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One hundred years of educational research in New Zealand: Landmarks and directions

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## One hundred years of educational research in New Zealand: Landmarks and directions

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### Abstract

*The field of educational research is broad and changes form over time and space. This article reviews educational research in New Zealand over the past 100 years as a background to current policy and practice. It describes a series of landmarks over the century, the changing contexts and the assumptions which underlay them and identifies recurring issues which continue to face the educational research community.*

### Keywords

New Zealand; educational research; history.

The field of educational research is broad and hard to pin down. Yates defines it as “a human, situated practice itself directed at, as well as located in, a field of activity (education) that changes its form over time and place. Research practitioners, research agenda and the reception of research are contextually located: they are not timeless or universal” (Yates, 2004, p. 3). Lingard and Gale (2010) analysed directions in Australian educational research as illustrated in presidential addresses to the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE). They found that the definition of an educational researcher had moved from exclusivity to inclusivity, that acceptable theories and methodologies had broadened, that research once seen as neutral was now perceived to be political and that focus had shifted from Australia to a more global stance which challenged the dominance of northern theory, methods and epistemology. New Zealand educational research has likewise seen significant shifts, affected both by local context and international trends. The purpose of this paper is to review educational research in New Zealand over the past 100 years as a background to current policy and practice. It describes a series of landmarks along the research journey, the changing contexts and the assumptions which underlay them.

### The education context in the 1920–1940s

At the beginning of the 1920s, original educational research in New Zealand was sparse. This mirrored the situation in other academic and professional fields. The University of New Zealand (UNZ), a federation of four small colleges in the major cities, was inadequately funded. Parochialism was rampant, especially in competition for resources and new courses. In addition, academic staff had few colleagues and faced difficulties in maintaining international ties since letters to England, the US or



Europe waited a minimum of three months for an answer. Books needed to be ordered six months in advance.

The subject of Education was hardly represented, as teacher education was carried out in stand-alone colleges, staffed by former teachers. Otago had appointed the principal of Dunedin Teachers' College, D. R. White, as a lecturer (1904), when "the theory and history of education had been made a degree subject" (Cumming & Cumming, 1978, p. 226), and then as professor (1909). A more significant appointment was that of James Shelley, who arrived from England in 1920 to take up the Chair of Education at Canterbury, bringing with him a commitment to the 'new education', the arts and psychology. Shelley's impact on education in Canterbury was soon felt. Imbued with the liberal educational views of men like Percy Nunn, J.J. Findlay and John Dewey, he took a prominent part in the university, local drama and lecturing for the Workers Educational Association. His psychological laboratory carried out a number of practical local research studies, and he encouraged his students to innovate. An ambition he was unable to fulfil was to establish Education at Canterbury as a 'special' or professional school, serving the country as the Schools of Mines and Medicine at Otago did.

In 1924, the Minister of Education announced a Royal Commission into the UNZ to recommend national provision for university teaching and research. After interviewing 171 witnesses, commissioners Sir Harry Reichel and Frank Tate reported in 1925 "that there was no freedom of teaching because of detailed syllabuses and external examinations; the teaching load of staff was too wide and too heavy. Little research was possible" (Cumming & Cumming, 1978, p. 231). Though they were adamant that local research was important and needed support, the depression and World War II made progress glacial.

In 1946, a new university chancellor, Justice David Smith, challenged the university colleges and the government over research. Claiming little had changed since Reichel and Tate, he asserted that "teaching and research is of the very essence of the highest education ... a teacher of science who is himself [sic] untouched by the research spirit is incapable of fulfilling the higher ideals of his position" (AJHR E7, 1925, pp. 75–76). The Government's response came in the 1946 budget, which included an initial £10,000 grant for research in the UNZ, and during the 1950s increasing resources were allocated to the universities as student numbers soared. The foundation of the UNZ Press in 1945 was another development to support researchers.

