Australian Research on Education for Development

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Education for development sits at the intersection of theory and practice. It stretches from the aid we provide to improve educational outcomes in developing countries to the scholarly work that underpins those activities. Mediating the theoretical and practical work undertaken are government and non-government agencies that provide funding for project work and, through policy and partnerships, provide implicit and overt direction to scholarship and practice. This research digest provides an overview of the scholarly and political settings presently at play in the education for development landscape.

Education is crucial to enabling individuals and nations to climb out of poverty. The flow-on effects of improving rates of education participation and retention include better health outcomes, reduced maternal and child mortality, increased workforce participation and more resilient communities. For these reasons, education-related activities – particularly those around gender equality in school education – underpin all of the UN's 2015 Millennium Development Goals (Bellamy 2004). For example, UNICEF has found that education of girls for six years or more "drastically and consistently" improves rates of childbirth survival, reduces rates of death for children under five, and reduces rates of HIV infection (UNICEF 2014).

Australia has a long history of seeing education as a form of aid for developing countries, dating back to the 1951 Colombo Plan for aid to South and South East Asia (Auletta 2000; Lowe 2010).

The Colombo Plan formed the basis of the first wave of international education in Australia (Universities Australia 2011), as students from neighbouring Asian countries were sponsored by the Australian government to undertake tertiary education in Australia. The thinking was that students' home countries would benefit when they returned with the knowledge and skills gained here. The outcomes, however, were often that the students so sponsored were from already wealthy families (Oakman 2004), and so the benefits were perhaps more modest than intended. When legislative changes allowed universities in Australia to enrol international students on a full fee paying basis in the late 1980s, international education swiftly changed track from a form of aid to a source of revenue. Education as a form of aid, or education for development, remains an important part of Australia's aid program, however. Australian funding for education related projects in developing countries was $856 million in 2012/13 (DFaT 2014).

Scholarly activities in education for development

Marginson and Bexley's (2012) study of Australian universities and research institutions' engagement in education for development observed that it is an area of study with no obviously natural disciplinary setting. Teaching programs and some relevant courses are located in education schools or faculties, and therefore have teacher education as their focus, with development as a context. Others courses are located in development studies schools and these tend to locate the education aspect of studies in the management of educational facilities in developing countries. Still others were located in areas as diverse as economics, politics, agricultural science, anthropology and midwifery. Many strands are interdisciplinary. Similarly, research activities in education for development are housed in a mix of locations, generally either in education or the humanities and social sciences, with the precise location tending to shape the research capacity, orientation, agenda and projects. On the whole, then, capacity in leading edge, multi-disciplinary and policy relevant research and analysis in education for development is fragmented. The primary unifying, or coordinating, node for education for development – as with much academic research – is its funding sources.

As part of the 2012 study of scholarly work in education for development in Australia, we undertook an analysis of the publication activities of Australian scholars working in fields related to education for development. The primary journals for the publication of the kind of work were Asia Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, Higher Education, Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies, Studies in Continuing Education, Asia Pacific Viewpoint, World Development and the Asia Pacific Journal of Education. Together, these journals accounted for 425 of the 535 articles authored or co-authored by Australian academics that we located in a five year scan of Thompson Reuters publications. In terms of the educational sectors investigated by Australian academics writing about education in a development related context, around one third of the articles we coded were on each of education generally, K12 education, and higher education. Teacher training related research also featured. The main topics or issues being investigated were national education polices, international students and transnational education, and theoretical approaches to understanding education in a development related context.

