What Counts as Educational Research? Spaces, Boundaries and Alliances

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Introduction

In their paper *Decentred Education*, Kathleen Ferguson and Terri Seddon begin with this image of the school as "the fundamental leitmotif of education":

> Its solid redbrick construction, high windows – too high for children to see through, and fences around the perimeter speaks of a particular kind of being in the world that is centred through discipline, authority and public guarantees … Even in the 1960s when schools became more open, architecturally, pedagogically and in relations with local communities, they remained centred; a place apart from the world that took children from their family environments and formed them, along universalist principles, as emerging adults, workers and citizens.
> (Ferguson & Seddon, 2007, p. 111)

Drawing on historical work of Theobald (2000) and others, Ferguson and Seddon (2007) trace a twentieth-century history of schooling and nation-building, then map some of the significant changes in the social relations of learning in the past half century: from the red brick school to dispersed learning spaces, relocating the school in complex socio-spatial networks. Their article maps out a conceptual framework for interrogating this "decentring of education" and the effects on young people of the new learning spaces.

More recently, Lingard and Gale (2010) ask: "'how *do* we' and 'how *ought* we' define education research?" (p. 8, italics in original). In their introductory chapter to their edited volume titled *Educational Research by Association* (Gale & Lingard, 2010), they draw on Appadurai (2001, p. 13) to argue the need to "globalise the research imagination in education and thus to de-parochialise educational research".

Both Ferguson and Seddon's and Lingard and Gale's arguments clearly represent substantial disturbances to the "theory of the business" (Sharrock, 2007) of both

education and education research, as defined by 20th century logics and social, cultural and economic imperatives. Ferguson and Seddon's concerns with the decentring of education speak of changes happening to a large extent around and beyond as well as within the boundaries of the education research community, while Gale and Lingard are calling on the education research community to respond more openly and vigorously to these changes. Decentring and de-parochialising are in different ways spatial metaphors – socially, culturally and economically weighted – invoking a requirement to continue to question and remake the narrative of where and how to locate education and research in 21st century conditions. At the same time, public and persistent challenges to the viability of the state-centric 20th century educational project (see Stephen Heppell's recent invocation of *The Death of Education and the Dawn of Learning*, retrieved from http://www.servantofchaos.com/2008/05/death-of-educat.html) enthuse about the potentials of learning to drive change in all spheres of contemporary life. What part does "education", however defined, play in these new learning narratives? And how do we relate these questions to the re-definition of a research field for education?

The particular contribution I seek to make to these deliberations is to extend both decentring and de-parochialising metaphors into new spaces related to what Sharrock (2007) sees as a reinvention of the theory of the business of the contemporary university in relation to educational research. Sharrock, writing of the triple helix of the Melbourne model (research, teaching, knowledge transfer), redefines the "third stream" as "*the co-production of new understandings and solutions that tap the expertise of non-academic partners" (*Sharrock, 2007, p. 10, italics in original). For my purposes here, I take this argument up in terms of an exploration of practices and economies of learning that make visible particular practices where educational work is embedded in places other than schools, colleges and universities, or at least in complex interaction with them. To do this, I draw on a body of work I have been involved with over the past ten years, sole-authored and co-produced with colleagues (notably Bill Green, e.g., Green & Lee, 1999; Erica McWilliam, e.g., McWilliam & Lee, 2006 and Roger Dunston, e.g., Lee & Dunston, 2010) reflecting on the history and contemporary positioning of educational research and its relationships with research on learning in spheres outside formal education itself. My particular focus is on recent collaborative research I have been involved in within health, where I exemplify some directions and possibilities in relation to Sharrock's notions of "co-production of new understandings and solutions" – across boundaries and in interdisciplinary endeavour. Interrogating the boundaries and limits of what can count as educational research is always a risky endeavour, as it challenges the idea that there is a "centre" or one "parish" for education, conceptually, spatially and culturally. But my experiences of interdisciplinary research into health practice and professional learning allows the question of what is and is not education to be asked in ways that I hope have some conceptual as well as pragmatic value. It takes as axiomatic that the boundaries of

what counts as education, and hence the proper business of education research, are not fixed but shifting in time and space, and are more and more intensely contested, as the centre, as Ferguson and Seddon's socio-spatial framework suggests graphically, gives way and is remade through insertion into a set of dispersed learning networks. While this latter term has become commonplace, almost ubiquitous in recent times (who could argue against networks?), there is a need for rigorous theoretical and empirical work attending to the scope and parameters of such conceptions.

