

# The Changing Nature of Australian Based Educational Leadership Research Publications

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*ABSTRACT: Research is pivotal to the advancement of knowledge. Contemporary policy conditions have seen a significant shift in research policy stressing the importance of productivity in the form of outputs (e.g. publications), research income and research training. Most notably in this changing context is the necessity for academics to publish more and generate higher levels of research income. This article builds from an earlier published piece (Eacott, 2009) that looked at the production of peer-reviewed papers in a sample of internationally recognised educational leadership, management and administration journals over an extended period – 1977-2007. In this article, the analysis took place over the past five years (2008-2012) to investigate whether there have been any changes in the production of research papers in the sample journals. While raw numbers of outputs and contributors have plateaued, the spread across Australian universities has also flattened. On the basis of the data presented, Australian based researchers are producing a sizeable amount of published research on educational leadership, management and administration. In this unique time and space, the challenge now remains to effectively integrate research, policy and practice for the benefit of Australian schools, and most importantly, students.*

## **Introduction**

There is little doubt that the Australian and international research environments are changing. For education as a discipline, the performative regime of the contemporary international research context is the greatest challenge since the amalgamation of colleges of advanced education with universities. That is, the nuances of the rating (a.k.a. ranking) systems such as the Excellence for Research in Australia (ERA) has the potential to provide evidence – the seductive language of managerialism – that questions the legitimacy of disciplines, and especially those which sit outside the natural sciences (e.g. education). For education research, this is a particular issue. In ERA2012, the second round of this rating regime, education as a field of research (one of 22 in total) featured as one of the weakest areas accounting for four and a half percent of the national research productivity (outputs such as peer-reviewed books, book chapters, journal articles, and

conference papers) and only receiving two percent of national competitive research income.<sup>1</sup> In ERA2010, education was responsible for five percent of productivity and one percent of research income. Most significantly, in both ERA2010 and ERA2012, on a five point scale, education research was rated ‘below world standard’. In a context where brand management has never been more important for universities in a global market place, combined with fiscal contraction in the form of ‘efficiency dividends’ and also the potential re-distribution of university funds to pay for Gonski reforms, the state of education research is at a significant junction. This is particularly so when politically we have the US example of *No Child Left Behind* (2002) calling for schools to only adopt research proven programs, and the English example of Michael Gove (the rather infamous Education Minister) pushing an implicit agenda of policy-driven evidence (as opposed to evidence-driven, or even research-informed policy).

The weak profile of education in the academy is nothing new and is experienced by education academics on a daily basis through numerous apparatus including research funding regimes, journal rankings (even if they are not defunct in the ERA), promotion systems (particularly at the higher levels of Associate Professor and Professor), research fellowships, post-docs, and so on (Eacott, 2013a). As a speciality, educational leadership, management and administration research has a relatively weak quality profile – over an extended period of time – within the weak profile of education research (see: Eacott, 2010; Gorard, 2005; Griffiths, 1959; Immegart, 1975). However, geographically, as an intellectual home, Australia (and New Zealand for that matter) has a rich tradition of contributing to educational leadership, management and administration scholarship, particularly from a socially critical perspective (Bates, 2010; Gunter, 2010). Significantly, Australian based discourses are not homogenous. For example, while Brian Caldwell was writing and advocating for self-managing schools (see: Caldwell & Spinks, 1988, 1992, 1998, 2013), John Smyth and colleagues were critiquing them (see: Smyth, 1989, 1993, 2011). This diversity of opinion reflects the vibrancy of an intellectual field and reflects the complexity and contested nature of educating and school leadership.

