The Teachers' Guild of NSW

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Reflection Report on:

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Annual Poster Lecture Evening (APPLE) Reflection Report

Dr Frederick Osman
2011 APPLE Convenor and Enterprise Education Director, Trinity Grammar School

The Teachers' Guild of New South Wales held its second Annual Poster Presentation Lecture Evening on Monday 25 July 2011 at Trinity Grammar School, Dining Hall, 119 Prospect Road Summer Hill Campus from 6.00 to 9.00pm. The purpose of the Annual Poster Presentation Lecture Evening is to:

- o Give presenters a chance to present their research work to a learned audience in the friendly environment of a school setting.
- o Allow for reflection of the presenters' proposed research and progress achievements.
- o Recognises a research-based contribution to improve classroom practices.
- o Give the presenters the opportunity to liaise with other presenters, students, academics, staff, visitors and past students.

These awards were created to encourage excellence in research work, and all nominees that participated in these awards had an opportunity to compete for the $1000 Guild Research Award Prize, $500 COOP Bookshop prize and special certificate that recognises the nominee's high standing.

This new format and approach to presenting current research to peers in education, highlights the positive work being done to ensure education continues to move forward into the future. Each presenter had one poster board *(2.1 metres high by 1.2 metres wide)* to present their research work. The poster presentation session was designed to be a powerful alternative presentation using stimulating layout and interactive discussion. The presenters were given two minute introductions to "sell" their posters to the audience. The two minute introductions gave a much higher profile to the posters, which was intended to "break the ice" for further discussions during the poster sessions. I would like to thank our judging panel for their time and dedication in judging the posters:

⇒ Dr Anthony Loughland – University of Sydney
⇒ Mr Stuart Braga
⇒ Mrs Meera Varadharajan – University of Technology Sydney
⇒ Ms Michele Hanwell-Short (Chair of juding panel) – Meriden School

The judges ranked the candidates according to: (1) content and scientific quality, (2) clarity and (3) presentation skills and determined the winners for the following categories:

⇒ Guild Research Award Winner: Erin Mackenzie from Meriden
⇒ Highly Commended Award: Lucy Macken from Kambala
⇒ Highly Commended Award: Christine Grima-Farrell from Australian Catholic University

It was wonderful to see so much diversity and such talented educators presenting at APPLE. The Guild would like to acknowledge the wonderful posters from the participants and wish them all the very best for the future. The poster summaries of all the presenters are included below.

I would like to thank our sponsors, COOP Bookshop, EDUCATION REVIEW and the Australian College of Educators which have contributed in various ways to this event. To Mr Milton Cujes, Headmaster of Trinity Grammar School we extend our thanks for his continued support of the Teachers' Guild and his readiness to allow the school to host our functions.

From left to right: Frances Fleeton, Fred Osman, Alan Harper, Mark Connellan and Stuart Braga

Poster 1: Perceptions of Primary to Secondary School Transitions: Challenge or Threat?
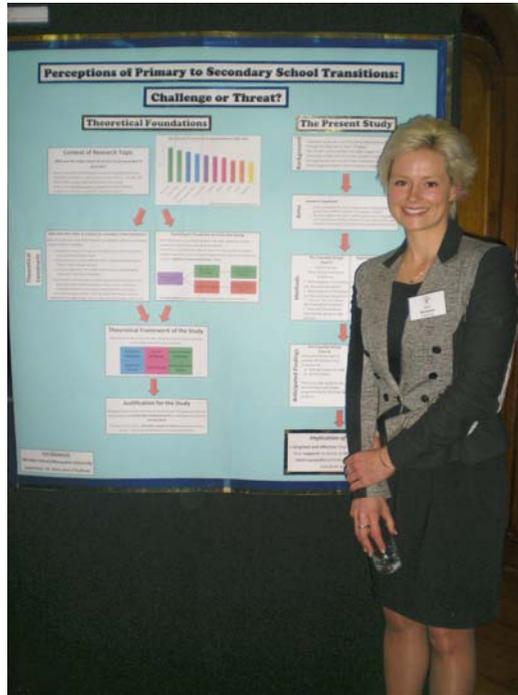
Name: Erin Mackenzie
Institution: Meriden School