What is Education and How Do We Think Education Research?

Within the logics of 19th- and 20th-century schooling, the institutional enclosures or parishes of the school, the college, the university, structured not only our working conditions but the ways we think and can think about and know education (see Green, this volume). Wilf Carr's (2007) exploration of the historical conditions for the emergence and consolidation of education research, as we currently recognise it, identifies education as "essentially an Enlightenment project firmly rooted in the commitments and beliefs of modernity". This is characterised by commitment to the ideas of emancipation, empowerment and rational autonomy. Within this frame, Carr goes on to ask the question "What *is* educational research?" He suggests that:

> educational research now embraces so many traditions, paradigms, theoretical perspectives, methodological frameworks and academic disciplines that it cannot claim to meet even the most minimal criteria of homogeneity that any notion of a "research community" presupposes and requires. It is thus unsurprising that any identity educational research may have stems more from its institutional embodiment in conferences, research journals and learned societies than from any internal intellectual coherence. (p. 3)

Carr (2007) elaborates on the diversity and incompatibility of conceptions of "what research is", and "what education is" encompassed within these bodies. He attributes the problems with relevance and influence of education research among politicians, policy makers and practitioners alike to the problems of these incompatibilities. Furthermore, he notes that, despite this heterogeneity, educational researchers "often behave as if they belong to a single intellectual community", and indeed argue for recognition as such, for purposes of funding, political influence, and a mission of social amelioration through education.

However, these issues of diversity raise the questions of how any claims for distinctive activity called educational research might be assessed:

> If there are no criteria for distinguishing research which is "educational" from research which is not, there are no grounds for using this term to designate one kind of research rather than any other. Alternatively, if there are such criteria, to try and distil these from the diverse practices of those claiming to be engaged in educational research merely begs the very question at issue. "What is educational research?" is not a question about the numerous ways in which this enterprise is conventionally conducted, so much as a request to spell out the distinctive criteria in terms of which the adequacy of each and any of these approaches can be assessed. (Carr, 2007, p. 3)

These philosophical and historical deliberations, when placed against recent accounts of the decentring of education and the emergence of dispersed learning spaces, raise important questions. They can help those of us working within the conceptual and institutional space defined in some manner as education research to de-stabilise some of the attachments and certainties of our categorisations, and perhaps help us imagine, and see the need to imagine, an educational and educative project differently.

Erica McWilliam and I have argued that different conceptions of what "the problem" was with educational research (McWilliam & Lee, 2006) project different kinds of solutions. On the one hand, from within the field, educational research is conceived as *having* a problem (e.g., insufficient funding or poor reputation). On the other, from outside – in the media, the government etc – educational research was often represented as *being* a problem (e.g., being unable to present a coherent agenda to policy makers). We attempted to lay out this "problem of the problem" as a problem of education itself, its fantasies of social transformation and of its capacities to deliver. We argued that competing claims made about what educational research *can* and *should* do are founded upon twin "fantasies" about the nature and purposes of the educational enterprise itself. The first ("redemptive") fantasy is the hope on the part of governments and societies that education can and should ameliorate social disadvantage whatever the prevailing political reality and the economic conditions. In this vision, education offers the extravagant promise of delivering transformative social benefit at the same time as its institutional presence, its practitioners and its advocates are increasingly held responsible for the failure to deliver on the promise. The second, related, fantasy is that education as a field, a discipline or an institution, can deliver transformative learning outcomes *of itself*. Both fantasies, we suggested, serve to disconnect the domain knowledge of educational research from the conditions within which the work is performed. We used the term fantasies, "not to be dismissive of collective or individual hopes for a new and better social order to be achieved through education, but to indicate both the seductiveness and elusiveness of that hope" (McWilliam & Lee, 2006, p. 46).