## The establishment of NZCER

The discipline of education, however, had already benefitted from a significant research development with the establishment in 1934 of the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) through the generosity of the American Carnegie Corporation and the energetic lobbying of a small group of New Zealand educators who did not want New Zealand needs subsumed under the already established Australian Council. The core members<sup>1</sup> had an ambitious vision, outlined in their suggested constitution. They hoped for "local surveys that provide data for a philosophy of Education for this country, and some researches that will throw light on the state of our system as far as co-ordination is concerned." The Carnegie Corporation was even more far-reaching. When its President, Keppel, wrote to Professor Hunter offering to fund a New Zealand council for five years, he warned against "over-emphasis of research of a sterile sort" and insisted that the new Council should "feel free to give NZ a kind of service which ordinarily is not rated as research—a service which is capable of application in the professional field".

The NZCER Council met in March 1934 to select an Executive Officer. It is an indication of the times that the only research most applicants had carried out was for their own master's degree. The successful candidate was C. E. Beeby, Acting Professor of Philosophy at Canterbury University College, holder of a PhD from the University of Manchester, who had studied under Professor Charles Spearman in London. He was a close colleague of Professor Shelley with whom he worked in the Canterbury Psychological Laboratory.

One of Beeby's first tasks was to set out a rationale and philosophical justification for educational research. *Educational Research in NZ* was published by the Council and a condensed version appeared in *National Education*, the monthly journal of the New Zealand Educational Institute in February 1935:

Little else matters if the Council can serve as a rallying point for the curiosity in his craft which alone can keep the teacher alive. And which tends to fade so rapidly in the trying atmosphere of the classroom. That curiosity can die or it can grow, but cannot

stand still; it is not the business of the Council to satisfy it but to feed it. If the Council did nothing but ask intelligent questions it would have done a job worth doing. A few may even be answered. But intelligent questions, like most living things, breed, and there should be more unanswered questions in five years' time than there are now (Beeby, 1935, p.1).

Beeby also insisted on the need for research into local issues and for the development of a national philosophy of education, rather than merely adopting a colonial one.

Because of its size and its isolation, New Zealand has a set of educational problems which are peculiar to it, and the solution of which can be found not in British and American textbooks, but only in a first-hand study of local conditions. Unfortunately, this has not been New Zealand's way (Beeby, 1935, p. 1).

The Council developed its own publishing list with the first books appearing in 1937. Its small staff meant that a major part of its role was commissioning research from external writers. This resulted in some important texts. But the council also funded a number of small-scale projects on a diverse range of topics. Education Institutes were established in New Zealand's four main cities. The impact of the 1937 New Education Fellowship Conference on these groups stimulated further local studies, some of which were published in *National Education*. Sadly, much of this activity was suspended by the outbreak of World War II in 1939 which deprived schools of male teachers and stretched resources. The addresses given at the conference by Susan Isaacs, however, made a lasting impact on early childhood and junior teachers and provided an example of theory development based on meticulous and recorded observation.

The research of this period was marked by breadth, independence and careful dissemination. NZCER wanted to understand the educational system but also to encourage local enquiry and questioning by teachers, given a huge boost by the NEF conference in which NZCER took a leading organisational role. When international funding stopped and government grants were needed for its continued operation, the passage of its own Act and its elected Council ensured statutory protection for NZCER independence.

## Educational publications

Research findings need dissemination. *National Education* provided an ongoing outlet for publication of small-scale research that was widely distributed to schools across the country. The September 1941 issue noted that 90 percent of the material published was local. Issues that year featured topical concerns such as teacher grading, along with research reports on age at entry to school, museum education, Somerset's study of child nutrition in a rural community, and regular book reviews. Although Sylvia Ashton Warner later claimed no one in New Zealand was interested in her classroom research, the journal in 1955–1956 published eight chapters based on her Māori reading scheme.

If the 1940s and 50s were dominated by war and its aftermath, including a population boom that gave urgency to the opening of new schools and building classrooms, by the 1960s conditions for educational research improved. In 1962 the UNZ was replaced by four independent universities with their own Acts. The Currie Commission into school and technical education included 10 recommendations for increased research provision in the Department and NZCER and annual research studentships for teachers. Teacher education programmes were extended from two to three years. Opportunities for publishing research within New Zealand expanded dramatically. Researchers also had access to new international journals and air traffic made international travel more feasible.

