnamese migrant women in Australia: Perceptions and experiences of English language competence

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In Australia, Vietnamese migrants are one of the largest migrant communities with a non-English speaking background. However, because of limited opportunities to use English prior to arriving in Australia, many Vietnamese migrants have a considerably low level of English language competence. Thus, they may encounter challenges communicating in English. To address the unique and specific challenges that women migrants face, this study, which is part of a larger research project, aims to understand how Vietnamese migrant women in Australia perceive their English language competence in communicative situations and explore the challenges they face related to it. Employing an ethnographic approach within the larger research project, this research implemented three stages of data collection and gathered data from three sources for data triangulation. The data sources included participant observation in a Facebook group, diaries, and interviews.

The initial thematic analysis of the Facebook data reveals that Vietnamese migrant women often perceive themselves as "not sufficiently competent" in English, which leads to significant difficulties in employment, education, social and cultural integration, and daily life activities. The findings contribute to the knowledge of the perceptions and experiences of migrant women as English as a second language (ESL) learners seeking to develop their communicative competence, serving as a foundation for further research and informing policies to support women migrant ESL learners in Australia.

Feminist pasts, presents and futures in early childhood education

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Feminism has played a central role in shaping Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Australia. At its core, feminism seeks to improve equity by highlighting how systems of oppression intersect across race, species, class, gender, and sexuality. Despite these historical

influences, the publication of *The Early Years Learning Framework V2.0* marks the first time feminist theories are named as a suggested field for educators to draw from when making decisions about pedagogy and practice. Whilst this presents opportunities for early childhood educators to reflect on and respond to whose voices are amplified and whose are excluded or ignored in current practices, curricula continue to be shaped by outcome-driven approaches that promote individualism, universalism and mastery. Drawing insights from feminist theories and with an anticolonial framing, this paper builds on findings from the author's PhD that highlight the generative potential of ECE shifting beyond theories and practices often associated with the discipline. By bringing feminist pasts into conversation with feminist presents and futures, the paper proposes a suite of practices for supporting early childhood educators to engage purposefully with feminist theories. These recommendations facilitate a necessary shift towards more eco-socially just futures.

Challenges faced by female principals in Catholic composite and secondary schools in Western Australia

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This study explored factors that challenged female principals in Catholic composite and secondary schools (CCSS) in Western Australia. Composite schools include both primary and secondary students. The study used a constructivist paradigm, specifically that of interpretivism and employed a symbolic interactionist perspective to explore participant experiences. The methodology for the study was an instrumental case study. Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews with 14 female principals as well as the use of researcher field notes. The results indicate six challenges that participants faced as female principals in CCSS. These challenges focus on the multifaceted nature of the role; challenges of safety, health and wellbeing of the school community; breadth of financial and property management skills required; school compliance and regulations; principal preparation processes; and gender discrimination. Three recommendations are made to CEWA in the light of these challenges, which include addressing ongoing and adequate support for female principals, prioritising leadership training for female principals on work-life balance, and comprehensively addressing gender discrimination.

The missing human link in The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

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The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers outline the knowledge and skills teachers should possess at various career stages. However, it is important to consider the intangible human elements of teaching, such as relationality, resilience, commitment, compassion, and collegiality, which are difficult to measure.

This qualitative study explored the perspectives of Western Australian teachers at the Proficient career stage regarding the Standards. Fifteen teachers participated in semi-structured interviews, revealing five themes under the categories of Strengths and Challenges of the Standards. Participants consistently noted that the Standards do not adequately address the human qualities of successful teachers. Their views align with Monteiro (2015), who found that teaching standards often focus on measurable aspects, excluding the ontological dimensions of teaching. The emphasis on technical abilities can typify a neoliberal educational society, potentially limiting teachers' sense of identity and contributing to feelings of powerlessness. The Standards do not articulate the personhood of an effective teacher, which includes attributes like caring, emotional intelligence, relationality, and persistence. This perspective is consistent with Taylor (2016), who views teaching as a social and relational practice.

In the context of teacher well-being, attrition, and high levels of burnout in Australia, the Standards may unintentionally make invisible the human qualities that are exercised daily and are essential for success. Overall, the Standards appear to be a double-edged sword. They have the potential to be helpful to the teaching profession if used as a tool to guide and support teachers. However, there is a danger of the Standards being used in a perfunctory manner if teachers do not have time to engage with them meaningfully and do not believe they encompass all important aspects of individual and contemporary teacher practice.

Teachers' perceptions and practices of individualised teaching for students with learning disabilities in Bangladesh

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Individualised teaching strategies (ITS) are critical to the success of students with learning disabilities (LD), yet their implementation in low-resource settings remains underexplored. In Bangladesh, systemic barriers — including underfunded special needs provision, a shortage of trained teachers, and limited assessment tools — challenge the application of inclusive pedagogies. Classrooms often exceed recommended teacher–student ratios, and social stigma surrounding disability further exacerbates the issue.