Perhaps a more illustrative approach to understand the work presently taking place in education for development in Australia is to look at projects awarded funding in major ARC grants. We coded a ten-year record of ARC grants awarded, finding that of the 12,000 projects awarded funding between 2001 and 2011, 330 were for studies that were broadly related to education in a developmental context, or aid-related studies in the Asia-Pacific region. Of these, 91 projects focussed specifically on AusAID priority countries (however many did not have an identifiable geographic focus). Indonesia was by far the most studied country of those on AusAID's priority list. Interestingly, when we assigned ARC grant funding by country study focus, we saw clearly the influence of the National Research Priority Areas on ARC-funded projects. The 'Safeguarding Australia' priority area is undoubtedly responsible for the very significant levels of funding for projects focused on Iraq ($8.5M) and Afghanistan ($1M) compared to the total pool ($14.5M spent on research on AusAID priority countries). The table below provides data on ARC projects by both the relevant country or region as well as the identified education sector or broad area of interest, for the 30 ARC projects with a direct education for development focus.

Most of these projects were concerned with broad regional issues rather than one specific country. Indonesia and China were the countries most frequently researched.

TABLE 1: Selected Australian Research Council-funded projects with a direct education focus, by country/region and educational sector/issue.

COUNTRY	EDUCATIONAL SECTOR OR ISSUE	
Afghanistan	■ Peace building	
Asian region	■ Aid	■ Higher education
	■ Australian teacher migration	■ Human capital formulation
	■ Colombo Plan	■ Peace building
	■ Cross-sector	■ Science
Australia – International comparison	■ Education policy discourse	■ Teacher education
	■ Rural and remote education	■ Trade in education
	■ Social identity	
China	■ Academic skilled migration	■ K-12
	■ International students	■ Youth
Fiji, Tonga, Vanuatu	■ Education systems	
Indonesia	■ Aid	■ Literacy
	■ Cross-sector	■ Youth
PNG & Solomon Islands	■ K-12	
Timor Leste	■ Adult education	
Unspecified	■ Cross-sector	■ Information and communications
	■ Higher education	

Examples of recent large-project investigations funded through the ARC include ethnographical work, for example 'The Teaching Occupation in Learning Societies: A global ethnography of occupational boundary work' undertaken by Prof TL Seddon, Dr C Joseph, Dr A Devos, Dr LL Henriksson and Dr B Niemeyer (2008/09) at Monash University:

"Education is a key instrument for governments and communities managing economic and social development. Yet the historical model of closed centralised national school and training systems cannot meet current government policy or community expectations in open global economies. This global ethnography contributes to knowledge about changes in teaching as an occupation; provides evidence about re-ordered relationships, cross-border demands and boundary work in teaching; suggests policy solutions to address occupational renewal and teacher workforce development; develops innovative global research methodologies and strategies; and consolidates expert global networks in education and human service work as a resource for Australian research."

Other studies focus on practical matters of national policies and practices for the teaching workforce. For example, "Skilled migration and the sustainability of Pacific Island education systems," by Dr CM Voigt-Graf and A/Prof RR Iredale (2003/04) at ANU:

"Teachers' migration and the resulting shortage of teachers at national and local levels have become major concerns in many Pacific countries. This project will investigate the relationship between skilled migration, education systems and economic and social sustainability in Fiji Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu. The aims are to improve the understanding of skilled migration in the Pacific region and analyse the inter-relationships between education-related migration, sustainability of education systems and human resource development in the Pacific Islands. The research will inform policy debates in the Pacific countries and in Australia, which is a major donor of foreign aid to these islands."

Other projects are directly related to education for development in post-conflict nations. 'An investigation into the contribution of the national adult education system to the post-conflict reconstruction and development of East Timor,' by Dr BG Boughton and Dr R Spence the University of New England is a very good example here:

"This project will improve our understanding of the society and culture of our closest neighbour, East Timor, and of the dynamics of aid and development in our region. The Australian adult education community will learn to interact more effectively with the development process in Timor, as we pilot an approach which may be applicable in other communities, particularly ones with histories of conflict and where poverty is a major issue. Funding agencies will benefit from understanding better how to target adult education aid to achieve poverty reduction and democratic development. The project will strengthen the capacity of the government of East Timor to use adult education policy to raise living standards in their country."