A key initiative was the establishment of the *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies* in 1966. Edited initially by Professor Philip Lawrence of the University of Canterbury, the new enterprise was sponsored by an advisory council which included the heads of the education departments of all the universities, the teachers' colleges, the teachers' organisations, and NZCER. Its first two issues featured symposia on Māori education and educational manpower, two historical articles, an article on Piaget and social studies, two psychological studies, and articles on the school leaving age, and methods of teaching elementary statistics. The authors were drawn mainly from the universities but included staff from a teachers' college, NZCER and the Department of Education.

At a time when the number of education staff in New Zealand universities was steadily increasing, the journal attracted a range of articles. In the first 10 editions (1966–1975) around 60 authors were published, a few more than once. Most were associated with university education departments. The field

of history produced the greatest number of articles (12), with Māori education and reading/language next. Only one entry focused on early childhood education, compared to five each on classroom practice and testing, four on philosophy, adult education, and the South Pacific, three each on delinquency, cognitive development, subject teaching, vocational guidance and socio-economic status. There was little initial sign of the ferment in education and society in New Zealand during the 1970s with the rise of feminism and Māori consciousness. An analysis by Middleton (1988, p. 57) classified the articles over the 44 issues published by then: “28% were from psychology, 21% history, 11% testing, 10% curriculum (emphasis on reading/literacy, maths and science) 4% philosophy, 2% administration and 4% other.”

Other journals followed: *Delta* (Massey University, 1967); *set: research information for teachers* (NZCER 1977); *Access* (University of Auckland, 1982); *Annual Review of Education* (Victoria University, 1991); *Waikato Journal of Education*, (University of Waikato, 1994). Currently NZCER alone publishes five research journals. Former professional journals have become research oriented and more specialised sector and subject publications set up. Most are available online.

The establishment of these outlets was important in providing encouragement to local university staff to publish their work as well as linking colleagues in the same field together. *NZJES* remained the flagship and continued to publish a range of material. It was aimed at an academic audience and became an important source for more advanced students. NZCER’s *set: research information for teachers*, on the other hand, was established to present material in plain language and in a briefer and more attractive format to appeal to teachers and speak directly to practice.

## Doctoral study in education

In 1953 the first doctorate in Education was awarded to Brian Sutton-Smith for an innovative thesis on children’s games. His work was ahead of his time and his subsequent career was in the United States. The second doctorate, two years later, was awarded to Philip Lawrence, who went on to become professor of Education at the University of Canterbury. Lawrence was unable to travel overseas for family reasons and pioneered what became a common pattern of working part-time on his research while employed as a staff member at the university. Middleton’s study of New Zealand education doctorates (Middleton, 2001) provides a fascinating picture of their growth and scope, those who undertook them, and the changing social and theoretical frameworks in which they worked.

The number of education doctorates awarded in New Zealand has risen exponentially since the first tentative steps were taken. For staff in university education faculties, a doctorate has become a basic pre-requisite. These faculties have themselves increased in size as amalgamations between them and teachers’ colleges have taken place. Increasing numbers of policy makers, educational leaders in varied fields and teachers are also enrolling. International student enrolments are encouraged, though they are currently affected by the spread of the Covid-19 virus. Because of the nature of teacher education and the importance of professional expertise, many of those enrolling in doctorates are established in teaching, policy or guidance careers and often study while continuing to work full-time or part-time and while raising families. A few, who still have questions to answer, enrol as a retirement project. An issue to be explored further is the research career paths available to these graduates and their impact on the wider field of education.