The transition from primary to secondary has been identified as a significant issue for young adolescents. It is a period associated with a decline in average grades, a more negative attitude towards schooling and various mental health issues. However, for the majority of students, these apparently negative effects are relatively short term. While the transition period is a time of potential threat and challenge, it can also be an opportunity for personal growth and development, if the student is equipped to cope with the change. Recent research into primary to secondary school transition has explored the concept of individual differences in student concerns in terms of their perceptions of the transition. This body of research is founded in the theoretical framework of Lazarus' cognitive-transactional stress theory which describes the individual's appraisal of a stressful situation as being the main factor in the actual stress associated with the event. Transition from primary to secondary school has been shown to be a stressful event in the lives of all adolescents. If a student were to perceive transition as a challenge, or an opportunity to master the situation, then emotions such as eagerness, happiness and excitement would follow. Conversely, those students who feel anxious or fearful of the transition would appraise it as an anticipated harm or loss. If the transition has the potential to be stressful, then it would be advantageous to explore the nature of that stress for a particular group of students. This study will explore the perceptions of the transition experiences of a group of female students. The cognitive-transactional stress theory will underpin the research instruments, and offer a framework for measuring their experiences. The context of the present study is an Independent Girls' School in Sydney, NSW (Meriden School). The school currently has a transition program in place, and it would be advantageous to gather information about student perceptions prior to the transition to secondary school. This would allow the transition program to address issues that are specific to the students who are to be supported by it.

The study will attempt to address the following research questions:

(i)   What perceptions do Year 6 students at an Independent Girls' School have of their transition to secondary school?

(ii)   What perceptions do Year 7 and 8 students at an Independent Girls' School have of their transition to secondary school?

It is intended that the study will be undertaken during semester 2, 2011, and forms part of a Postgraduate Certificate in Research Methods (Macquarie University).

Poster 2: Recognising the neomillennial learner. Can a 'blended learning' approach, with an IB inquiry based learning programme, motivate students and extend learning beyond the classroom?


Name: Jonathan Butcher
Institution: Trinity Grammar School

Vygotsky explored the child's desire and motivation to learn, considering the role of structured play. He believed social interaction led to the development of cognition; "learning awakens a variety of internal developmental process that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers" (1978, p.90). It is Vygotsky's reference to 'his environment' that is of significant interest. The learners' environment changed significantly in the 1980s – 'A New World Dawns" (Time Magazine Jan. 03, 1983). The 'neomillennial' learner is born.

This ethnographic study attempts to explore the learner's environment in all its total complexity. Schenck (undated) provides an insightful neuroeducational account of the accommodation of new information. He explains patterns are processed through a structure called amygdale (an 'emotional filter'), where the information is examined for personal significance. This personal significance is called salience. The term 'blended learning' has gained interest in recent years, suggesting educators combine the various pedagogical approached with neomillennial learning, in authentic settings. The author explores Siemens' (2004) learning theory of connectivism within the IB PYP conceptual framework, to facilitating authentic experiences within the learners' progressive digital environment, creating a high salient experience to motivate the neomillennial learner.