Funding Australia's efforts in education for development

Australia's contributions to education development in the Asia-Pacific region have primarily been coordinated, whether explicitly through program delivery, or implicitly through funding via AusAID. However, with the recent dismantling of AusAID as a government agency, and the dissolving of its activities into the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the future directions for these efforts are less clear. A significant proportion of higher education research in education for development and related areas is conducted with the support of funding from non-government organisations (NGOs), such Save the Children, UNICEF, Plan, Care and World Vision. This includes long-term projects funded through ARC Linkage grants, small one-off projects and participation in workshops and roundtables. Some examples of the work being undertaken by Australian researchers, and funded or part-funded by these organisations includes (Marginson and Bexley 2012):

- **Dr Harriot Beazley**,
  The University of the Sunshine Coast

Dr Beazley has worked for UNICEF and Save the Children training local researchers to utilise participatory child-centered methodologies with children and young people, focusing on Child Labour and the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children

in Java (UNICEF), children's experiences of living in orphanages in Aceh after the Tsunami (Save, US), and children's experiences and views of physical and emotional punishment in Southeast Asia and the Pacific. Harriot has undertaken evaluations in this area, for example of an Anti-Child Trafficking project in Java and West Kalimantan (ENABLE, SAVE, US) and area based projects to combat CSEC and Child Labour in East and West Java (UNICEF).

See: <http://www.usc.edu.au/university/ faculties-and-divisions/faculty-of-arts-and- business/staff/001467.htm>

- **Dr Anitra Wierenga,**
  The University of Melbourne

Dr Wierenga is currently one of the Chief Investigators on an Australian Research Council funded Linkage Project that involves Global Connections program. It is titled 'Youth led learning: local connections and global citizenship', and explores the processes which enhance civic engagement and awareness of global and local issues by on one hand Australian school-aged youth, on the other hand young people in Indonesia.

- **Dr Kathy Cologon,**
  Macquarie University

Dr Cologon has taken part in a number of activities lead by NGOs, such as:

- a presentation and roundtable discussions at the Ministry of Education with the Preschool National Directorate, UNICEF and the Early Childhood Development Working Group of Timor Leste, Dili (2012);

- a presentation and workshops with ministerial and NGO representatives at the UNICEF and OSI consultation forum, Kuluhun, Dili (2012);

- a Roundtable discussion on Early Childhood Development in the Asia Pacific Region, hosted by the World Bank and Plan International, Sydney, Australia (2011);

- an invited presentation at the UNICEF Regional Conference, Bangkok (2011); and

- delivery of the plenary paper presented at the ECD Regional Policy Conference, UNICEF, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea.

See: <http://www.iec.mq.edu.au/contact_us/staff_ bios/dr_kathy_cologon>

■ **Professor Jacqueline Hayden,**
Macquarie University

Professor Hayden specialises in early childhood development analyses at international level, with a special focus on young children who experience emergency situations and/or fragile contexts. She has worked for, consulted to, or volunteered for several international development projects, including: an early childhood development conceptual framework for Cambodia (UNICEF); early childhood development in Timor Leste (OSI); a service plan for vulnerable and homeless children in Mauritius (UNICEF); the assessment and development of services for orphans and abandoned children in Zimbabwe (Sincerutty Trust Foundation); the coordination of a program for unaccompanied children in a Rwandan in St Lucia, West Indies (CUSO). She has held grants in relation to 'A burning issue: The plight of young children in emergency situations. Raising awareness, identifying capacity and developing plans for enhanced programs and services regarding the issue of disaster risk reduction for young children and families in the Asia Region' (UNICEF/ARNEC, with Kathy Cologon); and 'Early Childhood Development Emergency Response in Haiti' (UNICEF/Consultative Group, with Lisa Deters, Kathy Cologon and Emma Pearson).

