Realising Innovative Partnerships in Educational Research

Theories and Methodologies for Collaboration

Rachel McNae and Bronwen Cowie (Eds.)

Realising Innovative Partnerships in Educational Research

EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS

Volume 1

Scope:

Partnerships and collaboration are two ideas that have transformed teacher education and enhanced teacher professional learning, enquiry and research. Increasingly, the changing context in which teachers work requires them to continually update and enhance their knowledge and skills, and to engage in different forms of professional development in order to understand the needs of their pupils and the communities they come from. This underlines the need for stronger partnerships to connect teachers with each other, with teacher education providers, with local communities, with local government, and with business and National Government Organizations (NGOs). Educational partnerships as a concept recognises the new ecology of digital interconnectivity, the need for stronger collaboration at all levels, and a new collective responsibility for education. Partnerships in the form of transnational education, public-private collaborations, interactions between formal and informal educational organisations, collaborations between tertiary organisations and industry/the service sector and amongst schools and between schools and their communities have emerged as strong policy and practice drivers. This series aims to span this broad understanding of partnership and make a contribution to both theory and practice.

Realising Innovative Partnerships in Educational Research

Theories and Methodologies for Collaboration

Edited by

Rachel McNae and Bronwen Cowie
The University of Waikato, New Zealand

All chapters in this book have undergone peer review.

Cover image by Ann Harlow (@art.maramastudio.nz)

Printed on acid-free paper

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section III: Research Partnerships within and across Organisations

Section IV: Research Partnerships with Community

Section V: Research Partnerships with Multiple Institutions

Section VI: Concluding Thoughts

RACHEL MCNAE AND BRONWEN COWIE

ELABORATING LOCAL RESEARCH AGENDAS

Reimagining Innovative Research Partnerships

Imagination is the beginning of creation. You imagine what you desire; you will what you imagine; and at last you create what you will.

– George Bernard Shaw

INTRODUCTION

Current discourses in education call for reimagining the ways educational research takes place. The rapid pace of technological advancement and global connectivity has prompted further calls mandating the revision of current education practices to meet and shift futurist predictions and ideals about how young people prepare for and engage with their futures. But what of this future? Relatively unknown in shape or form, yet positioned as dynamic, technologically grounded and constantly evolving, many would say the future holds opportunity and possibility for education if educators, learners and researchers are willing to embrace change. With regard to education, the words of Shaw above could emphasise a need for freedom, creativity and an imagining of new ways to support innovative practices that meet the rapidly evolving shape of what education looks like in order to create these new possibilities.

Such a focus touches on meeting a resounding demand for what could be described as an *architecture of innovation*, whereby new ways of thinking about research and the practices of teaching and learning are proposed and reconciled (or not) with existing education contexts and practices. Research is fundamental to these ideals and new ways of researching are needed to meet this call for innovation. The development of the kinds of research relationships that support innovation and change have become a priority. Within this context notions of partnership have been seen as paramount, and even central to the authenticity of research agendas, design and conduct, and to the relevance of outcomes.

Partnership is central to ensuring that universities develop a vision of public service, relevance and social responsibility that allows them to contribute to new and emerging challenges. In the scholarship exploring global perspectives on strengthening community-university research partnerships, Tandon, Hall, and Tremblay (2015) assert alternative forms and paradigms of knowledge need to be explored in response to current global issues. They note that researchers are increasingly moving to work with organisations and communities to co-generate knowledge which draws dynamically on multiple epistemologies and lifeworlds. They go on to state such co-creative acts of knowledge production are at the heart of the university's contribution to deepening knowledge democracy and social

justice. They also point out it is important to develop strategies for communicating productively with those we hope will use our research—academic colleagues around the world, national and international policy communities, and practitioners.

While there is a global trend to support the development of partnerships as a strategy to foster and resource innovation and improvement, there is ample evidence that those working in universities must take careful account of the local policy, political, cultural and material resource setting. As our colleague Michael Peters (2014) explains:

> The principles of consultation, participation and informed consent are useful operating principles for partnership but the critical discourse of partnership in policy terms requires an understanding of the political context. (p. 4)

Recognising this, we next set out key aspects of New Zealand as a context for partnership in educational research and elaborate on what is unique about the education sector in New Zealand.

PARTNERSHIPS OF LOCAL ORIGIN: NEW ZEALAND AS A BICULTURAL NATION

There are a number of aspects of the New Zealand context that provide a particular tone and imperative to the notion of partnership. The Treaty of Waitangi (Te Tiriti o Waitangi), considered to be New Zealand's founding document, is the most important and enduring of these. In the mid 1800s, when an increasing number of settlers arrived in New Zealand, British Crown representatives and numerous Māori (indigenous people of New Zealand) Chiefs signed The Treaty, which sets out a broad statement of the principles on which the British and Māori would found a nation state and create a government. The purpose of the Treaty was to enable the British settlers and the Māori people to live together in New Zealand under a common understanding and partnership. This binding treaty document protected the rights of Māori to keep their land, forests, fisheries and treasures while handing over sovereignty to the British. The Treaty gave the Crown the right to govern and establish laws in the interests of all New Zealanders and to develop British settlement. It gave Māori the same rights and status as British citizens, but also importantly, recognised that Māori occupied New Zealand before British settlement and Māori culture and heritage must be protected. The principles of partnership, participation and protection form the core of the Treaty and it is in the spirit of these principles that the laws in New Zealand are shaped. The principle of partnership, which is used to describe the relationships between the Crown and Māori, deemed they must act reasonably, honourably and in good faith (Waitangi Tribunal, 2012).