The work of the Hungarian psychologist Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi helps understand the intrinsic motivation condition of 'flow' when one experiences the feeling of being 'in the zone'. Data will be collected through participant observation, semi-structured interviews and questionnaires, providing an insightful understanding of the students' motivation and learning experience. This research presents the possibility of exploiting new e-Learning technology to facilitate novel play, preparing students for a modern world, rather than one of the past.
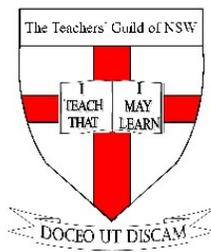
Poster 3: Curriculum framework for International Primary Education using an inquiry methodology

Name: Nadia McCallum, Carolyn Rhodes and Sue Floro
**Institution: Trinity Grammar School**

Trinity Grammar School is an independent boys' school in Sydney's inner western suburbs. The clientele is comprised of predominantly well educated professional parents who value education and have high expectations of both their sons and the school. In addition to this we are an IB World School, offering the Primary Years Programme, a curriculum framework for international primary education using an inquiry methodology.

Standardised and teacher developed assessment as well as classroom observations suggest that the cohort is significantly above average in ability and performance, particularly in numeracy. This raises the question as to whether the content we deliver and our assessment practices specifically meet the needs of our students or demonstrate the extent of their knowledge and understanding as effectively as they should.

The transdisciplinary nature and inquiry based pedagogy required of a PYP school, also means that we need to re-evaluate the way Mathematics is delivered in our context. This will also involve changing the mental models staff bring to the planning and facilitation of mathematical learning.

We propose to use an Action Research model to determine the effectiveness of our current practices and shape a plan for the future. This particular research approach is reflective of inquiry and facilitates the analysis of qualitative and quantitative data. It will also allow for reflective practice to shape the direction of the research.

The aims of the research are to: deliver a rigorous Mathematics curriculum that meets the needs of all students, develop assessment tools that provide measures of learning gain for each student, authentically integrate mathematics into a transdisciplinary based curriculum and identify areas of need regarding the resourcing for Mathematics in the school.
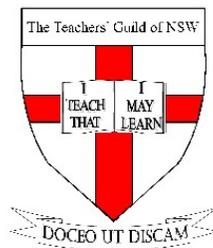
Poster 4: Lending Learning a Helping Hand
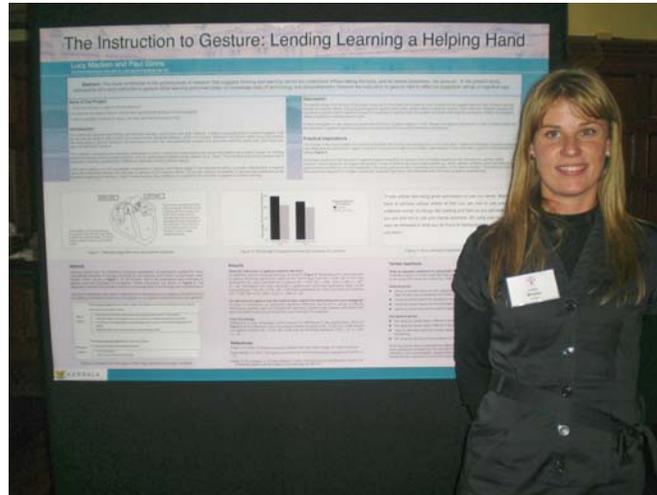
Name: Lucy Macken
Institution: Kambala

There is a growing body of research to suggest that we can use our hands to help us learn. This study investigates whether the instruction to gesture enhances learning through its cognitive effects, by drawing on the evidence-base of Cognitive Load Theory. Currently, Cognitive Load Theory does not incorporate the potential role haptic (kinaesthetic, tactile or proprioceptive) perception in cognitive processing; this study proposes an expansion of the theory to include considerations of embodied cognition, specifically, the instruction to gesture. Forty-two university-educated adults were either instructed to gesture, or not gesture, as they learnt novel, paper-based materials about the structure and function of the human heart. Subjective ratings were used to measure levels of intrinsic, extraneous and germane cognitive load, respectively. Participants who were instructed to gesture performed better on knowledge tests of terminology and comprehension, however the instruction to gesture had no effect on subjective ratings of cognitive load. Participants reactions to using, or not using their hands while learning were collected and analysed thematically in order to provide a source of qualitative information regarding the impact of gesture on learning. This study contributes to the research base supporting the development of meaningful ways the instruction to gesture may be included in the educational setting to enhance student learning.

