Information for applicants

Project title: ‘Pedagogy as research’: Expanding notions of pedagogy in the early years

Project Description: (250 words)

This project will use the notion of ‘pedagogy as research’ to frame research that makes a difference to the lives of infants, toddlers and young children as learners, those that care for them and those that make decisions for/about them. While quality early childhood education and care is now widely viewed as the ‘magic bullet’ to positive outcomes for children, more attention has yet to be granted to the nature of pedagogies that underpin successful learning in these early years. Pedagogies traditionally view teaching and learning as either an art or a science, involving certain beliefs, methods and techniques oriented towards assimilation of valued knowledge (Farquhar & White 2014). This project will stretch these boundaries, taking a view of pedagogy as a political, philosophical, cultural, transformative and creative intersubjective act that is deeply concerned with ‘being, belonging and becoming’ young learners and their families in and across societies.

Through this expansive route we will explore pedagogies as diverse ways of seeing teaching and learning for our youngest - in and through dialogue, culture, curriculum, routines, transitions, community engagements and, importantly, in play. We aim to re-locate pedagogies as compassionate encounters between young learners and the people (adults, peers, virtual communities etc), places (landscapes, cultures, eco-environments) and things (tools, technologies) that orient their lives. Part of our focus will be to critically explore pedagogy as a form of governmentality, juxtaposed with its potential to create new possibility spaces for transformative practices. We see the project as a way to address the extant (false) dichotomy of care and education globally and progress understandings of how and why pedagogical practices are so deeply implicated in early childhood education. There is scope for generating new pedagogies and giving voice to previously silenced pedagogies through this work.

This project will encompass a number of existing studies and international partnerships with the view to expand and diversify. Key methods include, but are not limited to, polyphonic methods, discourse analysis and visual ethnography. Orienting disciplines include early childhood education and care, infant and toddler pedagogy, inclusive and alternative pedagogies, education philosophy, digital inquiry and education policy sociology. Key theoretical frameworks include post-structural, dialogic, inter-cultural and feminist approaches which seek to expand rather than limit the potential for alternative ways of viewing pedagogy as research.

Relevant Literature


**Supervisory Team***
1st Supervisor: Jayne White
2nd Supervisor: Josephine Ng
3rd Supervisor: Aleksandra Acker
4th Supervisor: Elise Hunkin

*Adjunct Professor Berenice Nyland will be a project advisor, and may also be involved in supervision

**FOR Codes**
1301
1302
1303
Information for applicants

Project title: Vocational Education for Sustainable Development

Project Description: (250 words)

UNESCO UNEVOC @ RMIT is located in the School of Education with governance by a Management Committee drawn from TVET expertise across RMIT University, the VET sector and industry. UNEVOC @ RMIT is accountable through a two-year workplan cycle registered with UNESCO-UNEVOC headquarters in Bonn, Germany.

Aspirations for UNEVOC @ RMIT
Focused on being part of an inclusive, global learning network of institutions and organisations involved in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in UNESCO’s Member States.

Positioning RMIT and Australia as a leader and enabler in the region (Asia Pacific, North Asia and South Asia) in applied research, network building and evidenced-based interventions and policy-making in VET.

Leveraging the work being conducted at other UNEVOC Centres around the world for the benefit of Australia and Australian future workforces and industry.

Enabling further brand and reputation building for RMIT and its leading position in the VET sector in Australia and internationally.

Delivering research impact through establishing stronger links with end users and beneficiaries of research being conducted by RMIT in the area.

Contributing, through concrete, applied, and research based activities, to meeting the UN Sustainable Development Goals, including: (4) quality education, (5) gender equality, (8) decent work and economic growth, (9) industry, innovation and infrastructure, and (10) reduced inequalities.