See <*http://www.iec.mq.edu.au/contact_us/staff_bios/professor_jacqueline_hayden*>

Much other research work is undertaken via consultancies, yet such work is difficult to track. Consultants typically under-publish their research, whether because it does not involve substantial data gathering or literature review, or because of restrictions on publication in contracts, or very often because of lack of time to support publishing activity. The result is that much of the extensive consultancy work is not feeding into the longer-term collective accumulation of knowledge in education for development. In short, while the activities and priorities of AusAID, and to a lesser extent international organisations and foreign governments, closely shape the patterns of research activity in education for development in Australia via the consultancy activity they fund, the patterns of academic research and publication outside consultancy are different, and there is little obvious cross-fertilisation.

Areas of research intensity

AusAID's (now absorbed into the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade) leading priorities in aid for education provide a good guide to the focus of education aid at the government level. They are, in order of intensity of activity, PNG (23 per cent), Indonesia (17 per cent), the Philippines (12 per cent), Afghanistan (7 per cent), Bangladesh (6 per cent). Various Pacific nations together make up another 17 per cent.

Yet these areas of government aid intensity do not align closely with areas of scholarly research intensity. Marginson and Bexley's (2012) analysis of ARC-funded projects over the previous five years found that of the 332 ARC projects analysed only 27.4 per cent related to countries on AusAID's list. Only the importance given to Indonesia (40 articles, comprising 44.0 per cent of this group of 91 projects) appeared to roughly match AusAID priorities. There were nine research projects in relation to the Solomons (2.7 per cent) and 13 (3.9 per cent) in relation to Timor Leste, both countries where the Australian military has played a role in the last 15 years, but only five research projects in relation to PNG in all areas (a miniscule 1.5 per cent of the total of all research projects and 5.5 per cent of those relating to countries on AusAID's list) and seven for the whole of the rest of the Pacific. The Philippines was served by three research projects and Bangladesh by none.

Overall, taking all these data sets into account, the research neglect of PNG stands out very strongly. Australia is focusing much of its educational aid in that country but conducting little of the kind of in-depth research needed to help guide that allocation. There is also an obvious neglect of both Bangladesh and the Philippines. At least some of these disparities between the interests of researchers and of aid agencies are mediated by postgraduate scholars who come to Australia via government-funded scholarship programs, as shown below.

Education as aid: providing educational opportunities for people from developing countries

Perhaps the main way that Australian universities contribute to education for development is via PhD training of students from developing nations. Scholarships are relevant to the topic of the research in two senses: where they support

research related to education for development or education in developing country contexts; and where the scholarship itself is a component of Australia's foreign aid, and part of the research capacity of Australian universities. The primary Australian scholarship schemes include Australia Award scholarships for students from developing countries, Endeavour scholarships and fellowships, the International Postgraduate Research Scholarship (IPRS), and a range of discipline-specific schemes such as the John Allwright Fellowship (ACIAR) in science and scholarships funded by universities themselves. Governments of many developing countries also provide scholarship programs, such as the Directorate General of Higher Education (DIKTI) scholarships in indonesia.

In 2011, for example, there were large numbers of AusAID-supported scholarships – not all at doctoral level – for students from Indonesia (369), Vietnam (259), PNG (183), the Philippines (139), Bangladesh (75), Cambodia (63), Lao PDR (60), Bhutan (53), Pakistan (51) and Fiji (47). Scholarship students are located across the broad range of fields of study and in many different higher education institutions, however, the bulk of AusAIF scholarship holders are studying in Go8 institutions (1040 of 1899 scholarships in 2011). This is perhaps unsurprising as the Go8 house the majority of HDR candidates generally. Of these doctoral projects a large proportion, in many different disciplines, focus on development issues in that the students' theses concern modernisation and reform within their own countries.

A doctoral research project is a substantial investment in terms of financial investment and time and constitutes new knowledge. It is a matter of concern that in at least some cases where the doctoral student's work bears on education for development, the research of these students is not folded effectively into a larger infrastructure of context-informed research on developing country issues. Such research is likely to contribute to longer-term capacity only in units that already have a critical mass of development-related activities. Often there is little longer-term flow-on within Australia from the research and scholarship, once the thesis has been completed.

A further issue, in terms of the efficacy of the 'aid' component of these scholarship programs, is that the very high calibre of the students they fund put those same people in a strong position to find work in Australia, even where the terms of the scholarship require that they return.

