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# Faculty of Education

## Research News

MAY 2007– ISSUE 1

### SUCCESSFUL GRANT OUTCOMES late 2006/2007

**Prof JE Wright; Dr V Harwood;** Dr LC Burrows; Dr E Rich; Prof J Evans. This grant is a first for the Faculty- an ARC Linkage International grant with researchers from NZ and the UK, with funding from the UK as well as Australia.

Project Title: The impact of attitudes and policies relating to obesity and related health issues on school policy and practices 2007-2008 Total Amount \$159,000

Project Summary: Governments have made and are continuing to make substantial investments in policies, strategies and research to address the perceived risk of obesity and related health issues. Schools in particular have been targeted to address the issue. This research seeks to inform public policy and school practices by examining how the new health imperatives are being taken up by schools. It will examine how these imperatives are shaping schools' priorities and teaching about health, and how this, in turn, influences young people's attitudes and understandings of their own and others' health, in particular in relation to physical activity and food.

**Dr SJ Bennett; Dr L Lockyer; Dr SF Agostinho; Prof BM Harper;** Prof Dr EJ Koper (ARC Linkage Grant). Project Title: Improving university teaching: Creating strategies and tools to support the design process 2006-2009 Total Amount \$140,000

Partner Organisation: Janison Solutions Pty Ltd

Project Summary: This project will create strategies and tools to help university teachers design effective online learning experiences. Excellence in online education is important to Australia, socially and economically. Social benefits come from greater participation and graduates better equipped to contribute to their communities. Economic benefits come from graduates with skills and knowledge to be flexible, adaptable and productive in a dynamic workplace. As high quality online education providers, Australian universities will be more competitive in the international education market. This project will raise the profile of Australian research and lead to new commercial ventures through the development of innovative technologies for online learning.

## 2007 SUCCESSFUL FACULTY RESEARCH GRANTS

**Tony Okely, Jillian Trezise, Rachael Jones** for their project entitled “ Promoting physical activity among pre-school-aged children: The Genesis proff-of-concept trial” for the amount of \$4,270.

**Ken Cruickshank, Val Harwood and Honglin Chen** for their project entitled “Investigating multilingualism: Young people’s performance of identities” for the amount of \$10,000 which will be revised if URC application is successful.

The remaining applicants were encouraged to develop their proposals further on the basis of feedback from the committee; some seed funding was made available to assist in this process.

## CHILD OBESITY RESEARCH CENTRE REPORT

**Tony Okely** has led a consortium of researchers from Deakin University and Kansas State University (USA) in successfully tendering for the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing Physical Activity Recommendations for Children under five years. The purpose of this tender is to write a discussion paper to inform Australian Government policy in relation to health-promoting physical activity for children under five years of age. The project will draw on existing national and international literature to develop a policy platform for this age group. It will also develop a draft set of recommendations on health-promoting physical activity levels (frequency, intensity, time and type) to support the physical activity policy for this age group. This project will build on the recent emphasis within the Child Obesity Research Centre on the Early Childhood age group and strengthen existing national and international collaborations in this area.

**Tony Okely** was recently invited to become an Australian Reader (Ozreader) for the ARC.

**Tony Okely** recently received a high commendation in the Vice- Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Research Supervision. See <http://www.uow.edu.au/research/rsc/news/UOW008976.html>

**Jodie Southall**, PhD student in the Centre, was recently awarded a NSW Institute for Educational Research scholarship for her project titled "Effect of a school-based physical activity program on the actual and perceived physical competence, enjoyment of and participation in physical activity."

Recent publications (last three months)

1. Jones R, Okely AD, Collins C, Morgan PJ, Warren J, Steele JR, Baur , LA, Burrows T, Cliff D, Cleary J. The HIKCUPS Trial: A multi-site randomized controlled trial of a combined physical activity skill-development and dietary modification program in overweight and obese children. *BMC Public Health*, 2007; 7: 15.
2. Warren JM, Golley RK, Collins CE, Okely AD, Jones RA, Morgan PJ, Perry RA, Baur LA, Steele JR, Magarey AM. Randomised controlled trials in overweight children: Practicalities and realities. *International Journal of Pediatric Obesity*, 2, 73-85.
3. Booth, M.L., Dobbins, T., Okely, A.D., Denney-Wilson, E., Hardy, L.L.(2007). Trends in the prevalence of overweight and obesity among Australian children and adolescents 1985-1997-2004. *Obesity*,15, 1089-1095.

## POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENTS NETWORKING

International music, sharing research directions, and ideas for further networking were on the agenda at the postgraduate student social get together on May 9<sup>th</sup>. The student organisers advertised the event as “by postgraduate students – for postgraduate students”. This built on the student-organised social event that was held last year. Approximately 25 students came together to share their views, have some fun, and get to know each other better. Some students brought traditional food to share including delicious home-made sushi and prawn crackers. Teams were formed to compete in the International Music Trivia Quiz, with prizes of toy koalas going to the winning team members. Professor Jan Wright was invited to open the gathering and the students thanked her for her work as Associate Dean, Research. The students were pleased to meet Associate Professor Lockyer who was introduced as the incoming Associate Dean, Research.

The students appreciated the opportunity to network in an informal way, so much so that four students - Gail, Phill, Jessica and Christina- volunteered to arrange the next event. We intend to build on the success of this event and entice more students next time. The organising committee (Maureen, Mabel, Abi, Clara) appreciate Honglin’s encouragement and support. Thanks to all students who helped out and cleaned up afterwards, and to the Faculty for allowing us to use the staff room (and for the wine!).

## CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

### **Report from Kori Nemme, PhD candidate, on Uniquet Research Commercialisation Workshop.**

Last month a team of UOW postgraduate students attended the Uniquet Research Commercialisation workshop, which offered an intensive grounding in the basics of commercialisation and intellectual property protection. Speakers were drawn from industry, the investment community, UOW and UniQuest to provide researchers with an informative and practical insight into the commercial environment. Topics covered included assessing the market, protecting your IP, commercialization options, consulting, licensing, venture capital and pitching your idea. Wollongong represented successfully against the teams from UQ with our staff team coming second in the final pitch session and UOW students winning their section. The workshop was open to all UOW staff and higher degree postgraduate research students. I would encourage any UOW researchers interested in enhancing their awareness or applying their innovations and expertise in the community to apply next year.

**Kulum Shanmugam** - candidate for PhD – will be giving a conference presentation entitled "Teaching Tamil Language in the Tamil Diaspora: Australian experience" at the University of Toronto and the University of Windsor jointly hosted Conference in Toronto, Canada "Imagining Collectives: Continuities, Changes and Contestations," the second annual Tamil Studies Conference from May 31 - June 2, 2007. This conference will bring together Tamil Studies scholars from North America, Europe, South Asia, and Australasia. Over 40 scholars from disciplines ranging from Anthropology, Archaeology, Diaspora Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature, Political Studies, Psychology, Public Health, Religion, Sociology and Theatre Studies will present papers.

### **Abstract**

Tamil communities, formed as a result of increased migration in western countries, face particular issues and challenges in terms of intergenerational language shift away from Tamil. There is a body of research evidence identifying the factors in diasporic languages such as Tamil that lead to language

maintenance or attrition in the second and further generations. The role of language teaching in mainstream schools or ethnic/ community language schools has also been receiving increasing attention. There is now substantial evidence supporting the social, cognitive and cultural benefits of bilingual education.

Little is known, however, in terms of Tamil. There is anecdotal evidence of rapid language loss, especially of the written language. Although Tamil Schools have been established in Australia and other countries, it seems that only a small percentage of children are attending these schools. Of the estimated 50,000 Tamil population in Australia, for example, only 1000 students are studying in the Tamil language schools operating under the Federation of Tamil Schools. There is also little research into the goals or effectiveness of these schools.

The present study examines what constitutes effecting teaching of Tamil as a diasporic language. What are appropriate goals of such programs? How can programs be made more effective? The study will also investigate Heritage Language teaching approaches being adopted in the US and elsewhere. These frame the community language teaching as needing a specific approach and not as mother tongue/ native speaker education or as traditional foreign language education.