Our argument was both a conceptual and a pragmatic one. Conceptually, the problem concerns how education is and can be thought. We argued that the proposition that education works best when held separate from other disciplinary domains is one that may no longer be tenable. We suggested that education can no longer be conceived outside of a set of social dynamics that are tied up with developments in digital media, creative design, health and well-being, environmental sustainability, and so on. Pragmatically, the consequences of perceiving and arguing for education as both separate and separable from socio-economic realities, but also from other knowledge domains and forms of cultural practice would lead to a continuing frustration and disappointment both for education research leaders seeking more government funding and for governments seeking social solutions through education.

These considerations go the conceptual heart of the educative project, whatever and wherever it is. One particular piece of the problem is a collective fantasy, played out in policy discourses, professional associations and institutional arrangements within universities, that continually hauls ideas of education and education research back into an imaginary centre or parish of the 19th and 20th century school and its modern project of compulsory youth schooling and nation building, thereby either forgetting or defining as outside the proper concerns of education research the dispersal of practices and arrangements for learning and educational work within the society more generally, and guarding a parish that itself is metamorphosing in ways not well understood. Bauman's metaphor of the "liquid modern" helps us to these objects and relations differently and to attempt to "unthink" the previously solid boundary that divided the parish from the pale – education from other forms of social institution:

> The history of education has been full of critical periods in which it became evident that tested and seemingly reliable premises and strategies were losing their grip on reality and called for revision and reform. It seems, though, that the present crisis is unlike the crises of the past. The present-day challenges deliver heavy blows to the very essence of the idea of education as it was formed at the threshold of the long history of civilization: they put in question the invariants of the idea, the constitutive features of education that have thus far withstood all the past challenges and emerged unscathed from the past crises – the assumptions never before questioned, let alone suspected of having run their course and being in need of replacement. (Bauman, 2003, p. 19)

The somewhat apocalyptic tones of Bauman's invocations of the conditions of liquid modernity are echoed in many recent studies of what is happening to the idea of education, from Spanos' (1992) and Postman's (1995) very different, yet in some sense intimately related, volumes on the end of education to Heppell's recent multi-media productions of *The Death of Education and the Dawn of Learning* cited earlier. Here,

of course, we run the ever-present risk of what Rose (2007, p. 252) calls "breathless epochalization". Rose cautions that "we are not blessed or cursed by some turning point. We do not stand at a unique moment in an unfolding history, but in the midst of multiple histories". Nevertheless, and the boundaries policed by government research codes and assessment exercises notwithstanding, there are important and disturbing implications of these deliberations for the question of what to do. In the remaining sections of this paper I present a set of practical considerations that address some of the consequences of our contemporary categories, then work through a kind of thought experiment, locating education in its relation to that other major sphere of human service and governance, health, in order to re-think problems and possibilities within this relation, and to assist us to re-think the conditions and relations of education research itself.

Sectoring

One of the hallmarks of early 21st century educational space is the blurring of sectoral boundaries erected during the course of the 20th century, in response to policy imperatives of mass compulsory public schooling and the increasing participation in secondary and then post-secondary schooling. Yet despite this blurring, there are important separations and resistances that create silences and lacunae within the spaces of debate about education and what it is becoming.

Educational sectors are bounded in both space and time, conceived sequentially and as discrete, though not equal elements. Ferguson and Seddon (2007, p. 113) note that education policies of the last two decades have driven "vocationalization and lifelong learning in a way that seemed to set them in opposition to the established institutions of education and training". The institutional and policy separation of categories of educational services: primary, secondary, tertiary and its adjacent and ancillary categories: pre-primary, early childhood, further education and so forth, are powerful visible legacies of the spatial politics of education in the 20th century. Beyond these lie less well bounded institutions such as vocational colleges, community colleges and organisations, adult education colleges, and of course the workplaces and community spaces where learning has always happened but been held separate from what is defined within the sphere of education. This has material effects in terms of constituting institutional structures and populations vertically segmented by age: sectors, departments, governance structures, research categorisation codes, funding rules, categories of teaching and research, kinds of persons, teachers, teacher educators, adult educators, etc, in a kind of "commatisation" (O'Brien, 1984) of sectors. This is a disciplinary grid associated with the management of populations, social stratification, social mobility with citizenship and nation-building agendas, and ultimately, with the establishment and consolidation of a field – education research – taking its focus and purpose largely as the sphere of compulsory schooling.