This qualitative study explores how teachers perceive and implement ITS in inclusive schools in Bangladesh. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and classroom observations. Three key findings are identified. First, while teachers expressed positive attitudes towards ITS, they often conflated LD with intellectual disability and lacked knowledge of condition-specific strategies (e.g., for dyslexia). Second, despite limited resources, teachers demonstrated practical creativity — adapting lessons and using low-cost materials to engage learners. Third, challenges included over-reliance on informal assessment, training gaps, and contextual constraints that hinder effective implementation. The study highlights the need for continuous professional development tailored to LD-specific ITS and system-level supports such as screening tools and reduced class sizes. These findings contribute to ongoing international conversations on inclusive education in resource-constrained settings.

Tortured poets and rap battles: A Spotify-wrapped approach to exploring poetry for English teachers

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Poetry is a core component of English in the Australian curriculum, but effectively engaging students in its study is often a difficult prospect for teachers, with research indicating that a lack of teacher confidence often leads to concerns about how to effectively teach poetic forms of literature (Dymoke et al., 2013). This poses a provocation for English units in Initial Teacher Education courses – how can we more effectively equip our future teachers to develop their confidence and competence in teaching poetry in their future classrooms?

This presentation explores the creative potential of poetry in teacher education, through a student-centred approach to the study of song lyrics as poetry, examining the use of a range of contemporary lyricists including Taylor Swift and Kendrick Lamar, as well as student-contributed songs to support literacy development, student engagement, contextual understanding, and critical and creative thinking. Prioritising the musical landscape that students inhabit, the aim is to develop students' awareness and understanding of the powerful language that they engage with in their everyday lives, broadening their appreciation of poetry as a literary artform. This also supports students in developing critical literacy skills as they examine the sociocultural and political aspects of lyrics-as-poetry,

reflecting on the implications of popularity, and what social and critical reactions to both lyrics and artists says about the world in which they live.

Investigation of the impact of e-mentoring on the motivation and engagement of underachieving gifted students

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Gifted students, often not considered at risk in academic environments, present a perplexing challenge for educators and families when they underachieve. Misconceptions about underachievers as 'lazy' or 'unmotivated' arise due to their high abilities, despite a range of emotional, environmental and systemic factors contributing to underachievement. While traditional mentoring can be effective, it often lacks the flexibility and personalisation gifted learners need. This research explores how e-mentoring—delivered via digital platforms—may foster motivation and engagement in gifted students aged 8 to 15 who are home-educated in Australia. Participants will be identified using a multi-source approach to determine giftedness, including diagnostic assessments, teacher or psychologist reports, and alignment with the Gagné DMGT framework. A mixed-methods design will combine quantitative measures of motivation and engagement with qualitative insights from students and mentors. The study has received ethics approval, with data collection scheduled to commence later this year.

By focusing on how e-mentoring can enhance motivation and engagement among underachieving gifted learners, this research aims to fill critical gaps in current educational frameworks. It seeks to inform more inclusive, individualised strategies for gifted education that support students in reaching their full potential. This presentation will outline the rationale, methodology, and participant selection process, highlighting the anticipated contributions of e-mentoring to research and practice.

Through the ages: An educational ethnographic research journey with WAIER

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From my first paper presented as a PhD candidate at the WAIER Forum in August 2007, *An ethnographer swinging in the school policy jungle: Peeling the layers*, [<https://waier.org.au/archives/forums/2007/abstracts.html#robinson>] through to WAIER's 2025 40th Annual Forum 'ConnectED: Past, Present, Future'; this presentation shares and connects the pathways that have led to the publication of my recent book, *The "trouble" with school behavior and discipline policies in neoliberal times* [Peter Lang Verlag].

The key provocations and critique of neoliberal school policy told through the lenses of teachers, young people and author as researcher, capture significant stories and messages of advocacy into the future for education policy research.

An investigation into the impact of participation in educational activities and its effects on long-term prisoners' mental well-being

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This systematic review investigates current literature regarding prison education and its possible impact/s on mental well-being, to understand the potential that education may have on the lives of attendees and to establish the value of said learning. The intended

outcome of this research is to determine the prevalence of educational activities and the impact that engagement in these activities may have on a prisoner's mental well-being, empowerment, transformational learning, ability to adapt to their environment, confidence, self-belief, hopefulness for the future, and self-efficacy.

Using PRISMA guidelines, the authors systematically searched and reviewed the literature to comprehensively analyse the findings using the six-phase analytical process of *Thematic Analysis* (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The results of 21 studies suggest that participation in prison education may support incarcerated people by encouraging the development of positive relationships. This may help to establish transformational learning through greater confidence and increased self-esteem and enable the learner to enhance positive outlooks for the future. The research suggests that it is important for the educational centre to be classified as a neutral territory in a punitive environment without penal custodial judgment.