The study will focus on the teaching and learning of Tamil in community schools in Australia. The methodology will be mainly qualitative relying on questionnaires, observations interviews and focus groups. The paper will report on the first stage of this study. It is hoped that the findings will inform the development of more effective curriculum and teaching of Tamil in Australia, the US and other countries where Tamil is used as a diasporic language.

## 2007 FACULTY CONFERENCES

**29 June – 1 July 2007** – Systemic Functional Linguistic Conference will be held at the University of Wollongong. Further information is available at:

<http://www.uow.edu.au/conferences/SFL%202007/Home.html>

Contact: **Bev Derewianka**

**1-3 July 2007** – 32nd Annual Congress of the Applied Linguistics Association of Australia – “Making a Difference: Challenges for Applied Linguistics” will be held at the University of Wollongong. Further information is available at:

<http://www.uow.edu.au/conferences/ALAA/home.html>

Contact: **Honglin Chen**

**3-6 July 2007** – Australian Teacher Education Association will hold their conference “Quality in Teacher Education: Considering Different Perspectives and Agendas” at the University of Wollongong. Further information is available at:

<http://www.uow.edu.au/conferences/ATEA%202007/index.html>

Contact: **Julie Kiggins**

## VOICES OF CHILDREN EXHIBITION

An exhibition of work drawn from the Voices of Children project was held in April in the Gallery Space at the University of Notre Dame in Broome, Western Australia. The exhibition featured the work of children from Wulungurra Community School, located on the edge of the Great Sandy Desert in the Kimberley region. The work of children from other areas in Australia, as well as Hong Kong, Thailand, Malaysia, Zambia, Samoa and the USA was also included. This is the fourth in a series of exhibitions highlighting the children's work - previous exhibitions have been held at UOW, Assumption University in Bangkok and the University of Northern Illinois in the U.S.A.

The exhibition was organised in conjunction with Mrs Lynne Quince (Librarian and Project Officer, Notre Dame University - Broome campus) and it was officially opened by Mr Gavin Greaves (Executive Director, Notre Dame University - Broome campus). The opening was well attended by staff from the Broome campus as well as members of the public. An in-depth interview on ABC radio with Assoc. Prof. Ian Brown profiled the project and stimulated interest in the exhibition. Mr Jade Kennedy, who is currently completing an Indigenous Cadetship with UOW, joined the research team in Broome for the establishment of the exhibition. The Principal of Wulungurra Community School, Ms Carolyn Pickett, met with **the research team, Assoc. Prof. Brown, Ms Ros Westbrook and Dr Pauline Lysaght**, who presented her with a book specifically created for the school that contained images and text from the exhibition.

Voices of Children is an international project that involves children and young people aged 6 to 18 years. Participants are provided with disposable cameras and writing booklets. They are asked to capture images of their everyday experiences as well as providing written responses to questions about themselves, their families and their views of the world. A range of different personal and cultural perspectives are depicted through the contributions made by the children and young people from many different locations.

(Photos available from Pauline Lysaght as too big for this document)

## HIGHER DEGREE RESEARCH STUDENT CONFERENCE

On Wednesday, 26 September 2007, the Research Student Centre will hold the Higher Degree Research (HDR) Student Conference. The aim of the conference is to give HDR students the opportunity to present their work to their peers, industry partners, academic staff and members of the community and for UOW to showcase the ground breaking research being undertaken at the University.

Last year's conference was a great success. Feedback from students that participated was positive and encouraging. A couple of comments from students were:

"It was a fantastic format and invaluable experience"

"It was a fantastic opportunity for research students from all the faculties to showcase their research."

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS will close on Friday, 29 June 2007. Students may submit for an oral or a poster presentation. Please refer to the Conference information web site at:

<http://www.uow.edu.au/research/rsc/news/index.html>

Students are encouraged participate and get their abstracts in. Preference will be given to students who are in their second year of enrolment or more.

Please do not hesitate in contacting Mari Dwarte if you have any questions about the Conference.  
Mari Dwarte, HDR Student Events Officer, Research Student Centre Ext: 5454