Poster 5: Identifying factors that bridge the research to practice gap in inclusive education: An analysis of six research to practice case studies
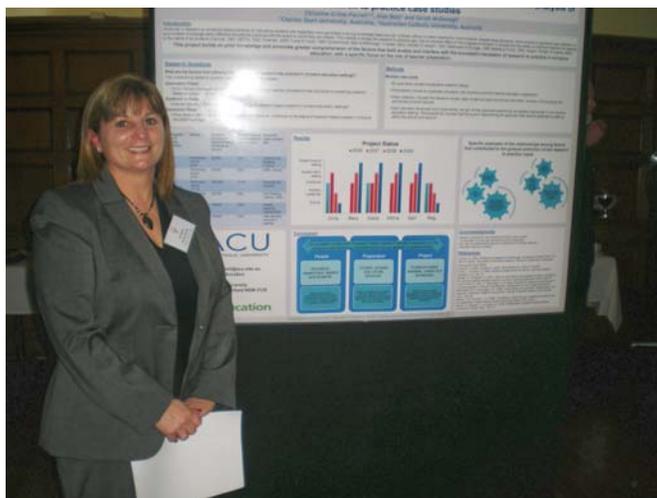
Name: Christine Grima-Farrell
Institution: Australian Catholic University

Advances in research on evidence-based practices for educating students with disabilities have generated a strong knowledge base that can underpin efforts to make classrooms more inclusive. Despite these

advances, there remains a significant gap between our accumulated knowledge about effective educational practices and the extent to which they are utilized. This inability to bridge the research to practice gap, has an adverse effect on the progress of inclusion in schools and the ability of individual teachers to respond to the needs of all students. This project aims to build on prior knowledge and promote greater comprehension of the factors that both enable and interfere with the successful translation of research to practice (RTP) in inclusive education. The investigation examines six case studies of the application of various research based practices in diverse educational settings. It employs an ex post facto analysis of the experience of six graduate educators who developed and implemented an applied intervention in an inclusive education setting. The experience involved identifying and implementing an approach that had the potential to directly address student and teacher needs. The cases provide accounts of a range of trajectories in terms of the sustainability and scalability of research-based practice in classroom environments. The implications of this study are three fold. It firstly explores and applies the existing literature on RTP as a framework to investigate the diverse cases. Secondly it identifies and explains factors that contribute to the status of research based projects in practical applications. This includes the explanation of factors that contribute to both the success and difficulty in sustaining and scaling research-based innovation. Thirdly this research expands upon RTP knowledge through validating and building upon these assertions to enhance the use of effective educational practices that address the diverse needs of our students.

Poster 6: Applying Slowness to ICT integrated learning: A vision for the 'long now'

Name: Miriam Tanti
Institution: Australian Catholic University

This research study developed from the technologically saturated environment in which we all live, which has resulted in ICT rich education being placed high on the political and educational agendas. This in turn resulted in almost instantaneous increase in access to ICT for many schools and classrooms. However, the rationale behind such access appears to be driven by a growing desire to maintain high levels of economic growth and ensure we produce a population who can continue to contribute to this growth. As a result, the Digital Education Revolution neglected time spent on small scale experimentation, so that people could observe what happens and reflect on how the bigger picture is changing and will continue to change for the longer term. Therefore, it appears that the rapid technological change appears to be driving the cult of speed and breeding a culture of fast knowledge. The aim of this research proposal involves developing an understanding of the following:

       (i)   Since there appears to be a strong association between ICT and fast knowledge, a review of the technological practices in education and document/policy analysis, will be conducted to examine the nature and extent of this association. In particular:

(a) What is the connection between ICT and fast knowledge and why does such a relationship exist?

(b) What valuable things, if any, are we losing because of this association with speed and consequently the loss of slow?