Research Focus
The research focus for UNEVOC at RMIT is multidisciplinary, and is initially focused on three key areas:

- Young people, social enterprise and VET for Sustainable Development
- Applied research and the transformation of VET learning and teaching for Sustainable Development
- Gender diversity, equity and participation in VET for Sustainable Development

Relevant literature (max 4):

Supervisory team (min 2, max 4 supervisors):
1st Supervisor: Peter Kelly
2nd Supervisor: Seth Brown
3rd Supervisor: Emily Gray
4th Supervisor: Rohan Nethsinghe

FOR Code:
130108 Technical, Further and Workplace Education;
160809 Sociology of Education
**Project title:** Social justice, diversity and education

**Project Description: (250 words)**

This project focuses on issues of diversity, difference and inclusion in both formal and informal educational spaces and seeks to ask what are the hopes and possibilities for social justice in an increasingly fractured world? We ask what role education plays in order to address issues of inequality for minorities across the globe.

In 2004 and in response to 9/11, Judith Butler wrote of a rise of anti-intellectualism, an acceptance of media censorship and a growth of the notion that some lives are more grievable, and therefore more important, than others within Western contexts generally and the US specifically (Butler 2004). We have witnessed successive Western nations reject liberal progressivism to embrace a particular brand of right wing populism that reflects Butler’s concerns about the rise of anti-intellectualism. This oppositional populism can be understood as ‘a “thin ideology,” that sets up a hypothetical confrontation between right- wing populists championing the “people” against an elite accused of favouring a third group of their choice’ (Speed and Mannion 2017, 249-250). Such a rise has been accompanied by the ascendance of a right-wing populism that actively encourages dogmatic approaches to understandings of nation, border security, LGBTIQ rights, women’s rights, racial inequality and financial (in)security (Lyons 2017; Wilson 2016).

This project seeks to imagine different possible futures within which education meets the needs of individuals and communities in order to ameliorate educational inequalities and therefore to address inequality more broadly.
Relevant literature (max 4):


Supervisory team (min 2, max 4 supervisors):
1st Supervisor: Dr Emily M. Gray
2nd Supervisor: Dr Michael Crowhurst
3rd Supervisor: Dr Seth Brown
4th Supervisor: Prof. Jeffrey S. Brooks

FOR Code:
1303 Specialist Studies in Education
Information for applicants

Project title: Enhancing the school environments through leadership and student-centered pedagogies

Project Description: (250 words)

This project aims to examine ways educators can build leadership capacity to support teacher education and professional development to enhance students’ health, well-being and learning within a school context. We welcome proposals that explore the use of creative student-centered pedagogies, global mobility to enhance cross-cultural perspectives, and leadership capability and improvement in school environments. The primary research designs of the project may employ a combination of descriptive research (namely Survey, Developmental research, Case Study, Focus group, Observational and Correlational), quasi-experimental and qualitative research. The project will draw from a wide range of sociocultural, behavioral and educational theoretical perspectives to explore the potential of health & physical educator’s capacity to impact on students’ health, well-being and learning within a school context.

International comparisons of PISA data for student outcomes relating to a range of academic performance indicators ranked Australia among the lowest in the world. Research has shown direct links between school leadership and student achievements (Barber, Whelan & Clark, 2010). In addition, the Active Healthy Kids Global Alliance report in 38 countries across 6 continents found that overall physical activity and sedentary behaviour in Australia are low/poor (graded D-). This project recognises that school health and physical education programs, co-curricular initiatives and environments play vital roles in shaping young people’s experiences, health, well-being, learning and development which impacts on these achievements. Overall, the project will use this empirical base to contribute to scholarship on the impact of school leadership, global mobility experiences and student-centered pedagogies on students’ health and well-being and achievements.

Relevant literature (max 4):


5. Barber, M., Whelan, F., & Clark, M. (2010). *Capturing the leadership premium: How the world’s top school systems are building leadership capacity for the future.*

**Supervisory team (min 2, max 4 supervisors):**

1st Supervisor: Assoc Prof Amanda Telford, School of Education 2nd Supervisor: Dr Toni Hilland, School of Education

3rd Supervisor: Dr Jason Wong, School of Education 4th Supervisor: Dr Melanie Nash, School of Education

**FOR Code:**

130313 Teacher Education and Professional Development of Educators
Project title: Gender-diversity & Digital Literacy Education in Contemporary Australian Schools

Project Description: (250 words)

Following the recent tumult of the Marriage Equality and Safe Schools debates, the increasing visibility of young gender and sexuality-diverse (GSD) students has become a socio-political minefield for schools. In addition, they are mindful of being responsive to sexist practices made recently more prominent by popular hybrid online/offline social movements like #MeToo. The complexities of contemporary gender politics are made more challenging by the pervasive presence of social media in young peoples’ lives, especially as it intersects with school environments, relationships, and practices (i.e. bullying that can start at school and continue into the home via social media).