## The foundation and scope of NZARE 1979

During the 1970s Director General of Education W.L (Bill) Renwick, conscious of the limits of the Research Division in his Department which focused on demography and predicting school numbers, worked to widen its focus. He organised a Ministerial Conference on Educational Research in April 1978 which attracted 150 participants to hear a range of commissioned papers, all written by men. An NZCER survey found that there was “virtually no research culture within the teachers’ colleges, and no institution appeared to possess written guidelines for ethical behaviour relating to educational research” (McDonald, 2006/2019, p. 113). A small group was set up to explore the establishment of a New Zealand Association of those interested in educational research. In contrast to the AARE, membership of which was then restricted to professional education researchers, the planning group decided the proposed New Zealand body should be an open one, welcoming “any person who has been or is actively involved in the promotion and/or conduct of research in its broadest sense” (McDonald, 2006/2019 p. 113). It was



hoped that schools and teachers would feel welcome, along with teachers' college and polytechnic staff. Within two years membership had reached almost 500.

In preparation for the first conference in Wellington in 1979, 15 papers were commissioned:

At that time there was no database of New Zealand research in education and no World Wide Web. Apart from ERIC, based in the US, there was probably no comprehensive collection anywhere, or research documents in education. One of the urgent needs was to find out and record exactly what research in education was going on in New Zealand. (McDonald, 2006/2019, p. 120)

The papers (NZARE/Delta, 1980) provide an interesting overview, particularly in comparison with the first issues of *NZJES*. In contrast to the near-invisibility of the field in the early years of *NZJES*, the chapter on early childhood education was placed first. Three of the authors were female. There was even a chapter *on* women in education. Richard Bates challenged fellow sociologists over the absence of important international thinkers in New Zealand courses and research. Although there is a chapter on the education of Māori children, the authors were Pākehā. It was not until 1985 that, at an NZARE conference in Auckland, a major symposium by Wally Penetito, Graham Smith and Linda Smith marked the beginning of what has become a significant aspect of NZARE—the contribution of Māori researchers.

NZARE began as a broad church, aiming to be inclusive and welcoming to all those interested. Its establishment of *Input*, an occasional newsletter, enabled researchers to note work in progress. In the first two decades at least, it drew widely on university staff at all levels, including the growing professoriate, teachers' colleges staff, teachers and sometimes interested members of the community. In more recent years attendance at overseas conferences or more specialised groups has proved a more powerful draw for many, especially when acceptance of a paper elsewhere carried greater perceived prestige. At times NZARE has worked hard to influence policy makers but its diffuse membership and fields of interest make this difficult. In addition, since 1990, tertiary education has been the responsibility of the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) whereas schools come under the proviso of the Ministry of Education.

## Research funding

The Department of Education played a significant and constructive role in the foundation of NZARE and its research staff continued to attend and present at its conferences. Until its demise in 1989 the department also provided contestable research funding, some of it for what grew into large and influential programmes. The Ministry of Education has continued funding though the emphasis has been on areas the MOE wants researched. This funding has underpinned some long-term and influential studies, though each has in its turn been challenged, built on or critiqued by later researchers. Some examples are:

*The 20-year Learning and Science project* at the University of Waikato, initiated jointly by Peter Freyberg of Education and Roger Osborne, a physicist. A key early finding was the need for teachers to discover students' thinking about science concepts as the basis for interactive pedagogy. The researchers were primarily qualified and experienced primary, secondary or tertiary science teachers, many of them completing advanced degrees. Key issues for the research landscape were its interdisciplinary nature, the classroom based investigatory work and use of student voice, and constructionist theorising.

*The National Education Monitoring Project* (1995–2010) was contracted to the Educational Assessment Research Unit at the University of Otago. Director Terry Crooks aimed to produce a broad picture of student achievement, providing reliable information for policy makers, educationalists and the general public. It made annual surveys of educational achievement at years four and eight on four-yearly cycles of learning areas and skills. Teachers from around the country were involved in the development, administration and analysis of student responses and this professional activity was carried back into schools. Reports on what children actually know and can do and their attitudes and motivation were widely disseminated for different audiences.

As a result, New Zealand was able to avoid individual testing as was occurring in England.