(ii) What are the implications of applying a slow pedagogy to inform ICT rich educative practice?

It is hypothesized that if we could shift the focus of the existing educational paradigm that centres technology, the economy and politics to a slower educational paradigm - one that values people, culture, philosophy and time, education could provide an environment "where students have time to discuss, argue, reflect upon knowledge and ideas, and so come to understand themselves and the culture they will inherit" (Holt, 2004, p. 1). This research project will explore the intertwined connections between technology and accelerated cycles of change and how the concept of slow could alter such cycles.

Poster 7: L2 Native Speaker Teachers' Perspectives

Name: Ingrid Weiss
Institution: University of Technology

Australia is a multicultural nation which is awakening to the phenomenon of the 'global village.' Linguists and economists have suggested that the monolingual English speaker in future generations will be at a competitive disadvantage compared to those who speak a second or third language. Australia is currently aiming to adopt language teaching models from overseas which introduce second and third languages in the primary grades via the use of foreign native speakers. In 2009 only one government elementary school in NSW featured a bilingual / immersion language program staffed with L2 native speakers who taught in classrooms 50% of each day across all curriculum areas. However, by mid-2009 the government had sought expressions of interest for other schools to develop similar bilingual programs and made a four year funding commitment to sponsor four schools willing to undertake bilingual education. Additionally, many schools in Sydney's metropolitan area are adopting the use of L2 Native speakers in the primary school classrooms. This research aims to investigate the L2 native speakers' experiences working collegially within Australian primary schools with monolingual Australian teachers. In seeking to capture the variations between the L2 native-speaking teachers' experiences from different cultures as they adjust/adapt in their roles in an unfamiliar education system, a positive outcome would be to provide a more detailed picture of learning to be an L2 teacher/teacher assistant in an Australian Context, developing cross-cultural pedagogical understanding, and influencing Australian school staffing allocation. A phenomenographical approach will be used in the data-generation process to determine the variations of L2 experience according to personal, cultural, school, social and environmental factors. Narrative Inquiry will be used to explicate the school setting and individual teacher background.

Poster 8: Fostering 'Creativity' in Preservice Primary Art Teachers

Name: Bronwen Wade-Leeuwen
Institution: Macquarie University

The Australian National Professional Standards for Teachers (2010) expects graduates to:

> Develop critical and creative thinking and resources to engage students and draw on local, national and global content through virtual and/or real environments for their programs (2010, Item 3.4, p14).

This research on 'Creativity' investigates the perspectives of final year preservice primary art teachers who are participating in a Sydney university arts-based program. It joins a growing body of participatory action research inquiry in the wider field of educational practice and adopts several contemporary theoretical frameworks that challenge traditional art-based programs. This poster illustrates how 'Creativity' can be fostered using cross-cultural material practices. This study draws upon the theories of Torrance, (1974) 'Creativity' tendencies; Eisner's 'Typology of Creativity' (1972); aspects from the Reggio Emilia Philosophy (Edwards et al. 1993); Brook's (2002) Vygotskian social constructionist perspective and Moku ink-splash (2005) drawing methods. The example in this poster highlights Shanghai's contemporary artist, Professor Wang Tainde who uses his native language to discuss how he develops 'Creativity' in his artwork "Gushan".

This 3-D artwork then became the stimulus for engaging participant's imagination while generating in them a sense of freedom to venture beyond the known (Edwards, 1998, p.71). This was done by engaging the participant's sensory exploration, action and play. In conclusion, this research demonstrates how preservice primary art teachers can foster their own 'Creativity' through more time and focus on "hands-on" approaches to material art practice. The implication for future cross-cultural studies into 'Creativity' in arts-based programs requires open minds and a risk-taking attitudes nevertheless have the potential to open new creative spaces.

From left to right: Boris Jovanovic, Paul Stenhouse,Bill Kneprath, Colin May and Fred Osman

Collage of Photos during APPLE - 2011