There is thus a "telos" to the narrative of education that has historically and symbolically been associated with liberal and disciplinary interests and trajectories. One readily identifiable effect of this is to produce the vocational sector, or further education, as an intellectual and conceptual *pale*, and, in policy and cultural terms, as the disavowed other to the real or core purpose of education. There is education research and then there is (classifier: e.g., vocational) education research. Paradoxically, the economistically driven directions of investment in education and training are more and more closely tied to the building of an educated and skilled workforce and hence are in more general terms, vocationally than liberally focused. Economically, at least, the distinction between the sectors blurs, particularly in relation to vocational education in schools, learning networks outside schools such as those described by Ferguson and Seddon (2007).

The intellectual, financial and, I suggest, moral, neglect of the further education sector is, as much as anything, I suggest, an unintended consequence of the professional educational research community's tight contract with the compulsory school. This problem goes beyond a particular historical experience of skills shortages etc, to the heart of the modern education project, its history of separation of liberal and technical/vocational missions, and its neglect of the philosophical and political ramifications of this separation. There is a great deal more that needs to be examined within the terms of this history for any consideration of "futures" for education and education research.

At the same time, higher education has created, seemingly *sui generis*, its own body of knowledge about what is now most commonly called learning and teaching. For a range of explicit and implicit reasons, this work has positioned itself as distinct from what it sees as school education, which is most often the term used within higher educational discourses to classify the general education research field. The post-WW-II history of the university saw teaching and learning becoming a key problem, through the effects of globalisation: massification, cold-war nation building, and the consequences in terms of student failure, attrition and wastage (Lee & Manathunga, 2010). Higher education emerged as a field through attempts to address these issues in practical ways, and a distinctive body of research was generated, largely formed and shaped by physicists, chemists and psychologists in the 1960s, concerned with problems in the teaching of science (Lee, 2005; Lee, Manathunga & Kandlbinder, 2008). More recently, the conceptual boundaries have blurred and a more expansive set of epistemological and methodological frames have been taken up in higher education research, yet its communities of researchers are formed in distinct societies, and its lexicons and its rules of engagement in the research project remain separate and bounded, with distinctive "insides" and "outsides", both within Australia and internationally.

I have argued (Lee, 2005) that the historical separation of education research from higher education research has had important consequences for the general field and more particularly for the higher education field. An important instance of the sequestration of the sectors and associated boundary work has been a set of key absences in the capacity of higher education as a research field to engage in a critical scholarship of *curriculum*. There are important possibilities for conceiving a set of educational problems and possibilities more broadly across sectors, for example, in terms of the key educational concepts of curriculum and pedagogy. This project is an emerging one, through the mechanisms of recent increases in government funding to the higher education sector, particularly through the Australian Learning and Teaching Council. Its conceptual resources are currently limited and unstable, yet there are important possibilities for thinking and *re*-thinking education research in this time and space.

The point of interest here is not to critique the value or indeed the necessity of sector-specific communities and interests, but to raise questions of the consequences for how educational questions and problems can be thought and re-thought within the conditions of 21st century challenges to centres and margins, and to the networking of learning practices within work and other forms of social participation. For example, questions of successful participation in education for vulnerable and under-represented populations are commonly bounded by sectoral divisions, yet these questions may be better conceptualised and engaged across and beyond these boundaries. The implications of the Bradley Review of higher education (Bradley et al., 2008) are a case in point within the immediate future of higher education as a research field as well as a social, cultural and economic enterprise. A further, wide-ranging set of considerations concerns the changing shape the professions, of work and of social participation, with implications for what counts as an education, conceived broadly.