*Professor Marie Clay's research into the ways in which children learn to read* resulted in wide international exposure and a national adoption of 'reading recovery' programmes for children not making sufficient progress when tested at age six. Though the programme, like the two already listed, became controversial, its widespread implementation across New Zealand and international educational jurisdictions provided a basis of understanding for classroom teachers and reassurance for policy makers, anxious to retain standing in international surveys.

A positive development in 2003 was the Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (TLRI) which "seeks to enhance the links between educational research and teaching practices to improve outcomes for learners" (tlri.org.nz). Grants from this contestable fund are awarded on the advice of expert panel members and administered by NZCER. The initiative aimed for strategy, the building of cumulative knowledge about teaching and learning, and collaborative research between practitioners and researchers. A review after nine years, however, suggested that while "it is clear that the school sector projects have informed the practice of the school and teachers who participated in them, it is less obvious how and if, this work has affected practice beyond those immediately involved" (Hill & Cowie, 2012 p. 48). This report also noted that while the projects had resulted in considerable publication and conference dissemination, the findings were little incorporated in MOE publications for teachers.

Upscaling pilot projects has also proven difficult. Sometimes a project lapses because of a change of government with consequent shifts in educational priorities and funding. Sometimes upscaling would involve a level of labour intensity and financial outlay which policy makers find unacceptable. Sometimes there are alternative solutions to the problem being addressed which seem cheaper. Sometimes a programme can be overtaken by fallout from international surveys such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the need to be seen to address these directly. The time taken to produce replicable results may be deemed too long. Genuine change with buy-in from teachers and policy makers takes longer than most ministers are willing to accept. A further key issue facing those anxious to scale up programmes is the sheer complexity of what happens in schools and the importance of context. Variability is inevitable.

## **The age of performativity and the PBRF**

During the 1980s the social climate changed dramatically as the fourth Labour government adopted neo-liberal economic ideas in which competition and performativity measures became key drivers of educational policy, enacted in legislation. These directions continued during the 1990s under a National-led government. For tertiary institutions, research became a key aspect for performance management.

The introduction of the Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) in 2003 has been described as "one of the most significant and controversial changes to the tertiary education landscape in recent decades" that would both "determine the research funding available to tertiary institutions and affect the research activities, self-esteem and careers of the overwhelming majority of academic staff in New Zealand's tertiary education sector" (Boston, 2006, p. 5).

The change occurred during a period of upheaval in initial teacher education: between 1991 and 2006 moves towards a fully-graduate profession led to gradual integration of university and college programmes and staff. Institutions offering degree programmes were expected to demonstrate that teachers were "active in advancing knowledge" (Education Act, 1989, Part xiv. Section 162, para 4a); this was generally interpreted to mean staff must be active researchers. For the majority that meant enrolling in postgraduate study themselves.

The first PBRF assessment was problematic for the field of education. It had a very large number of eligible staff (1077). On the one hand it produced the third highest number of A and B grades of any subject examined, but on the other hand more than 70 percent of those eligible received a grade of R, indicating that they were assessed as not reaching the threshold of activity for a C rating. The major reason for this is that many staff deemed eligible for assessment had not until then had research as part of their job descriptions. For many, the award of an R grade was a serious blow to their self-esteem and sense of identity. Considerable debate ensued on whether the scoring system gave appropriate weight to practitioner research (Jesson, 2005; Boston, 2006; Middleton, 2006) and professional development activities (Haig, 2005).

Over the 15 years since, most teacher education programmes have been taught in universities, though the early childhood sector has maintained considerable private and community-based provision. Tertiary institutions now spend considerable time, effort and money assisting staff carry out research and helping them present their PBRF portfolios for maximum impact. It is difficult to compare figures between assessments, however, as R grades are no longer reported and most institutions have been through restructurings with consequent decreases in staff numbers. The total number of education academics is also difficult to compare. In 2003, 994.81 FTE educationalists were declared PBRF eligible, 493 of whom submitted portfolios. While education still submits the second largest number of portfolios (behind engineering), the field appears to have shrunk massively since the first quality assessment. Nevertheless, the number of education researchers in tertiary institutions receiving A, B or C grades has risen from 260.25 in 2003 to 446.41 in 2018. The number awarded A grades which indicates world class work has doubled from 24.2 to 51.53. This indicates that a substantial amount of work is being produced and published. On the other hand, Education has a higher percentage of C portfolios than in most other subject areas, possibly because of other professional responsibilities.