Educational policy and practice is required to be responsive to the Treaty principles and to ensure they are actively addressed. Education policy makers, leaders, educators (teachers and lecturers at all levels of the system) as well as educational researchers have a responsibility to understand, recognise and surface the principles of partnership, protection, and participation within educational

research. The *New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007), which outlines the vision for learning for the schooling sector, states that the goal is for:

> … young people who will work to create an Aotearoa New Zealand in which Māori and Pākehā recognise each other as full Treaty partners, and in which all cultures are valued for the contributions they bring. (p. 8)

The principle of 'community engagement' in the *New Zealand Curriculum* calls for schools and teachers to deliver a curriculum that is meaningful, relevant, and connected to students' lives. Community engagement is about establishing strong home-school partnerships where parents, whānau (family) and communities are involved in and support students' learning. That is, educators need to harness the knowledge and expertise of the diversity of people who can contribute to students' learning, including families, whānau, iwi (tribes), and other community members. Noticing and shifting power imbalances becomes an important aspect of engagement with regard to forming partnerships as Berryman, Egan, and Ford (2016) state, "It is the less powerful and less privileged who best understand how to transform the relationship" (p. 3). Partnership is realised as schools collaborate with Māori and non-Māori to develop, implement, and review policies, practices and procedures. By working collaboratively, schools learn to share power, control and decision making while validating the unique position of Māori as tangata whenua (host Māori) and recognising the contribution Māori make to education (see goo.gl/0KPikH for further information).

Within research, the Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (TLRI) fund has been influential in shaping understandings of possibilities, priorities and practices in educational research. This funding source, introduced by the Ministry of Education in 2003, prioritises research partnerships whereby practitioners and researchers work together to build knowledge about teaching and ways to improve learning outcomes for diverse learners, as well as how to build the research capability of teachers and researchers. The initiative is explicit that partnership is central to the research relationship. The implicit assumption is that all partners will have opportunities to develop and explore questions and ideas of interest to them. The notion of partnership can extend beyond researchers and practitioners within a formal and/or informal educational setting to include the wider community and organisations with a vested interest in expertise to contribute to the focus of a research project. The dissemination or transfer of learning is identified as important whereby this might include teachers using findings in their wider classroom practice, findings being shared and used by other teachers in the school and in other schools and by other researchers.

Most recently, the government initiative Investing in Educational Success (IES) includes the development of Communities of Learning/Kāhui Ako. These communities bring together centre, kura and school leaders, educators and professional development providers to help students achieve their full potential (http://www.education.govt.nz/ministry-of-education/col/). Each Community of Learning group of schools and early childhood centres sets shared goals or achievement challenges and then works with students, parents, whānau, iwi and

communities to achieve these challenges. The idea is that by collaborating and sharing expertise students' learning pathways will be well supported and their transition through the education system improved. The Teacher Led Innovation Fund, also part of the IES, supports schools to identify an area for inquiry and to work with 'experts' to pursue this.

Initiatives such as these attract significant financial and resource investment and illustrate the perceived value of collaborative research and the role partnership can have within an education improvement agenda. The ways these partnerships are enacted could be considered unique as, founded on principles of partnership, they take careful account of the community context and needs, research intentions and design and the associated ethics. Therefore, coming to understand the nature of partnerships within and across contexts, how they are initiated and how they are enacted is critical.

PARTNERSHIPS IN ACTION: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK

Research into the dynamics of partnerships and the mechanisms by which they foster educational change tends to focus on challenges, and provide less insight into successful partnerships or how partnership designs and strategies can address challenge (Coburn & Penuel, 2016; Lillejord & Børte, 2016). Our book addresses this gap through its focus on successful partnerships without avoiding the challenges involved.

Partnerships can be focused around a particular outcome or project or they can be more open-ended with the outcomes emergent rather than predetermined. They can be initiated by researchers, by practitioners and by funders. The chapters in our book represent each of these options. The authors describe educational research projects in which they were joint developers and owners of new knowledge and new practices. Students, teachers, schools, communities and organisations from around the world partnered with the authors as researchers. We conceptualise these various sets of relations as providing for different foci for partnership and units of change that in turn offer unique opportunities for understanding and innovation, and for reimagining possibilities for action. When we look deeply into the different units of change are all present in some form—more or less overtly and explicitly—in each of the projects; they do not exist in isolation but are nested one within the other, overlapping and interacting.