On an international scale, Australian based scholars have been key players in the *International Successful School Principalship Project* (see: Drysdale & Gurr, 2011; Gurr & Drysdale, 2007, 2008; Gurr, Drysdale & Goode, 2010; Gurr, Drysdale & Mulford, 2005, 2006) and the *International Study of the Preparation of Principals* (see: Clarke & Wildy, 2010; Clarke, Wildy & Pepper, 2007; Clarke, Wildy & Styles, 2011; Wildy & Clarke, 2008, 2009; Wildy, Clarke & Slater, 2007; Wildy et al., 2010). Theoretically, Richard Bates’ (1983) *Critical Theory of Educational Administration* and Colin Evers and Gabriele Lakomski’s (see: 1991, 1996, 2000) *Natural Coherentism* have made significant intellectual contributions. At a national level we have also had the *An Exceptional Schooling Outcomes Project* (AESOP) led by Steve Dinham and colleagues (see: Dinham, 2005, 2007a, 2007b, 2008, 2010). These are just a small sample of the work being undertaken by Australian based scholars in educational leadership, management and administration leading to a critical mass of publications. As a scholarly community however, the

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<sup>1</sup> In relation to research productivity, this reflects some 375 books, 3,715 book chapters, 9,282 journal articles and 5,252 conference papers over the period 2005-2010 with an upward trend. In relation to research income, this result is made up of: 0.9% of Category 1 (National Competitive Grants); 3.6% Category 2 (Other Competitive Public Sector Funding); 2.6 Category 3 (Both Australian and International Industry Funding); and 0.6% Category 4 (Co-operative Research Centre Funding). Overall, this means that education research received \$182,068,131 over 2008-2010.

Australian educational leadership, management and administration academy is in a period of transition. As I have argued elsewhere:

. . . there is a significant changing of the guard underway within the Australian academy. While it has been some time since the passing of the pioneering scholar Bill Walker, a number of professors in the area have, or are about to, retire. Richard Bates, and many of the University of New England alumni, Patrick Duignan, Bill Mulford, Ross Thomas and David Gamage, just to name a few, and the *Journal of Educational Administration*, one of the longest serving and most popular international journals in the area, has moved off-shore (Hong Kong). It has become increasingly difficult to fill vacancies in the area (as it is in schools), and a number of universities have turned to sessional (very good) staff to teach courses. In this context, both Gronn (2008) and Smyth (2008), building from Bates and Eacott (2008), lament the marginalisation of a once-fertile scholarly arena in favour of a fanatical concern with 'operational and technical matters' (Thomson, 2001) and the matching rapidity of Australian scholars exiting the field to more interesting and intellectually rewarding areas of research and scholarship. (Eacott, 2013b, pp. 118-119)

This article is a revisiting of my controversial 2009 article on the publication outputs of Australian based educational leadership research. This article is however less ambitious in scope and more guarded in its assertions (arguably something that comes with advanced age). My goal here is to survey the production of journal articles by Australian based researchers (those identifying with an Australian institution) in a purposively selected set of educational leadership journals during the five years since the previous article (2008-2012). Specifically, my interest is as to whether there have been any observable changes in the pattern of productivity in the context of increasing regimes of rating and ranking academic units, and by virtue academics, on the basis of productivity.

## **Description of the Study**

The data generation for this article was undertaken by a systematic search of the Table of Contents of every issue of 12 identified journals over the period 2008-2012 (five years). I explicitly sought to identify papers that had at least one author identifying with an Australian institution. Table 1 lists the journals searched. Unlike the 2009 article, the list is not stratified based on any external journal ranking system, rather listed in alphabetical order. I have included the ERA journal rank despite these no longer applying.<sup>2</sup> This is for two reasons: i) while they are now defunct, many institutions continue to use them in various internal institutional structures and for the most part, they were in play during the sample period; and ii) despite their flaws, I believe that these categories validate the choice of journals as reflective of leading international, and appropriate local, journals from which to base this article. As additional information, I have included the rating with the European Reference Index for the Humanities.<sup>3</sup> The key reason for including this

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<sup>2</sup> In the now defunct ERA journal ranking system an 'A\*' journal was considered in the top 5% of journals for the field, 'A' was the next 15% (and in the assessment, A\* and A were grouped together), 'B' the next 30%, and 'C' the bottom 50%.