De-parochialising Educational Research

It is perhaps now commonplace to recognise what Bernstein (2001) referred to as the "totally pedagogised society" as a sign of the contemporary condition. In this account, education has been "de-territorialised" from its modern spaces of enclosure through the global imperatives of economic reform, through the restructuring of work and through a cultural "learning turn". Discourses of knowledge economy and lifelong learning speak to the expanding boundaries of "the educational". This so-called "pedagogical turn" or learning turn involves rapidly shifting boundaries for conceptions of education, pedagogy and learning, requiring in general a re-framing of social activity as learning.

As I noted in the introduction to this paper, Lingard and Gale (2010, p. 13) call for their readers to "globalise the research imagination in education and thus to de-parochialise educational research". In sketching the "contemporary contours of a global educational

research field", Lingard and Gale suggest that this emergent field is one in which "tensions are played out between epistemological challenges to northern theory read as the universal and the global application and reach of such theory". They further see this as demanding the de-parochialisation of the institutional and practice foci of education research and sketch, though do not elaborate, the corresponding need to expand the frame of what counts as educational research in relation to sites of the social not normally associated with education: "workplaces, cultural centres such as museums and art galleries, and multifarious aspects of public policy (e.g., training requirements attached to certain welfare benefits)" (p. 15) which have become pedagogical in focus. The processes and practices of cultural production and reproduction have thus become pedagogised in a general and inchoate way. They argue, therefore, that the institutional and practice foci of educational research, as well as the national foci, need to become de-parochialised.

Interestingly, the projected audience for Gale and Lingard's (2010) collection are primarily education researchers, members of the Australian professional association for education research (AARE) and its international counterparts, and newcomers to the parish, doctoral students, early career researchers in education and so on. Their call is to insiders to look beyond the boundaries of their field, in disciplinary, institutional, sectoral, cultural and national terms. Yet this is fraught with danger for education as a research field. Erica McWilliam and I (2006) argued that the theoretical and institutional decentring of education research creates a kind of "no-space" for education, where education is increasingly "everywhere and nowhere, everybody and nobody" (Vitebsky, 1993). As we have seen, where new sites and spaces for learning open up, there is a learning dimension to everything, everyone is a learner and everyone an educator. How can these new sets of learning relations be construed?

The discourse of "lifelong learning" was produced over the last two decades as both a response to and an instigator of the blurring of institutional, sectoral and conceptual boundaries between education and not-education. The term has its origins and early home within adult and worker education (Field, 2006) but, in its contemporary incarnation, it is most closely associated with the French political economist Delors, through the wide circulation within the OECD of his report titled *Learning: The Treasure Within* (Delors, 1996). This report coined the "four pillars of learning: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live and work together, and learning to be". These four pillars are underpinned by the importance of "learning how to learn". Yet the lifelong learning movement is complex, contested, and ultimately disappointing in terms of the work it was able do to open up critical questions. In international terms, as Jarvis (2008) concluded, in his recent review of the international and national policy aspirations encapsulated in reports such as Delors, the initially expansive discourses of lifelong learning were captured by neo-liberal economic globalisation in the first 10

years of the 21st century. In intellectual as well as political terms, in the UK, at least, it has arguably lost its currency, though it is still referenced in scholarly and pedagogical spaces, badged as "professional lifelong learning" (Bradbury et al., 2010). The uptake of lifelong learning discourses has varied among nation-states. In Australia, lifelong learning lived mainly within the sector of adult and community education, in spaces that have remained largely outside the political, institutional and epistemic walls. Jarvis argues that the work undertaken in this space has maintained a "political and social inclusion agenda" and he asserts that understandings of lifelong education need to be broadened at all levels – both formal and non-formal. Yet the location of lifelong learning within this sector has been paralleled by a corresponding poor uptake in other sectors, a matter beyond the capacity of this article to analyse in any depth. Ultimately, perhaps the best that can be gained from a study of the history of the lifelong learning movement is to ask what work it did in shaping policy discourses and agendas in Europe and the UK over the past two decade, as an instructive instance of the decentring and re-regulating of the spaces of learning.