The five sections in the book foreground the implications of taking students, teachers, schools and their communities, community organisations and international networks as the units of partnership and change. By focusing on partnerships with students, teachers, organisations, communities and international networks, we aim to promote awareness of the breadth of possibilities for creating and supporting partnerships and mobilising knowledge for practitioner, community and policy action. We consider a distinctive feature of the book is that a number of the chapters are co-authored by practitioners, and most include teacher and or student voice. In emphasising this we note, as Elliot argues:

> Educational research, as opposed to simply research on education, will involve teachers in its construction and execution and not simply in *applying its findings*. Teachers engage in *educational research* and not simply with it. (Elliott, 2001, p. 565, emphasis in original)

This comment by Elliot resonates with Stenhouse's (1981) much earlier proposition that teachers are active agents who need to constantly engage with ambiguity as part of teaching. He argues that ultimately it is teachers who will change what happens in school by understanding them. Mitra, Lewis and Sanders (2013) would also position students as active agents highlighting they too can "serve as a catalyst for positive changes in schools, such as improvements in instruction, curriculum, teacher–student relationships and teachter preparation" (p. 172). The notion of enactment is critical and problematic in educational research because, as James (2013) pointed out, impact will not simply follow from the dissemination of research findings. In her words, "it is often not knowledge that we lack; it is implementation" (n.p.). Therefore, if sustained and embedded change is to occur, the actions within partnerships must extend into frameworks of activism which support the dissemination of research, a core function of this book.

Each of the five sections in the book is introduced by a colleague. An international collaborator provides an overview commentary, distilling themes from the chapters in their section to highlight how the chapters reflect and refract trends of general (non-local) and New Zealand-based interest. We thank Dana Mitra for her insights into the value and implications of a focus on partnerships with students, Catherine Reichl for her analysis of the various roles teachers/lecturers and researchers can adopt within research partnerships, Coral Campbell for her reflection on the various tiers of partnership possibilities, Karen Edge for her exploration into the challenges and opportunities created through working in organisation-community partnerships, and Susan Bridges for her emphasis on the cultural dimension of partnering and relationship building across international borders.

CONCLUSION

Partnerships in educational research are foundational to most current educational reforms as early childhood centres, schools, kura and tertiary organisations seek to embrace the diverse strengths and needs of each and all the learners who walk through their gates. The chapters in this book set out important trends, challenges and approaches associated with how research partnerships are initiated, supported, and sustained, although sustaining partnerships beyond the initial questions and funding remains problematic. They examine the underlying principles that support the development of and engagement in collaborative partnerships in educational research settings. Indeed, collaborative frameworks form the core pillars of this book and are used to provocate: Why engage in partnerships for educational research? How has this happened in the past and what needs to happen for the future? What is unique about the New Zealand context and what could other countries learn from collaborative and culturally responsive research

methodologies? What could be some of the underlying principles that support the development of and engagement in collaborative research? How do we evaluate the effectiveness of research partnerships in education to shift the focus to the future? It is our hope that by drawing attention to the diversity in the ways educational research partnership can be enacted across contexts, new possibilities for research can be imagined to meet the unknown demands of the future.

In the second part of this introduction, Susan Groundwater-Smith, a University of Waikato Visiting Scholar in the Wilf Malcolm Institute of Educational Research, provides an overview of the complexities and possibilities related to the practice of partnership. Susan was involved in the initial conception of this book, and in her actions as a visiting academic deliberately sought to create partnerships in her work. In the next part of this introduction, Susan examines and underscores the relational and moral aspects of partnership work, positioning partnership, networking and learning as contested practices. In doing so she encourages us to think about the role partnership can play in the personal and professional lives of educators.

REFERENCES

Berryman, M. A. P., Egan, M., & Ford, T. (2016). Examining the potential of critical and Kaupapa Māori approaches to leading education reform in New Zealand's English-medium secondary schools. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2016.1206973

Coburn, C., & Penuel, W. (2016). Research–practice partnerships in education: Outcomes, dynamics, and open questions. *Educational Researcher, 45*(1), 48–54.

Elliot, J. (2001). Making evidence-based practice educational. *British Education Research Journal, 27*(5), 555–574.

James, M. (2013). *New (or not new) directions in evidence-based practice in education*. Retrieved from http://www.bera.ac.uk

Lillejord, S., & Børte, K. (2016). Partnership in teacher education—A research mapping, *European Journal of Teacher Education, 39*(5), 550–563.

Ministry of Education. (2007). *The New Zealand curriculum*. Wellington, New Zealand: Learning Media.

Mitra, D., Lewis, T., & Sanders, F. (2013). Architects, captains, and dreamers: Creating advisor roles that foster youth-adult partnerships. *Journal of Educational Change, 14*(2), 177–201.

Peters, M. (2014, July 4). *Education as the power of partnership: The context of co-Labor-ation*. Paper presented at the Partnership, Power and Education. One–Day Conference, AUT Manukau Campus, Auckland, New Zealand.

Stenhouse, L. (1981). What counts as research? *British Journal of Education Studies, 29*(2), 103–114.