<sup>3</sup> The ERIH employs three categories: NATional, which are European publications with scholarly significance but limited to a geographic region; INTernational, which is broken into two sub-categories – INT1 that are high visibility and influential international publications cited across the world, and INT2 that are international publications with significant visibility and influence in different countries. New journals (less than three years old), un-submitted journals (this was the responsibility of publishers) or journals which did not meet the criteria are not rated.

information is because it demonstrates the international scope of the journals as the ERIH rates journals on the basis of their foci and scope/reach. The three journals not listed in the ERIH include: the Australian Council for Educational Leaders journal (*Leading & Managing*), the Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration and Management journal (*International Studies in Education Administration*) which is in a transition period, and surprisingly the BELMAS journal (*Educational Management, Administration and Leadership*) which is one of the few journals in the field listed with the prestigious Index of Social Sciences published by Thomson Reuters (a number of other journals are pursuing this currently).

### **Some Caveats**

To prevent some of the mis-readings or misappropriation of the 2009 article, I am going to explicitly outline what this article is, and more importantly, what it is not. Following the 2009 article, I received numerous emails from individuals asking inquisitively where they ranked, or more assertive (dare I say aggressive) emails alerting me to how I overlooked certain publications, or defamed individuals by their non-inclusion. This serves to highlight the sensitivity of any system which seeks to rank or rate individuals, but at the same time, is so central to the performative regime of the contemporary enterprise university. So to be clear, my goal is to illuminate some of the changes in the production of scholarly outputs (specifically peer-reviewed journal articles) by Australian based scholars during a period of substantive change in the national research sector. In locating the generated data in a particular time and space, I seek to offer some (speculative) reasons and potential implications of any changes.

It is important to note that the sample journals are exactly that, a sample. They do not cover the entire scope of the educational leadership, management and administration intellectual space. That being said, they do represent a core group of internationally, and nationally relevant journals in the field. Journal articles are however just one means of disseminating knowledge. While they are privileged in the ERA assessment, and are arguably the currency of the academic, it is important to recognise that what is presented in this article is not the whole of any individual academic or institution's work. Therefore, this article is not a ranking exercise. This may seem at odds with how the data are presented later, but the purpose is descriptive rather than ranking. Just as trends in different aspects of school performance experience ebbs and flows, so too do academic careers as one focuses on different theoretical and empirical problems over time, not to mention different stages of the project cycle. The key feature to stress is that this article is focused on a macro-level analysis of articles in the core set of educational leadership, management and administration journals. I seek to illuminate some of the changes during the past five years in the production of journal articles during a period of substantive change in the national research environment and discuss some reasons, and possible implications of such moves. Further work is being undertaken to analyse the theoretical and methodological nature of the work.

**TABLE 1: LIST OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP JOURNALS SEARCHED**

Journal	ERA	ERIH
Educational Administration Quarterly	A*	INT2
Educational Management, Administration and Leadership	A	-
International Journal of Educational Management	B	INT1
International Journal of Leadership in Education	B	INT1
International Studies of Educational Administration	-	-
Journal of Educational Administration	C	INT1
Journal of Educational Administration and History	B	INT2
Journal of Educational Change	B	INT1
Journal of Education Policy	A*	INT1
Leading & Managing	C	-
School Effectiveness and School Improvement	A	INT1
School Leadership & Management	A	INT1