Mainstream curriculum and government mandated initiatives like ‘Young and e:safe’ (a program of the Commissioner for Cybersafety) continue to address online safety and sex education with risk averse ‘if in doubt, don’t’. These are coupled with punitive legal consequences for transgressors. Such approaches fail to resonate with young people in their everyday practices. With only ad hoc education department guidance, schools and teacher-training institutions are left to grapple with how to productively support students, teachers and parents. Processes and frameworks of whole-child and initial teacher education (ITE) are consequently vexed.

This proposal will use applied methods that include workshop practice with young people and educators, and ethnographic engagement with communities of interest. Rich media and social media data sources, as well as research outputs, will amplify impact. We aim to create an interdisciplinary space spanning education, gender and digital media studies for establishing a general but interconnected program of research around digital media and gender diversity in and through education contexts.

Relevant Literature


Supervisory Team

1st Supervisor: Anne Harris
2nd Supervisor: Annette Gough
FOR Codes

130201 – Creative Arts, Media and Communication Curriculum & Pedagogy
200205 – Culture, Gender, Sexuality
200102 – Communication Technology and Digital Media Studies
Project title: STEAM and Creativity in the 21st Century

Project Description: (250 words)

There is ample evidence that creativity is now a ubiquitous economic and education across curriculum development, teacher training and policy. The need for creative change comes directly out of the Australian Government’s Inquiry into Innovation and Creativity (Commonwealth of Australia, 2017), Recommendation 10 (2.94), which “recommends that the National Innovation and Science Agenda explicitly recognise the importance of STEAM, creative digital skills, the creative industries and the arts more generally” (p. 40). We will work with other state-based Education initiatives to build a national and indeed international STEAM-based creative education framework for compulsory creativity enhancement across the sector. We take a ‘creative ecologies’ approach and draw on new materialist, systems and creativity theory. Our impact focus is education, economic and arts policy change.

The methods will vary according to the successful candidates, but the project is transdisciplinary in nature and will build upon Associate Professor Harris’ ARC Future Fellowship (2017- 2021) into intercultural creativity across higher education and workplaces in Australasia. We are keen to grow this research node to match the current national push toward a standardized approach to growing creativity in schools, and an international attention to creative skills and capacities in emerging workforces. It is a timely and expansive area of research, and confirming a project in this area means the considerable resources already committed through Creative Agency will continue to pay dividends in both research and impact terms.

Relevant Literature


Supervisory Team

1st Supervisor: Anne Harris
2nd Supervisor: Patricia McLaughlin

FOR Codes

130201 – Creative Arts, Media and Communication Curriculum & Pedagogy
130212 – Science, Technology and Engineering Curriculum and Pedagogy
130313 – Teacher Education and Prof Development of Educators
Project title: Mathematics Education: Understanding and Improving the Quality of Mathematics Teaching and Learning

Project Description: (250 words)

Across all fields of endeavor but particularly science, technology and engineering, there is very little of any substance that can be achieved without the capacity to recognise, represent and reason about relationships between quantities, that is, to think and work mathematically. However, many students are disengaged with school mathematics and international assessments of mathematical literacy reveal that 20% of Australian 15-year olds are unable to demonstrate the competencies needed to participate effectively and productively in society. The same data also reveal that student performance is strongly and positively related to socioeconomic background, that Indigenous students achieve on average at a level approximately two years below their non-Indigenous peers, and approximately one-third of the Australian females reported they did not think mathematics was important for later study compared to one-fifth of the males. These inequities are untenable where an estimated 75% of the fastest growing employment opportunities require some level of mathematics, science, technology or engineering education. This project is concerned with addressing these inequities through research that investigates how students learn mathematics and the pedagogical and organisational practices needed to ensure all students have the opportunities they need to learn mathematics with understanding and confidence. To date, the primary focus has been on developing evidence-based learning progressions for the big ideas in mathematics, but the project is also concerned with teacher development and student attitudes, motivations, and values in the teaching and learning of mathematics. The project is anchored in practice and framed by a sociocultural perspective of mathematics learning.