Tandon, R., Hall, B., & Tremblay, C. (2015). Introduction. In B. L. Hall, R. Tandon, & C. Tremblay (Eds.), *Strengthening community university research partnerships: Global perspectives* (pp. 1–4). Victoria, BC: University of Victoria.

Waitangi Tribunal. (2012). Wellington, New Zealand: Author. Retrieved from http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/principles-of-the-treaty-of-waitangi-nga-matapono-o-te-tiriti

Rachel McNae
Te Kura Toi Tangata Faculty of Education
The University of Waikato
Hamilton, New Zealand

Bronwen Cowie
Te Kura Toi Tangata Faculty of Education
The University of Waikato
Hamilton, New Zealand

SUSAN GROUNDWATER-SMITH

PARTNERSHIPS, NETWORKS AND LEARNING IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

Contested Practices

In this chapter, I shall propose that our first and overarching question must relate to what may seem an unproblematic term, 'practice', as it is associated with practice theory and relates to the formation of partnerships in education for the purposes of research. Drawing on, from among a number of practice theorists, Nicolini (2013) I argue that practice as a central construct both in terms of knowledge and action, has historical antecedents and may be best apprehended through an understanding of practice architectures (Kemmis et al., 2014). Following on from this I shall consider the nature of partnerships between universities and the cognate field of practice, in this case education and schooling, and pose a series of problematics regarding the purposes of such partnerships and the ways in which they may be nurtured and sustained. Furthermore, I shall draw upon the ways in which networking as a social enterprise can contribute to partnership formation engaging a range of stakeholders leading to enhanced professionalism.

UNDERSTANDING PRACTICE

There are some terms that are so ubiquitous that they are employed unproblematically. 'Practice' is one such term. For practice theorists such as Nicolini (2013) practice is closely associated with social life of one kind or another. As such it embodies all those elements of social transactions: activity; performance; work; and, relationships and includes power, conflict and politics. Practice evolves in situ and is governed by the norms and regulations of given sites at both micro and macro levels with degrees of overlap as well as contradictions. For example, academic practices in universities may well vary from those in government offices or schools; with each of these, in turn, varying one from another depending upon their location and histories. A faculty of education in a small regional university may very well be rather different from one in a large metropolitan tertiary setting; a government department offering one kind of educational service will not be identical to one functioning for other purposes; a privileged, well resourced school will embody different practices to one that may be poor and isolated. It is in the face of this variation that drawing attention to the notion of practice architectures (Kemmis et al., 2014) can be so helpful in enabling us to ask: What does practice look like? Who benefits? Who is disadvantaged? How did it come to be this way? Should it change? What would be required to change it? and so on. This is especially so when negotiating partnership

arrangements between the academy and stakeholders in associated fields for the purposes of research.

In the view of Kemmis and his associates individual and collective practice shapes and is shaped by what they have named as 'practice architectures' that embody the saying, doings and relatings characteristic of a practice that hang together as arrangements by which practices of various kinds work. The concept of practice architectures owes much to the work of Theodore Schatzki that has been evolving for over a decade (2012). In short, the sayings relate to the cultural discursive arrangements, the doings are the material economic arrangements, while the relatings are those of a socio-political nature. All contain traces of past knowledge and actions of one kind or another. Through its sayings a practice will unfold using the language and discourses through which it is comprehensible. Through its doings the practice engages participants and artefacts in activities embedded in the site. Through its relatings the practice will connect people and objects in various relationships. All will 'hang together' in what Schatzki (2012) descibes as "practice arrangement bundles" (p. 16). Recognising the complexity of practice architectures enables us to navigate our way through the manner in which partnership work occurs as it relates to education both formal and informal and its investigation. Practice in educational terms embodies situational professionalism contributing to knowledge that is developed simultaneously both *about* practice and *in* practice (Groundwater-Smith, 2011). It is for this reason that a relationship between the academic world and the field of practice is critical to understanding how each can contribute to our fund of professional knowledge through forms of systematic inquiry.

PARTNERSHIPS IN THE PRACTICE OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

Partnership form and function is underpinned by a number of determinants. Cook (2017, p. 86) sees these falling into four categories: bureaucratic, that is meeting a set of predetermined requirements; organisational, relating to logistics and the like; democratic, making transparent a range of options that may be discussed; and, participatory, where practice is evolving and based upon shared learning. She argues that it is the last of these that has the capacity to develop an authentic and purposeful critique that can inform present and future actions.

However, such an aspiration cannot occur by chance. A number of conditions are critical to the building of partnerships, including reciprocity, trust, dialogue and flexibility. More and more, we see practice in education trammelled by ever burgeoning regulatory frameworks. It is increasingly important to recognise that partnerships can be something of a Trojan Horse whereby problematic practices are imported by one partner into another's setting, in effect contributing to what Rudduck and Hargreaves (1992) claimed were possible *Liaisons Dangereuses*. This may be particularly so when the culture of one partner is not understood, or is misunderstood by the other – that is to say, in terms of practice architectures, that the 'sayings', 'doings' and 'relatings' of one site, have not been fully apprehended. Take for example, the ways in which many, but not all, universities are accountable to their human research ethics committees that will seek to restrict opportunities for

its graduate students to engage in research in such places as schools and early childhood settings, while at the same time those self-same sites are encouraging a climate of enquiry.