Crossing borders: Narratives of migrant teachers in times of shortage

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For more than a decade, Australia has faced intense teacher shortages. To address this issue, the Australian Government has proposed a strategy of expanding the number of migrant teachers. In the light of growing xenophobia and anti-immigration discourses, this study seeks to understand how the international teacher recruitment is received in Australia. Of equal concern, little is known about the lived experiences of migrant teachers as they navigate an Australian education system characterised by multilayered bureaucracy, complex pedagogical demands, increasing student violence and abuse, and limited resources.

This presentation is based on a qualitative study that showcases the narratives of secondary school migrant teachers. Building on themes of identity, belonging, power, networking and resilience, emergent interview data from Western Australia will provide insight into the experiences of migrant teachers.

Student wellbeing and primary to secondary school transition

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Primary to secondary school transition is a significant yet normative milestone in the lives of young people, who often face it with both excitement and worry. There is a lot to adapt to and student wellbeing can be impacted by a multitude of simultaneous changes such as those in friendships, the school environment and learning expectations. A recent study has brought the real world of student perceptions of their school transition experience to life by harnessing the power of student voice through focus group interviews and a short survey. Through reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022), the study revealed that the big changes take time to adjust to, there is a lot of work involved in the adjustment to secondary school and that connections with, as well as support from, other people are crucial.

Additionally, the study found that aspects of a student's personality can assist them with transitioning into secondary school. In a seemingly unique contribution to the field, the research has also uncovered the power of using the PERMA Framework (Seligman, 2011) to understand this important time in students' lives, further highlighting the importance of listening to what students have to say, as well as the significance of supporting students' social and emotional wellbeing.

Empowering girls in science, technology, engineering and mathematics through youth mentoring

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Girls' underrepresentation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) is a significant concern in education. While the impact of mentoring on female engagement in STEM is well established in some contexts, there is limited research specific to the Western Australian education context, particularly regarding how mentoring influences adolescent girls' attitudes toward STEM.

Supported by the 2024 WAIER-Fogarty Postgraduate Research Prize, this presentation shares findings from a research-informed STEM mentoring program for girls aged 11–14. This interactive session aims to equip attendees with practical strategies to design and deliver effective STEM mentoring initiatives. In addition to learning about key components of the research and program design, participants will engage in activities that model relationship-building techniques. Attendees will also receive an overview of our four-month STEM mentoring program, including tools for implementation and evaluation. This session is relevant to educators, researchers, and practitioners interested in mentoring or STEM outreach, offering both theoretical insights and hands-on guidance to support girls' sustained interest and participation in STEM pathways.

Nature cuddle books as therapeutic literacy tools in childhood cancer care: A multidisciplinary investigation

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In Australia, paediatric cancer diagnoses are swiftly followed by treatment focused on saving lives. For the 100 new diagnoses per year in WA, this treatment radically improves the outcomes for children, and most return to school with their peers following active treatment. Active treatment usually involves long duration hospital stays, as well as physical and cognitive impacts from any combination of drugs, surgery and radiation. During active treatment, most children are not allowed to play in nature (including sandpits) due to compromised immunity, so this research reimagines connecting with nature through bespoke plants outside the windows, Aboriginal stories, treasure hunts and story books that are shared with the enrolled school to facilitate shared experiences with peers and community support.

This presentation introduces a multidimensional research project involving disciplines from several schools within Murdoch University, Curtin University and Perth Children's Hospital and the not-for-profit sector. The presentation centres on the creation and use of 'nature cuddle books' as a resource for young children receiving treatment for cancer and seeks to investigate the efficacy of the nature cuddle books in supporting the development of early language and literacy.

University missions and financial incentives: The response of universities to Australia's Job-ready Graduates policy

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Funding incentives are widely used to steer universities towards meeting policy objectives, but they do not always produce the expected outcomes. The headline policy of Australia's

Job-ready Graduates (JRG) university policy changed student fees – lower for priority ‘job ready’ courses and higher for others – to steer student course choices towards national priorities. JRG also significantly changed funding arrangements from a university perspective, in ways that sometimes contradicted student incentives. How universities responded to JRG incentives and constraints remains unexplored. Drawing upon policy enactment and instrumentation perspectives, this study examines university responses to the JRG policy.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with vice-chancellors and other senior staff at five universities to explore how institutional actors interpreted and negotiated the JRG policy within broader socio-political and institutional contexts. Three key findings are identified. First, universities were usually (although not always) responsive to student demand, even when the financial incentives were weak. Second, a maximum university-level grant amount under JRG was widely interpreted as a minimum, which contributed to enrolling additional students without a tuition subsidy. Mission factors were also a factor in this practice. Third, mission factors, market competition and the perceived need to fully utilise the maximum grant led to postgraduate coursework places being offered on a subsidised rather than a market-fee basis.

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