As I will sketch briefly in the final section of this paper, one of the effects of the lifelong learning movement has been to make visible learning that occurs in spaces primarily associated with other activities, as instances of the pedagogisation of social life. For example, in the contemporary context of health reform both in Australia and globally, where, for example, patient or consumer engagement in health services becomes a key technology of system restructure and reform, what conceptions of education and learning inform these developments? Whose responsibility is it to have available the most contemporary and appropriate theories of education and learning to conceptualise this project? How does education research position itself within that kind of agenda? What kinds of resources are available to bring to bear on this problem?

Relocations: Health as Education

I have been engaged in over the past five years in a program of collaborative inquiry into new questions of the relationship between education and health, in the context of major policy restructure and reform, nationally and internationally. Through this work, my colleagues and I have been concerned to address questions of changing professional practice and citizen participation in health, with an accompanying expansion and diversification of what comes to count as health, who does health and how government, civic, professional and industry responsibilities for health are construed and managed. This program of work draws explicit parallels with that of the shifting terrain and boundaries of education, not just literally in policy terms, as the two major arms of human services within government, but as shifting forms of contemporary life, within economic, political and technological globalisation. These shifts in turn have major implications for schooling, the role of the university, work and civic participation.

What comes to mind when education and health are collocated? The following are just some of the spaces and practices in which the connection can be made: health professional education, i.e., the pre-qualification education of health professionals within universities and colleges, and the post-qualification of specialists; continuing professional (lifelong) learning and development within specialist colleges and institutes, as well as within government departments (e.g., Billett & Newton, 2010); health promotion and public health – the education of the public in matters of disease prevention and management as well as healthy living; patient and consumer education, including parent education, disease-specific education such as diabetes education etc; and the expansion of health as a metaphor and aspirational form of contemporary life – healthy schools, workplaces and communities. Clearly, the signification of health has been decentred from its capture within those modern institutions (e.g., red brick buildings) designed for the management of illness (hospitals, clinics, asylums, etc.), and has expanded its terms of reference and rules of engagement as a set of contemporary discourses of governance and social life. Overall, it could be said, that health is becoming more and more educational, or pedagogical (e.g., Blackmore & Kamp, 2009).

One example of work I have been undertaking with Roger Dunston and colleagues at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) has involved the playing out of a set of policy imperatives towards the de-institutionalisation and putative democratisation of health service provision, together with the accompanying increasing requirements for citizen participation in producing health in ways that disrupt the separation of the provider (government, health professional) from the consumer (patient, client, recipient of care or carer of others) characteristic of modern health systems (Dunston et al., 2009). Whether these are driven by neo-liberal concerns with deflecting cost and responsibility to the tax-paying consumer, or whether they are shaped by imperatives towards more active participatory citizenship, these directions are fuelled by major demographic shifts, in age, cultural composition, including global population diaspora. And they are enabled by a more and more highly educated populace and by the information and service affordances of digital media. We have explored new practice configurations in health care that manifest a new relationality in the practices and skill requirements for health professionals and consumers alike, in terms of the development of models of complex care, a discursive shift towards wellness and illness prevention and hence towards education, and increased participation through partnership models of health care. These parallel in important ways the shifts in educational policy towards family-school partnerships, in higher education work-based learning curricula, and in research policy in industry-university collaborations.

In particular, we have been interested in the ramifications of the policy philosophy of co-production, (e.g., Dunston et al., 2009), where professional practice and community

or citizen participation are being reshaped in specific sites to involve the conjoint activities of producing health. These policy or political technologies in turn raise a set of more fundamental theoretical questions about professional practice. We have been developing site-ontological accounts in practice settings where professionals work with clients that deliberately seek to co-produce practice in visible and principled ways. We have sought to get as close to these practices as possible, attending in particular to the dynamic materiality and relationality of practice (Lee & Dunston, 2010). In turn, we draw on these studies to ask new questions about the purpose and reshaping of professional practice in health and human services, and hence, the critical questions concerning the role of higher education and the university in the formation of professionals and in understanding the conditions facing the future of health and human services. These in general can be understood in terms of the pedagogisation of the expanding suite of practices captured within discourses of health.