More problematic at the macro-level is the development of partnerships that carry very large resource implications, namely the evolution of public private partnerships (PPPs) that function at a government to government level. Ball (2013), having investigated this phenomenon over a number of years, has made the case for these to potentially undermine consensual social values in the name of neo-liberalism. This may seem a far cry from the ways in which universities and schools may function in the interests of the kind of educational research whose purpose is to identify and clarify practices that may lead to improvement and reform. This, they would hope to do without the impediments of commercial agenda that may wish to develop materials that will be successful in the market place irrespective of the variations in local contexts and practices. The proliferation of testing regimes and teacher-proof textbooks that has arisen from a range of public private partnerships may satisfy government policies and contracts but fail to work effectively at the local level.

Even so, it is at the local level there is much that can be achieved through the creation and maintenance of networks that are designed to develop sustainable relations and that will enable the building of the trust and reciprocity that is required.

BUILDING LOCAL NETWORKS

This discussion is based upon the premise that networking embodies "the processes through which professional knowledge is received and transmitted by means of personal relationships … (It) is a social process which occurs both within and between the formal structures and boundaries of organisations" (Anderson-Gough, Grey & Robson, 2006, p. 232). It allows professionals, in this instance in the field of education, to develop knowledge about knowledge formation, application and evaluation. It is seen to be achieved by a wide range of social processes and requires thoughtful and appropriate behaviour.

Networking is not merely an instrumental means of developing professional knowledge, but that it is a form of professional *learning*. It is an outcome of learning: how things work both within and between institutions, locally, nationally and globally; the discourses and habits of mind that are employed; and, the strategies that are used to engage with the field. For success, the practice should be explicit and planned and beyond all else, enjoyable. Productive networks are inevitably built around partnerships and are characterised by mutual cooperation and shared responsibility. They require a capacity of the members of the network to communicate, coordinate and collaborate.

Networks can vary in complexity and may the product of an array of strategies ranging from those requiring a high degree of planning in relation to particular tasks and policies to those that slowly evolve over time (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2012). Much will depend on what is at stake and the nature of the practice architecture that has given rise to the network development.

Nonetheless, it is important to understand that networking has political connotations: who has the power? where are the secrets? what is the language-in-use? The effective networker not only employs the many skills of networking, but also has a kind of political antenna that can identify the answers to these important questions. As well the process can be seen as a means of navigating risk, enabling individuals to work their way through loose affiliations, often temporary arrangements and informal connections (Lee, 2011). For example, many small-scale research studies may be based upon opportunistic sampling where the requirements are those of flexibility and trust but the sample could be argued to be reasonably representative of a larger population. A university educational research centre may have an interest in establishing the ways in which recently arrived immigrant/refugee children are coping with local schooling conditions. Before embarking on a large-scale study the centre decides to develop a pilot study that will enable the researchers to identify the critical issues. Among the schools that work with the university there is a school that has a large number of such students and members of staff who have worked successfully and closely with the university researchers in the past. The relationship between the partners would be one that can be seen to be based on sound networking principles; were it otherwise entry into the school would be difficult and even resisted. Or, consider working in early childhood settings – necessarily such settings are cautious regarding bringing unfamiliar people into their space. But where there is such a centre that has an association with a university, the possibility of establishing a generative research agenda as a networked enterprise may be greatly enhanced.

Essentially it can be seen that networking is a moral practice. It is not a practice that treats others as a means to an end, but rather builds in a reciprocity that will bring benefits to those with whom a networker engages. It requires consummate skill and sensitivity. The literature has identified many attributes—among them: enthusiasm, generosity, trustworthiness, commitment, approachability and sincerity. Also, as in the hypothetical cases cited above, a sense of responsibility that will enable each party to share and interrogate information.

CONCLUSION: SO WHERE IS THE LEARNING?

A number of observers of educational practice, that includes educational research, have pointed to the essential nature of 'critical professionalism' based upon a knowledge of self and of practice as discussed at the beginning of this chapter. It has been argued that the critical professional is in a constant process of recreation building upon a careful and substantiated examination of what is taking place in research environments, whether in the field or the university, that are increasingly complex and populated by many players with their varying agenda and experiences (Nygaard, 2014). That recreation is based upon an ongoing cycle of professional learning that occurs when those players have a means of communication that is agentic and continuously capable of reform and reconstruction.

Throughout this chapter it has been argued that the careful and judicious development of partnerships, in particular those that are sustained by networks (such as discussed in Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2012) has much to commend

it as a practice. Nonetheless, there is no easy formula, for the successful creation of partnerships which arise from and nurture networks will be influenced by a range of variables such as the alignment, or fit, between the activities and aspirations of the various members and the ways in which the apposite practice architectures (sayings, doings and relatings) have evolved. While much depends on the sharing of information between the constituent parts a more important and critical outcomes will be the extent to which the participants are able and willing to learn from each other.