The creation of a PBRF portfolio can be a liberating way to look back and forwards, seeing how one's research has developed, deepened and broadened and how it impacts on policy and practice. It can provide a sense of purpose and direction. However, crafting and improving them can occupy substantial academic time, and even involve outsiders such as professional editors. Some believe they take as much time as writing one or more articles. Institutions carry out internal audits, and what is envisaged as a supportive process, and part of normal recording, can lead to fear and anxiety.

The PBRF has affected educational research in other ways. Although the definition of research is wide and generous and guidelines for assessment indicate that all kinds of research outputs that are quality assured will be assessed, there is a belief amongst many researchers that refereed articles in international journals are given more weight than those in New Zealand journals or edited books. Reports to the MOE on research projects are also seen as less prestigious and even emerging researchers are advised to send their material to top overseas journals. This has the effect of making such material less available to teachers in New Zealand schools. Academic articles are rated more highly than those for professionals. The PBRF appears to prioritise originality, innovation and distinctiveness of impact. This may work against younger researchers in larger teams where they would be part of a collaborative effort. The focus on six-year periods can make shorter studies seem more attractive to those being evaluated. There is a need for a longer perspective.

These concerns have been addressed by the Review Committee set up by the Minister in 2019. Their report (PBRF Review Panel, 2020) seeks to rename the PBRF as the Tertiary Research Excellence Evaluation (TREE), to downplay peer esteem in favour of contributions to the research environment and impact and to call for examples of research excellence in place of nominated research outputs. The report is currently out for consultation.

Issues of quantity as opposed to quality also recur. The PBRF is designed to measure quality and has gradually reduced the number of publications that can be listed from 54 in 2003 to 16 in 2018. Nevertheless, in the period immediately before an assessment, New Zealand journals publish extra 'special' editions, more small journals are established and researchers are encouraged to report the same findings in a variety of different ways. An early critic of the PBRF asserted that both the English Research Assessment Exercise and the PBRF have given rise to a publication frenzy.

The past decade has seen an enormous proliferation of academic journals, all claiming to be "peer reviewed" and "international". It could be said, somewhat cynically, that there are now more research articles being written than are being read. The obsession with performativity, which defines knowledge as "products" creates a disjuncture between the production of knowledge and its comprehension, or even its use value (Codd, 2005, p. 60).

The PBRF is a high stakes assessment for institutions, for individuals and for disciplines. The field of education needs to press for its distinctive professional needs to be acknowledged, celebrate its successes and work to ensure that all academic staff have the capability and support to contribute to new knowledge.

## **Expansion of the educational research field**



Until the middle of the twentieth century, New Zealanders tended to see educational research as something as imported from overseas. As early as 1900, George Hogben, Director of Education 1899–1915, kept himself informed of work in England and Scotland. But at the same time, the beginnings of local research were evident in data collection for policy making:

Methods of gathering and analysing basic statistical data needed for estimating expenditure on buildings and teachers were developed early by both the central department and the provincial boards, and gradually research and planning officers came to play an important part in undertaking research directly related to policy-making and to the carrying out of policy decisions. (Parkyn, 1981, p. 192)

By 1920 educationalists had become interested in how psychology could inform theories of learning, human development, individual difference and provision for those with special needs. This remained a dominant study for some time. History was another area of interest. For the next 50 years, researchers were mainly employed in universities, NZCER or the Department of Education and were Pākehā and male. By the 1970s, sociology was influential and concepts of gender, ethnicity, culture and economic status shed new perspectives on old problems. Early childhood became a research focus and lifelong learning (both work-related and personal) opened wider social areas to educational scrutiny. Challenges to research assumptions and researcher positionality became widespread. By the 1980s a major concern was for students who were not succeeding in the school system and a recognition that answers related not only to the students themselves and their backgrounds but to the assumptions the system made about what counts as knowledge and the concepts on which it is based. Indigenous and feminist scholars challenged these assumptions. International surveys of student performance have also shaped local research priorities with pressure from policy makers on researchers and practitioners in schools to improve national rankings. At the same time, researchers in learning theories and assessment have enlarged our perception and understanding. New Zealand underwent a major systemic change following the Education Acts of 1989 and 1990 and the concept of educational leadership has become a major area for investigation. And while the researchers of 100 years ago had to wait months for an international response to their queries, communication through digital platforms is now instantaneous.