Relevant Literature

Supervisory Team

1st Supervisor: Professor Dianne Siemon, School of Education
2nd Supervisor: Dr Tasos Barkatsas, School of Education
3rd Supervisor: Dr Angela Rogers, School of Education
4th Supervisor: Dr Rebecca Seah, School of Education

FOR Code

130208
Project title: Educational Leadership: Understanding, Exploring and Critiquing Influence in Schools and School Systems

Project Description: (250 words)

Throughout Australia and around the world there is increased recognition that leadership plays an important role in shaping the processes and outcomes of schooling. In this project, leadership is conceived as both formal and informal behaviours that people throughout an organization practice to influence followers. Leadership includes the development of conceptual, technical and relational skills. Importantly, we see leadership as a fluid phenomenon enacted by people regardless of position or rank—everyone is potentially a leader or a follower in different situations, and the nature of this distribution of leadership evolves over time. This project is focused on the various ways that leaders influence (and are influenced by) educational, ethical, social, cultural, political, organisational and equity dynamics in primary schools, secondary schools and the school systems in which they operate. The project is transnational in scope—to date it has included studies in Australia, United States, Thailand, The Philippines, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Malaysia and Saudi Arabia—we welcome proposals from other contexts as well. The primary research designs of the project are ethnography and case study, with a heavy emphasis on qualitative methods, but also employing mixed methods or quantitative methods as research questions demand. The project has drawn from a wide range of sociological, anthropological and educational theoretical perspectives to explore educational leadership in schools, but consistently recognizes the importance of local and organizational context.

Relevant Literature


Supervisory Team

1st Supervisor: Professor Jeffrey S. Brooks, School of Education
2nd Supervisor: Associate Professor Anne Harris, School of Education
3rd Supervisor: Juliana Ryan, School of Global, Urban and Social Studies
4th Supervisor: Josephine Ng, School of Education

FOR Code

130304
Project title: Teacher Pedagogy, Practice and Policy

Project Description: (250 words)

This project involves candidates who are interested in the teaching profession, pre-service and in-service teaching or higher education teaching, and those with a specific interest in pedagogy, practice and policy.

In relation to policy, candidates could be interested in current Teacher Education policy, such as that emerging from the 2015 TEMAG review. One key area of reform has been around stronger quality assurance of teacher education courses, leading to the revision of the national accreditation standards and procedures and a greater emphasis on accountability, demonstration of impact and improvement. Candidates may be interested in School Education policy, as it relates to international, national or state developments such as the 2018 Gonski 2.0 review, the Australian curriculum or 2016 Victorian F – 10 curriculum or specific curriculum developments such as the use of educational technologies or literacy initiatives.

In relation to pedagogy, candidates could have an interest in current and emerging pedagogies and their impact on schools, teachers or learners. This could involve pedagogies associated with pre-service or in-service teaching or pedagogical developments around 21st century skills, literacy and ICT.

In relation to practice, candidates would be interested in how schools, teachers and learners enact practice in specific contexts, and the complexity in their decision making. Candidates may pursue specific examples of practice as they relate to a particular cohort of learners or a curriculum area. Candidates may be interested in professional practice and how it connects to coursework in Teacher Education or how it is enacted in particular school sites and the use of specific pedagogical models or frameworks. Candidates may be interested in the provision of quality placement, the role of the teacher mentor in supporting this leaning experience, and the broader role of partnerships between schools and providers.