REFERENCES

Anderson-Gough, F., Grey, C., & Robson, K. (2006). Professionals, networking and the networked professional. In R. Greenwood, R. Suddaby, & M. McDougald (Eds.), *Professional service firms. Research in the Sociology of Organisations* (Vol. 24, pp. 231–256). Bingley, England: Emerald Group Publishing.

Ball, S. (2013). *The education debate* (2nd ed.). Bristol, England: The Policy Press

Groundwater-Smith, S. (2011). Illuminating partnerships in professional education: Critical inquiry and workplace learning. In J. Millwater, L. Ehrich, & D. Beutel (Eds.), *Practical experiences in professional education: A transdisciplinary approach* (pp. 61–72). Brisbane, Qld, Ausralia: Post Pressed,

Groundwater-Smith, S., & Mockler, N. (2012). Sustaining professional learning networks: The Australasian challenge. In C. Day (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of teacher and school development* (pp. 506–515). London, England: Routledge,

Kemmis, S., Wilkinson, J., Edwards-Groves, C., Hardy, I., Grootenboer, P., & Bristol, L. (2014). *Changing practices, changing education.* Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Springer

Lee, D. (2011). Networks, cultural capital and creative labour in the British independent television industry. *Media, Culture and Society, 33*(4), 549–565.

Nicolini, D. (2013). *Practice theory, work and organization: An introduction.* Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

Nygaard, L. (2014). The professional without a profession: An entrepreneurial response to supercomplexity in the research environment? *Educate, 14*(3), 22–31.

Rudduck, J., & Hargreaves, A. (1992). Universities in partnership with schools and school systems: Les liaisons dangereuses? In M. Fullen (Ed.), *Teacher development and educational change* (pp. 194–212). Abingdon, England: Routledge.

Schatzki, T. (2012). A primer on practices. In J. Higgs, R. Barnett, S. Billett, M. Hutchings, & F. Trede (Eds.), *Practice based education* (pp. 13–26). Rotterdam, the Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

Susan Groundwater-Smith
Sydney School of Education and Social Work
University of Sydney
Sydney, Australia

SECTION I

RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS WITH STUDENTS

RACHEL MCNAE

INTRODUCTION

Partnerships with Students

INTRODUCTION

The chapters in this section are positioned to draw attention to the core business of education—the students. Sharing examples of educational research which illustrate elements of youth-adult partnerships in various contexts, the enduring theme of research relationships is commented upon. Attention is drawn to the complex nature of these partnerships and contextual influences that ultimately shape what might be possible in partnership work with young people. This commentary sets the scene by foreshadowing the significant role student voice has in the formation and development of youth-adult partnerships, illuminating the high level of complexity and the key ideas that emerge from within and across each of the four chapters in this section.

   Four very diverse contexts and approaches make up the work that these chapters draw on. All located in New Zealand, the work of Emily Nelson shares action research from an intermediate school where students and teachers worked in partnership to co-construct responsive pedagogical approaches. This work positioned students in key decision-making roles in areas of the school that influenced their learning and highlights the value and complexity of this in action. Elements of inclusion are foundational in the second chapter by Maria Kecskemeti, Carol Hamilton and Ashley Brink. In their work with pre-service teachers in a university setting, they deliberately employed relational and interactional pedagogies to disrupt deficit discourses with regard to students with disabilities. In the third chapter, Kathryn Hawkes examines the ethical and methodological complexities of completing research with young children in early years settings. Using a 'Mosaic' approach to explore and disturb 'unexplored silences', she demonstrates the richness of research that can be drawn from this context, while at the same time, highlighting the fragility of the research relationship. The final chapter in this section by Vishalache Balakrishnan and Lise Claiborne examines the concept of diversity in the classroom. The nature of partnership within and across multi-ethnic and multi-cultural classrooms is shared, highlighting the need for multiple and evolving ways for engaging students.

RECONCEPTUALISING YOUNG PEOPLE WITH[IN] THE TEACHING AND RESEARCH RELATIONSHIP

At a time when the rapid pace of change in education demands innovation, flexibility and authenticity, many argue it is young people themselves who must be central to the decision-making processes and implementation approaches of new pedagogies and curriculum design. The underpinning rationale is that the outcomes generated will be more relevant and meaningful to the contexts in which young people learn, work and live.

It is clear from the authors' contributions in this section that each research project reflects core tenets of student engagement and contribution, ultimately raising the challenge that shifts in pedagogy and decision-making frameworks are required if young people's potential is to be fully realised and actualised. Focusing attention in youth-adult partnerships and the importance of student voice is therefore critical.