As educational research internationally becomes ever more specialised, the task of the general practitioner in schools becomes more complex. Bryk suggests that educators confront a professional knowledge explosion.

We are told today, for example, to attend to multiple forms of intelligence, differences in student learning styles, the salience of local communities, findings from brain research and cognitive science about how people learn, and from social-psychological on the importance of concepts such as resilience, grit, persistence and student mindsets. Moreover, the list of new ideas continues to grow at a dizzying pace. It is not surprising that a chasm exists between what we seek to accomplish and what we actually achieve. (Bryk, 2015, p. 470) The role of research in improving practice is complicated in the face of this chasm

## Summary

In this paper I have explored major landmarks in New Zealand educational research over the past century. The field has extended, the numbers of those formally engaged in research has multiplied and the plurality of approaches, methodologies, assumptions and expectations has widened. As Beeby argued in 1935, research generates further questions as well as partial answers. It would be unwise to predict the future—especially in a year when a world-wide pandemic has transformed patterns of living and ways of teaching and learning. But perhaps a few lessons can be drawn from our past about recurring issues.

A key positive is that educational research in New Zealand has a history of embracing practitioner research, and of seeing policy makers and practitioners as contributors to rather than subjects of or audiences for research. The Review of the 2018 PBRF supports the need for communities that investigate together, drawing on the skills of trained researchers and the practical knowledge of teachers across the spectrum, seeking the input of students and whānau. This theme is a recurring one, noted by Beeby (1935), The Currie Commission Report (1962), and Lawrence (1972).

Lack of funding for research has been an issue through all the milestones noted in this paper. The PBRF funding has not significantly helped education research and its six yearly reporting cycles work

against larger scale and longitudinal studies and strategic research planning. Both are fundamental to knowledge development.

The breadth and complexity of the educational field can be bewildering. There have been attempts, particularly in the USA, to define a ‘gold standard’ for research and exclude most practitioner and action studies. This can lead to narrow reports where teachers and learners are transformed to statistics. The Best Evidence Syntheses initiated by the Ministry of Education managed to avoid such narrowness and brought together a series of international and local studies to shed light on major themes. Nevertheless, the search for ‘what works’ can be constricting.

There will be ongoing tension between individual interests, politically-determined national priorities, dependence on contract research funding, new theoretical positions and the pressure on practitioners in the field who face their own accountabilities and performativity based on international testing priorities. Forums to provide focus, strategy, discussion and the acceptance of plurality are vital. Lingard and Gale (2011) suggest a “vigorous academic dialogue” recognising and valuing diversity of approaches. A range of organisations and institutions are needed to ensure this.

Lingard and Gale argue for two interlocking concepts: all education practitioners, including policy makers, need a “researchly disposition” which involves being both research-informed and research-informing. Conversely, educational researchers need a “pedagogic disposition”. This relates back to the founding documents of NZCER and the curiosity it advocated. Our educational research history suggests an ongoing need for research communities with a broad vision for educational research in Aotearoa New Zealand which is wider than cognitive achievement, is inclusive and contextually based, locally-situated and globally-connected.

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<sup>i</sup> Professor Hunter (Victoria University College), Duncan Rae (Auckland Teachers College) and Frank Milner (Rector of Waitaki Boys High). They drafted a working document on the governance, constitution and organisation of the proposed Council which they discussed with university education professors and representatives of teachers' organisations. This document was uncatalogued when I consulted it in the 1990s and was with other material scattered across three archival collections