## Results

To locate this discussion in the contemporary condition of education research in Australia, I am going to outline how the sector rates. In ERA there are 22 two-digit Fields of Research (FoR, see [www.arc.gov.au/era/default.htm](http://www.arc.gov.au/era/default.htm)) divided into a further 179 four-digit FoRs, with further portioning down to the six-digit level. The particular FoR of interest in this article is the two-digit '13 Education', in particular '1303 Specialist Studies in Education' and although data are not presented at the six-digit level, specifically, the six-digit '130304 Educational Administration Management and Leadership'. Table 1 displays the performance of Australian institutions who submitted for assessment in 1303. Mindful that a rating of '3' means being assessed 'at world standard', we see in ERA2010, 17 out of 36 institutions being rated at world standard or above, and in ERA2012, 21 out of 34 at or above world standard (Table 2). These data reflect a general improved performance by institutions – even if that simply means they got better at playing the system. Alarming though is that while the average is improving, the mean for the sector remains below '3' – at world standard. This has particular implications for how education research (1303 is consistent, if not the best performing 13 FoR code) is perceived in the academy.

**TABLE 2: PERFORMANCE OF 1303 IN ERA2010 AND ERA2012**

	1	2	3	4	5	Average
ERA2010	6	13	12	4	1	2.5
ERA2012	2	11	15	5	1	2.8

To maximise the research performance, universities are adopting a range of different strategies. For some, there is the redistribution of resources to build critical mass of researchers in key areas. In education this is somewhat problematic. While it is possible for various natural science faculties to develop highly specialised / niche research programs that directly inform teaching programs, almost all universities offer education – primarily in the form of initial teacher education. Although places like Deakin were able to build an internationally recognised program (both research and teaching) on critical social theory in the 1980-1990s (see Tinning & Sirna, 2011), contemporary regulatory arrangements (e.g. <sup>4</sup>NSWIT and AITSL) are standardising education teaching programs with flow on effects for research – particularly when the contemporary enterprise university is more often seeking to meet the perceived needs of the profession in the name of attracting students and being relevant, rather than establishing and developing important research programs which can advance the profession.

Other institutions are articulating multiple academic pathways, such as research-only and teaching-only (a savvy way of hiding academics with low, or no, research productivity in an ERA assessment period as teaching only staff are removed from the denominator), in addition to the traditional teaching and research (and administration) profile of academic work. At the end of the day however, despite the rise of public relations based rating systems (e.g. QS University World Rankings), the most prestigious ranking regimes, Times Higher Education and Shanghai, privilege research. Therefore, to rise in the rankings in the global higher education marketplace, institutions need research. Not only do institutions need research, but high quality research and lots of it. But has this impacted upon the production of Australian based research in educational leadership, management and administration published in international peer-reviewed journals?

Table 3 combines the data generated for this article (2008-2012) with that of the 2009 article (1977-2007) to show two key measures: i) the volume of publications (weighted for authorship); and ii) the number of individual authors. Over the past five years, Australian based authors have generated 218 (weighted for authorship) articles in the 12 identified journals. These 218 articles were produced by 247 individual authors. That is, an average of 43.6 papers per year being produced by 49.4 individuals per year. Both of these values are consistent with the data from the 2000-2007 period of the 2009 article. They do however represent a significant increase, or growth in research outputs, from the 1990s and earlier.