For this to happen, the literature calls for educators and researchers to be cognisant of how the historical, cultural and social influences play a role in the ways educators conceive the notion of what it means to be a young person in today's society. Scoping youth development literature and consequently understandings of 'what youth is', it becomes apparent that what it means to be a young person is neither clear-cut, nor well defined. However, what is obvious is that dominant representations of youth are based on themes that aim to set young people apart from children and adults—antithetical to the nature of educational partnerships and collaboration between young people and adults.

Over the last 40 years, young people in the developed world have been the subject of an enormous amount of investigation and more recently, educational research specifically aimed at decision-making and partnerships in various education settings. Subsequently, there is a growing body of literature exploring the notion of young people and decision making with much of it based on and referring to one of two United Nations Initiatives: The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the United Nations Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes in 1998 (the Lisbon Declaration). In New Zealand the Treaty of Waitangi is also relevant as Māori draw on cultural processes to engage and establish new ways in which rangatahi [youth] can best participate in decision making. Despite these evolving research agendas and the implementation of an increasingly diverse range of initiatives, outlining explicit approaches and processes of involving young people in decision making in schools could be best described as still in its infancy as evidenced by those calling for further action in this area (for example, Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Campbell, 2000; McNae, 2011).

Furthermore, changing social structures and the development of new ways in which young people interact with their various communities (physical and virtual) have created greater levels of complexity and new uncertainties in education, which are both local and global in their origins. Although on the one hand young adults seem to have more choices, for example in leisure and employment, traditionally they are choices that have been socially prescribed and frequently lead by adults. The education context positions young people to incrementally

4

relinquish the dependent roles they play in the stages of childhood, yet they are not to be as independent as their adult counterparts who are tasked with making decisions and choices (Wong, 2004). As Stanton-Rogers, Stanton-Rogers, Vyrost, and Lovas (2004) state:

> … if we [school staff] have a concern for what current life is like for today's generation of young people, or what may help them in their futures, we cannot use our own experiences of being young or the aspirations we then held as much of a guide. If we want to promote the life opportunities of young people, if we want to help them to prepare for their futures and make well-informed choices about them, then we need to find out about this 'new world' in which they are growing up. (p. 117)

Each chapter in this section highlights that relationships are central to youth-adult partnerships. What is refreshing is that the broad and varied application of the student centred approaches to learning have inspired renewed attention to the practical side of how these approaches might be initiated. Emerging themes evidenced across these chapters included establishing the partnership in which the student voice is to be heard, legitimising student presence within the partnership, establishing expectations about the purpose of the work and noticing, hearing and heeding the student voice and, of course, the silences. This encourages us to re-examine the relationships we work in and reshape these to evidence student voice at their core.

RESHAPING THE TEACHING AND RESEARCH RELATIONSHIP WITH STUDENT VOICE

With relationships at the core of Bishop and Glynn's (1999) research, they espouse the value of interactions which support young people to develop an authoritative voice in education. This can happen when students are involved in activities (such as the themes mentioned above), which position themselves to negotiate and are involved in decision making. It is unfortunate, however, that on the most part, the voices of young people are not utilised and are rarely heard in educational settings, even though they are paramount to education directly effecting it and are directly affected by it (Brooker & MacDonald, 1999). Smith, Taylor, and Gollop (2000) argue this may be because young people are often the passive recipients of adult protection and knowledge and are therefore not seen as competent people who have a point of view. The work in these chapters positions young people as valuable sources of knowledge, whose contributions are valued and acted upon.

Importantly, as the voices and experiences of youth are embedded not only in their own families, schools and neighbourhoods contexts, those working in educational settings must keep in mind the contexts of the wider society (Ministry of Education, 2007; Smith & Taylor, 2000). The growing complexity of New Zealand society forces us to look for new paradigms in studies of young people, as the old theoretical models that we once used fail to capture the reality that they seek to describe. It is important to recognise the impact that the multiple and diverse contexts in which young people operate have a significant impact on the

ways they may wish to engage and feel comfortable contributing to different opportunities and initiatives. Developing contexts where young people feel comfortable to share and critique their personal values is an important part of shifting cultural changes with regard to discourses about youth partnerships. Such partnerships are frequently positioned as a useful way to [re]design and [re]form school curriculum and even [re]create governance structures. Student voice becomes an important part of this arrangement (Rudduck & Flutter, 2004).

Within youth-adult partnerships, student voice is increasingly identified as critical to the successful design and implementation of school curriculum (Rudduck & Flutter, 2004), and numerous benefits for involving young people in the planning and decision-making processes within educational contexts are espoused. Young people bring with them their perspectives which can positively influence outcomes in unexpected ways and create greater levels of commitment. Curricular innovations are more likely to be specifically tailored and more responsive to young people's needs when young people are consulted on their own social and cultural conditions and adults can gain further insights into how to enrich and enhance the educative experiences (Mitra, 2009).