These are examples, aspirationally at least, of what Sharrock (2007, p. 10) terms "the co-production of new understandings and solutions that tap the expertise of non-academic partners". In the research I have sketched here, these partners are health professionals, health educators (who do not define themselves as education researchers even when what they are researching is education), working health professionals, managers, patients/clients/consumers and communities. There are difficult questions to address in building working networks and alliances across the boundaries of different sectoral interests where educational work is being undertaken, or where learning becomes visible as a key factor in the doing of particular kinds of work or achieving change. Of particular concern to me is the task of defining how, when and where the perspectives and understandings of an education researcher become salient in the study of educational and learning work in these environments.

Concluding Thoughts: How to Think Futures

I have sketched the research in health in order to find a way to return to the question of what counts as education research in the contemporary moment and as we attempt to imagine futures. It is in the changing nature of the *when* and the *where* of education and learning that a rethinking and requestioning of the *what* of education and its research is demanded. This in turn suggests a need to be reflexive about how the questions about what counts and why are being asked. Carr's argument that the very notion of educational research is conceptually untenable, since it presupposes a coherent, unified and relatively homogenous field of inquiry, suggests a need for more refined differentiation of categories. From within the community, however, the diversity of what counts as education research is often a matter for celebration. In relation to this question, Lingard and Gale (2010) map the diversity and dissensus of the professional field as defined by the presidents' addresses from AARE that form the

collection, *Education by Association*. They caution against naïve celebrations of diversity, yet argue ultimately for a "principled eclecticism" for the research field. What are we to make of this?

I suggest that a viable educational research community in the future will need to grapple seriously with, rather than simply celebrate, its global diversity of purpose and dimensions, as well as its internal shapings. Notions of principled eclecticism raise many questions, concerning what the principles might be deemed to be and from where they are articulated, shaping what the proper objects of educational research are and can be, how these boundaries and drawn, by whom, where, and with what effects. Indeed, how the very notion of boundary assumes a fixity of position and identity when around us some, like Heppell and his colleagues are arguing that education as defined by these boundaries is dead. At the very least we may need to attend differently to boundary-*work*, as well as to the dynamics of net*working*, variously conceived and to building different kinds of epistemic and institutional alliances. There is important theoretical work to be done here, in relation to notions of learning networks and their relation to education and educational work. Learning networks can be conceived in social and organisational terms (e.g., Beeby & Booth, 2000), in terms of neuro-scientific notions of "habits of mind" (e.g., Campbell, 2006) as sociotechnical actor-networks (e.g., Vass, 2008). Socio-spatial conceptions of network (e.g., Ferguson & Seddon, 2007; Gulson & Symes, 2007), together with spatio-temporal notions of dispersal and complex simultaneities of learning and practice (e.g., Johnsson, in press), offer ways to re-think the relations of learning, educational work and education itself as a field.

Some practical implications of these involve the considering the possibilities and necessities of networks and alliances, thinking through what a principled co-production of new understandings and solutions to contemporary and emerging problems might look like. If education research works only in the direction of recuperation of a notion of field or community that somehow unites us in our dissensus, what elisions are perpetrated, discursively, professionally and politically? With what consequences in terms of pragmatic issues such as research funding, the replenishment of an education workforce? How is our language managed? In forging new alliances across boundaries – of educational sectors, professional formations, epistemological frames etc – how are the objects of our inquiry to be constituted? What new meanings of education and learning can be/are being mobilised? Bourdieu (1992) instructs us in the constitution of such objects as involving constructing an epistemological position, through the setting of limits. This always involves social forces entailing "the position in the scientific field of those who take them and the type of capital which it commands" (p. 48). Methodological strategies proposed by researchers are, he says, often "little more than rationalisations of their own limits". Indeed, many of the debates in the social sciences,

according to this account, are "debates which are organised around people caught within their pre-established limits" (p. 48). Bourdieu challenges the "categories of thought which makes a whole collection of things unthinkable" (p. 48). I would argue that those of us trained as education researchers attempt the work of interrogating the categories with which we debate educational interests, become capable of seeing differently, forging networks and alliances, co-producing new understandings and possibilities, and generating new and different theory of the business. This means a rethinking of core questions of curriculum and pedagogy, what, how, where and with whom we work.

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