Relevant Literature


Supervisory Team

1st Supervisor: Kathy Jordan
2nd Supervisor: Heather Fehring
3rd Supervisor: Patricia McLaughlin
4th Supervisor: Geoff Shacklock

**FOR Code**

1300
Project title: Extending the Boundaries of STEM Education

Project Description: (250 words)

The proposed research program, STEM Education, will focus attention on four areas:

1. Conceptualisations of STEM education: There are debates that argue that the term STEM is too diffuse and ill-defined and that there should be a return to the individual disciplines (Siekmann, 2017); debates that current conceptualisations of STEM should be expanded to include a wider range of disciplines, such as Art (Spoehr, Barnett, Molly, Dev & Hordacre, 2010); and debates that STEM education should reflect a more integrated, problem-based learning approach geared towards solving societal problems.

2. Participation and equity - considerations related to access and participation in STEM education by marginalized groups, including indigenous students, students from socio-economically disadvantaged groups, women/girls.

3. How STEM education is enacted at different levels of education, including: how education institutions engage with industry and community to develop STEM education to contribute to how society grapples with 21st century problems and trends; and how STEM education is positioned as a vehicle for curriculum and pedagogical renewal (inquiry, problem-based learning and 21st century skills) and student re-engagement.

4. How teacher education institutions are preparing new graduate teachers to engage with the STEM education agenda in their practices.

Relevant Literature


Supervisory Team

1st Supervisor: Dr Tasos Barkatsas
2nd Supervisor: Dr Nicky Carr
3rd Supervisor: A/Prof Patricia McLaughlin
4th Supervisor: Dr Grant Cooper

FOR Codes

1301
1302
1303
Project title: Co-constructing ITE curriculum through social learning systems

Project Description: (250 words)

This project aims to develop and document effective strategies that facilitate the co-construct of initial teacher education (ITE) curriculum and pedagogy through school/industry-university partnerships. Social learning perspectives see humans as enmeshed with the world as active agents in interdependent relationships with social, cultural and material contexts (Billet, 2006). Researchers may be interested in collaboration, knowledge building, interdisciplinarity, joint agency and generative practices in education settings.

Objectives:
The major objectives of the project are to:
- Make links between theories that underpin effective pedagogies taught at the university, with the day-to day practice of teaching and learning in schools, industry or education settings.
- Investigate effective teaching practices using expert and innovative guidance and mentoring models for student teachers.
- Explore, develop and evaluate emergent models of professional experience and ITE curriculum through distributed expertise and interdisciplinary collaboration.
- Create conducive conditions for learning that enable co-constructed practice and flexible learning opportunities.
- Enhance the relationship between schools/industry and tertiary ITE providers.

Methodology:
Social learning theories could include situated theories such as Communities of Practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), socio-cultural theories such as Affordance theory (Greeno, 1994), Cultural Historical Activity theory (Engestrom, 2008), Relational Agency, (Edwards, 2015) or Actor-Network theory (Latour, ). In the context of partnerships theories of boundary crossing (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011) and Third Space theory (Bhabha, 1994; Gutierrez, 2008)

Projects could adopt mixed methods of research to suit the particular investigation and contexts.

Relevant literature (max 4):


Supervisory team (min 2, max 15 supervisors):
Dr Nicky Carr:
Dr Alison Lugg:
Dr Thembi Mason:
Dr Melanie Nash:

FOR Codes:
130313 Teacher Education and Professional Development of Educators
Project title: Engaging Sustainability Through Education

Project Description: (250 words)

This project is focused on engaging sustainability at all levels of formal, nonformal and informal education. While there is a strong focus on environmental sustainability (environmental problems are social problems), this is complemented through consideration of all 17 United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals and how these intersect with education. However, among the research conducted in this project will be a recognition that there is a need to consider the more-than-human and have a biocentric orientation to counter the anthropocentrism that can come to dominate in sustainability contexts.

Research within this project will be consistent with the Urban Futures and the Design and Creative Practices ECPs’ focus on engaging the community in order to achieve the transformation required for a sustainable future. Indeed, social transformation is a central concern for this research.

Research in this project area will generally be trans, multi or interdisciplinary (although it may sometimes focus on a single discipline such as science education) and informed by a broad range of theoretical frameworks including positivism, interpretivism, critical theory, feminist theory, new materialism, poststructuralism, posthumanism, and intersectionality. Research will often involve participants from across all age groups and learning contexts where sustainability is being engaged, but it will also, at times, be theoretical and literature/policy based. Thus research methods will span the three types of evidence-gathering techniques: listening to (or interrogating) informants, observing behaviour, and examining historical traces and records.