This means that the knowledge they hold does not return with them to the home country. This is an extremely difficult ethical problem, for why should we disallow individuals from making the personal choices that best suit them?

Key sites of research activity

Marginson and Bexley's study (2012) identified a number of university centres and research consortia that specialise in Asia-Pacific development studies, including education and related disciplines. An important example is the Centre for Asia Pacific Social Transformation Studies (CAPSTRANS) at the University of Wollongong. CAPSTRANS has been able to effectively combine the work of academics from the discipline of education with academics from development studies in other disciplines.

The Centre undertakes interdisciplinary research on social, cultural, economic, political and historical transformations in the Asia Pacific region. It has built a set of discrete research programs, including: 'Globalisation, Mobility and Development' and 'International trade and economic integration in the Asia/Pacific region'.

CAPSTRANS partners include the:

- China World Research Network
- International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS)
- International Institute of Social History (IISG)
- International Centre of Excellence in Asia-Pacific Studies
- National Higher Education Research Institute (IPPTN)
- University Sains Malaysia, and
- Suez to Suva: ARC Asia Pacific Futures Research Network.

Another key site of research expertise is the ANU College of Asia and the Pacific. The College includes the Crawford School of Public Policy; the School of Culture, History and Language; the School of International, Political and Strategic Studies; and the School of Regulation, Justice and Diplomacy. The College enrols a large number of doctoral students, including many from countries in the region.

The Monash Asia Institute is the umbrella to a broad range of activity, and a long history of research in relation to nations such as Indonesia and Cambodia. There are specific centres for South Asian Studies and South East Asian studies. The research programs of the Australia-Asia-Pacific Institute at Curtin University includes a Centre for Human Rights education, which offers programs online, including a unit in 'Human rights and development'.

Other research groups include the University of Adelaide's Indo-Pacific Governance Research Centre focuses on governance and institutional reform. Its research strands include 'the political economy of new modes of aid governance, and the associated politics of institutional reform in the Indo-Pacific'. Like the Adelaide group, the Murdoch University Asia Research Centre is primarily focused on policy, politics and governance, with an explicit emphasis on the link between politics, governance and development. Its research program has an established international presence in relation to studies of Southeast Asia and parts of East Asia, and its work has received significant support from AusAID.

The Cairns Institute at James Cook University has an emphasis on training as well as research, and includes research strands in 'international aid development' and 'education futures'. It has interests in PNG and the Pacific. Like the Cairns Institute, the Alfred Deakin Research Institute at Deakin University hosts a number of more focused research programs, mostly conducted by interdisciplinary teams, including Centre for Citizenship, Development and Human Rights, the Cultural Heritage Centre for Asia and the Pacific, and the International Development Research Group.

Suggestions for further research

Scholarship and activities in education for development in Australia are presently disjointed, ill-coordinated and poorly mapped. A number of suggestions naturally arise:

1. With the demise of AusAID it is unclear how government funding for research and activity in education for development will be coordinated in the future. It is vital that wither the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, who now oversee the portfolio, or else an NGO or university research centre, document the projects presently being funded and maintain a bank of scholarly outputs for the benefit of future research.

2. The substantial research base generated by higher degree research candidates is at present lost to us after completion. The Australasian Digital Theses (ADT) Program ceased operation on 28 March, 2011. While the database is accessible from the National Library of Australia's Trove service, theses themselves are hosted on participating universities' servers. A readily searchable, central database of theses, including the full work itself where the candidate agrees, is needed, not just so that doctoral work in education for development remains accessible, but doctoral work more generally.

3. Australia needs a sustainable capacity in research in education for development that is both deep and multi-locational, draws on all relevant disciplines, and encourages a continuing flow of new participants and ideas into the field of activity. In the present funding and policy climate, sustaining this kind of capacity will rest on the ingenuity of research and institutions, rather than federal assistance alone.

ieaa.org.au/research-digests

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