Collaboration becomes an essential, and Camino (2005) warns it is simply not a case of 'getting out of the way'. Partnerships with young people require deliberate care and consideration with some educators believing that it is the responsibility of educators to provide a "constellation of activities that empower adolescents to take part in and influence decision-making that affects their lives and to take action on issues they care about (O'Donoghue, Krisner, & McLaughlin, 2002, p. 5). However, when engaging young people in opportunities to share their voices, it is important that these partnerships are seen as dynamic and constantly evolving as members of the partnership develop new knowledge. This will mean for each kind of student voice encounter, the role of the student may conceptualise differently depending on who is involved and the context in which the encounter takes place.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this introduction has been to foster a deeper, more cohesive, research-based understanding of the core elements of student-centred approaches to learning—specifically examining the practices associated with generating youth-adult partnerships within a research framework. Central to this notion is the concept of student voice, whereby students can actively engage in research and learning activities, negotiating and developing curriculum content and taking key leadership roles in their learning. The perceptions and voices of young people about their lives and experiences of their own personal development provide educators with a much needed source of knowledge and play a key role in creating better conditions for them in the future (Cook-Sather, 2002).

By engaging in youth-adult partnerships and including student voice in the teaching, research and learning encounters, educators can contribute to showing that students' voices and their ideas are valued, useful and worthwhile (Rudduck, 2007). Teachers and researchers can re-examine their own schools and research methodologies through shifting their views of youth from problems to powerful

individuals. Through changing the way that young people are viewed, schools can further address the changing needs of young people in their care.

Finally, by reshaping existing and creating new spaces for youth to redefine and express themselves in ways in which they feel are useful, relevant and responsive, we can observe them greet and contribute to the rapidly changing contexts in which they exist, aligning them more closely to what they desire within the changing culture of youth. As foreshadowed by Pittman, Diversi, and Ferber (2002),

> … the future holds perils and possibilities. To be paralyzed by the scope and speed of change in an increasingly diverse world is to silently contribute to a desolate scenario in which youth without ready access to preparation are left behind. (p. 156)

In this introduction, I have provided the rationale for reconceptualising the way that researchers and educators position young people in the research, teaching and learning relationship in order for productive and student-centred partnerships to flourish in educational settings. Researchers and teachers cannot remain insensitive to the changing realities for young people and must ensure that youth are involved in the planning and implementation of curriculum and research that will make a difference in their lives now and in the future. The chapters that follow rise to this challenge, carving space in the research landscape for students' perspectives and rich engagement in decision making, which has the potential to impact on their future.

REFERENCES

Bishop, R., & Glynn, T. (1999). *Culture counts: Changing power relations in education*. Palmerston North, New Zealand: Dunmore Press.

Brooker, R., & Macdonald, D. (1999). Did we hear you? Issues of student voice in curriculum innovation. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 31*, 83–87.

Camino, L. (2005). Pitfalls and promising practices of adult-youth partnerships: An evaluator's reflections. *Journal of Community Psychology, 33*(1), 75–85.

Campbell, J. (2000). Time for action. *Young People Now, 138*, 19–24.

Cook-Sather A. (2002). Authorizing students' perspectives: Toward trust, dialogue, and change in education. *Educational Researcher, 31*(4), 3–14.

McNae, R. (2011). *Young women and leadership development: Co-constructing leadership learning in a New Zealand secondary school*. Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand.

Ministry of Education. (2007). *The New Zealand curriculum*. Wellington, New Zealand: Learning Media.

Mitra, D. L. (2009). Strengthening student voice initiatives in high schools: An examination of the supports needed for school-based youth-adult partnerships. *Youth and Society, 40*(3), 311–335.

O'Donoghue, J. L., Kirshner, B., & McLaughlin, M. (2002). Moving youth participation forward. *New Directions for Youth Development, 96*, 15–26.

Pittman, K., Diversi*, M., &* Ferber*, T*. (2002). Social policy supports for adolescence in the twenty-first century: Framing questions. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 12*(1), 14–158.

Rudduck, J., & Flutter, J. (2004). *How to improve your school; Giving pupils a voice*. London, England: Continuum.

Rudduck J. (2007). Student voice, student engagement, and school reform. In D. Thiessen & A. Cook-Sather (Eds.), *International handbook of student experience in elementary and secondary schools* (pp. 587–610). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

Seale, J. (2016). How can we confidently judge the extent to which student voice in higher education has been genuinely amplified? A proposal for a new evaluation framework. *Research Papers in Education*, *31*(2), 212–233,

Smith, A. B., & Taylor, N. J. (2000). A new discourse for child advocacy, children's services and research. In A. B Smith, N. J. Taylor, & M. Gollop (Eds.), *Children's voices: Research, policy and practice*. Auckland, New Zealand: Pearson Education.

Stanton Rogers, W., Stanton Rogers, R., Vyrost, J., & Lovas, L. (2004). Worlds apart: Young people's aspirations in a changing Europe. In J. Roche, S. Tucker, & R. Flynn (Eds.), *Youth in society* (pp. 76–90). London, England: Sage.

Wong, V. (2004). From personal to structural: Towards critical change in youth work practice. *Youth Studies*, *23*(3), 10–16.

Rachel McNae
Te Kura Toi Tangata Faculty of Education
The University of Waikato
Hamilton, New Zealand