Relevant Literature

Supervisory Team

1st Supervisor: Annette Gough
2nd Supervisor: Jose Roberto Guevara
3rd Supervisor: Grant Cooper
4th Supervisor: Alison Lugg

FOR Code

130299
**Project title:** Young people, well-being, resilience and enterprise: critical perspectives for the Anthropocene

**Project Description: (250 words)**

Well-being, resilience and enterprise are key-words (Raymond Williams, 1976) in many policy, academic and community discourses about contemporary populations of children and young people around the globe. These ‘states-of-being’ are frequently imagined as being able to ‘inoculate’ individual children and young people against many of the education, training, work and life ‘disruptions’ that characterise the start of the 21st century.

Most often these key-words take the form of individualising and responsibilising, psycho-biological based, encouragements for persons to care for their own physical, mental and social health and well-being, to develop their resilience, and to become enterprising in a world that is taken-for-granted as being troubling, challenging and ‘disruptive’.

The Anthropocene is, firstly, a discourse of the earth systems science. This project takes the position that the social sciences and humanities must critically engage with, and contribute to, debates about these planetary wide changes and their consequences.

This project sits at the intersection of education policy, youth studies, and an examination of the future of life and work. It emerges from a sense that we need to develop new ways of ‘troubling’ these keywords at a time when planetary systems - environmental, capitalist - are in crisis.

We are looking for students to make empirical, theoretical, and/or methodological contributions to discussions about children and young people’s well-being, resilience, and enterprise that:

1) Critically engage with and/or review what the literature on the Anthropocene offers childhood- and youth studies for thinking about concepts such as ‘agency’, ‘structure’, ‘identity’, ‘belonging’

2) Seek to trouble or unsettle key dimensions of the forms of regulation, intervention, and problematising of children and young people.

**Relevant Literature**

Supervisory Team

1st Supervisor: Peter Kelly
2nd Supervisor: Seth Brown
3rd Supervisor: Shane Duggan
4th Supervisor: Perri Campbell

FOR Codes

130106 Secondary Education
130108 Technical, Further and Workplace Education
160809 Sociology of Education
Project title: Co-constructing ITE curriculum through social learning systems

Project Description: (250 words)

Outline the project, including key methods, disciplines, and theoretical frameworks.

This project aims to develop and document effective strategies that facilitate the co-construction of initial teacher education (ITE) curriculum and pedagogy through school/industry-university partnerships. Social learning perspectives see humans as enmeshed with the world as active agents in interdependent relationships with social, cultural and material contexts (Billet, 2006). Researchers may be interested in collaboration, knowledge building, interdisciplinarity, joint agency and generative practices in education settings.

Objectives:

The major objectives of the project are to:

- Make links between theories that underpin effective pedagogies taught at the university, with the day-to-day practice of teaching and learning in schools, industry or education settings.
- Investigate effective teaching practices using expert and innovative guidance and mentoring models for student teachers.
- Explore, develop and evaluate emergent models of professional experience and ITE curriculum through distributed expertise and interdisciplinary collaboration.
- Create conducive conditions for learning that enable co-constructed practice and flexible learning opportunities.
- Enhance the relationship between schools/industry and tertiary ITE providers.

Methodology:

Social learning theories could include situated theories such as Communities of Practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), socio-cultural theories such as Affordance theory (Greeno, 1994), Cultural Historical Activity theory (Engestrom, 2008), Relational Agency, (Edwards, 2015) or Actor-Network theory (Latour, ). In the context of partnerships theories of boundary crossing (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011) and Third Space theory (Bhabha, 1994; Gutierrez, 2008)

Projects could adopt mixed methods of research to suit the particular investigation and contexts.

Relevant Literature


**Supervisory team (min 2, max 15 supervisors):**

*Dr Nicky Carr:
Dr Alison Lugg:
Dr Thembi Mason:
Dr Melanie Nash:

**FOR Codes:**

130313 Teacher Education and Professional Development of Educators