

## FROM THE EDITORS

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This issue of *Scottish Educational Review* is the first of a series of forthcoming issues seeking to open up a space for reflection and engagement with the meaning of ‘research’ in education. Research activities take many forms and equally different and diverse are the theorizations on the nature of research as a knowledge-generating activity. Arguably, with the growing emphasis on data-driven policy, research is being identified with the availability of large data-sets which can be interrogated and manipulated for example, to describe the impacts of education on society. The knowledge here derived is persuasively descriptive and it may be used to inform governmental bodies on new funding allocations for either more research or professional development activities for teachers. However, research is not confined to data collection and manipulation. A more fundamental aspect of research is concerned with the values and assumptions which regulate the choice of methods and the criteria for validation. These choices range from aligning data collection methods with specific research questions to considering the longer-term effects of new knowledge and techniques on teachers and pupils.

The current issue of *SER* opens with the keynote address from the 2018 edition of the SERA conference by Professor Kate Wall. Professor Wall’s paper focuses on the ongoing emphasis in education on the importance for teachers to engage with research. Specifically, Wall’s asks questions about how a practitioner enquiry frame within the Scottish Education professional learning model, encourages teachers to think about research as central to their reflective practice, and offers thoughtful and scholarly discussion on this. Using examples of visual tools to exemplify her thinking, Wall’s demonstrates how the data arising from their use can be translated into the research domain, thus suggesting that a productive synergy is needed between research methodology and pedagogy, “where assumptions about ‘good practice’ on either side are not mutually exclusive but rather complementary in supporting practitioners’ reflective and strategic thinking”.

Staying with the theme of practitioners and research, with practitioners in this case being teacher educators in Higher Education institutions, the paper from Bain and Gray focuses on the “researcherly dispositions” and professional learning needs of teacher educators in Scotland. Their research is located within a wider survey of teacher educators’ professional learning needs conducted by the International Forum for Teacher Educator Development (InFo-TED) and offers some suggestions for such needs to be more widely articulated and supported in Scotland. Arguably, with the growing emphasis on developing research-led

teaching both in schools and Higher Education, it is crucial to interrogate further not only the images that are associated with 'research' but also the unspoken assumptions about who should engage with research activities, in what ways, for whose benefit and for what purpose.

Moving from teachers and teacher educators, the next two papers offer examples of two small-scale studies exemplifying the design and implementation of research to attend and to meet students' social and emotional needs. The first paper by O'Donnell *et al.* look at the "lived experiences" of student learners as they transition into and through their first year of higher education. This study provides a suggestion for three dominant enablers to support student transitions into a higher education setting focusing strongly on the demystification of Higher education and the recovery of peer support and pastoral care. The second paper by Mizzi examines inclusive practice in a more informal learning environment in Malta. Focusing on the practices of experienced catechists, the study sheds light on elements that impact the attitudes and behavior of educators and learners in a range of learning environments towards more inclusive practice.

Continuing with our focus on prominent female educators in Scotland, Anne Pirrie provides an illuminating account of the early life and experiences of the writer and educationalist, Nan Shepherd. Unassuming and largely unconventional as a female nature writer in her lifetime, it is only in recent years that Shepherd's contribution to the literary world has been widely recognized. Significantly, Nan Shepherd was also a teacher educator. She graduated with a first-class honours in English from Aberdeen University and subsequently spent all her working life as a lecturer at Aberdeen College of Education<sup>1</sup> until she retired in 1956. Pirrie explores the meaning of her legacy for contemporary educators and academics with a particular focus on research as a part of one's living educational practice.

It is a fortunate and most-welcome coincidence that Pirrie's scholarly contribution to the *Scottish Educational Review* coincides with the recent publication of her own book, *Virtue and the Quiet Art of Scholarship: Reclaiming the University* and is reviewed in this issue by Claire Skea. A must read for every academic interested in taking a fresh and critical look at how research can be relocated at the core of our activities as educationalists, academics, students and practitioners alike.

Finally, no issue of *SER* would be complete without the compiled highlights of *Education in the Scottish Parliament*, once again meticulously put together by Morag Redford.

It is with this Editorial that we see the end of the year 2018 with its political and environmental turbulence. Whatever the New Year has waiting for us the *Scottish Educational Review* will continue to invite readers to engage with reflection and debate in Scottish Education with an International perspective. There are two special issues planned for 2019, the May issue focusing on Learning for Sustainability, curated by a consortium of Initial Teacher Education Institutions, and the November issue on Poverty and Play curated by Prof. John McKendrick at Glasgow Caledonian University.

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<sup>1</sup> Aberdeen College of Education (subsequently Norther College of Education) merged with the University of Aberdeen in 2001 to continue to provide teaching and research activity as part of the University of Aberdeen School of Education.