**TABLE 3: QUANTITY OF OUTPUTS**

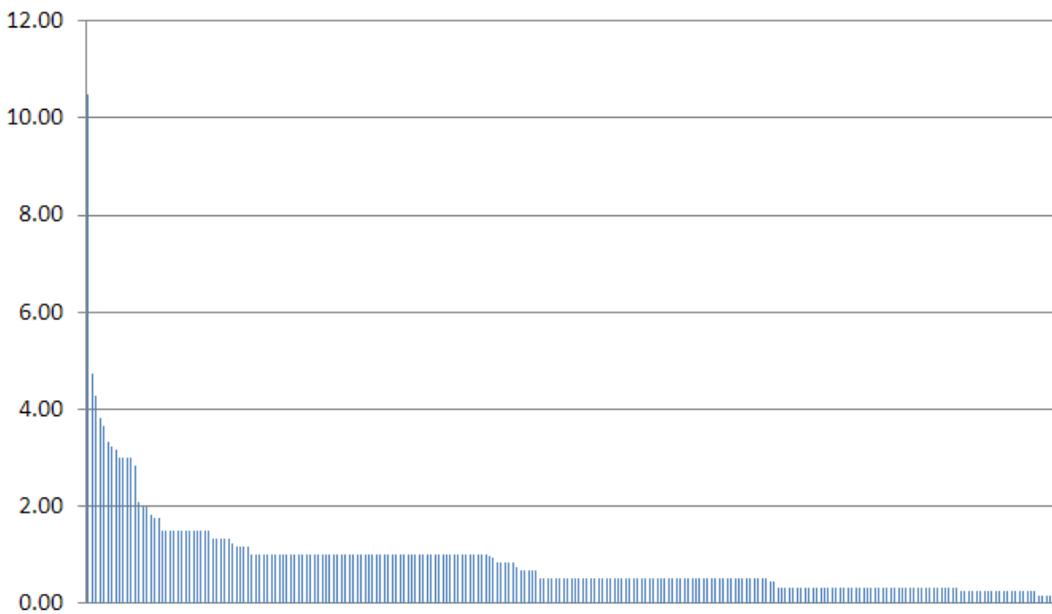
	Time Period				
	1977-1979	1980-1989	1990-1999	2000-2007	2008-2012
Total articles	36	229	313	358	218
Per Year Average	<i>12.0</i>	<i>22.9</i>	<i>31.3</i>	<i>44.8</i>	<i>43.6</i>
Total authors	42	203	310	386	247
Per Year Average	<i>14</i>	<i>20.3</i>	<i>31.0</i>	<i>48.3</i>	<i>49.4</i>

<sup>4</sup> NSWIT – NSW Institute of Teachers; AITSL – Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership

The international reach of this research is also captured in the spread of collaborators published with Australian based researchers. Co-authors were drawn from Canada (5), China (2), England (3), Finland (1), Hong Kong (1), New Zealand (1), Norway (1), Scotland (1), Singapore (2), Thailand (1), and the US (3). Conventional wisdom in research management is that work co-authored with European or American colleagues (and better still if at least one from each) is better cited, so such a spread of collaborators, even though for a small part of the sample (n=21, 9.63 per cent) is a promising sign, but one beyond the scope of this article to explore in greater depth.

An inevitable question arises as to who is publishing in educational leadership, management and administration. Figure 1 visually displays the sample authors (unidentified) and the number of weighted publications during the sample period across the sampled journals. Across the sample, 187 authors are linked with a single (unweighted) publication. Many of which are co-authored. This leaves 61 authors linked to two or more papers. These 61 individuals (24.60 percent of the sample) are responsible for 110.14 weighted publications, or 50.52 percent of the sample. Upon further investigation, the 16 most published individuals in the sample produced 26.45 percent of the total output (see Table 4). That is, 6.45 percent of the identified authors produced just over a quarter of all outputs in the sample over the period of the study.

**FIGURE 1: WEIGHTED PUBLICATIONS BY SAMPLE AUTHORS**



Eight of the 16 most published researchers are linked with five or greater articles, reflecting an average of one or greater unweighted publications per year. When weighted, the average across the sample period for the top 16 ranges from 0.40 through to 2.10 per year, which is not too dissimilar to the 1977-2007 values. I am reluctant to make too much of these data, but I am going to make one observation here, and return to this issue in the discussion. There are a number of

authors identified in the top 20 in the 2009 article that also appear in the top 16 of this collection period: Bill Mulford; Neil Cranston; John McCormick; Helen Wildy; Lisa Ehrich; Jill Blackmore; Brian Caldwell; and John Smyth. This group represents half of the top 16. The consistency of this group, in addition to the emergence of a new group of voices, is a productive sign for the scholarship of educational leadership, management and administration in Australia, but this is a point to which I shall return.

**TABLE 4: MOST PUBLISHED RESEARCHERS 2008-2012**

Author	Total Articles	Weighted Publications
Eacott, S.	11	10.50
Mulford, B.	11	4.72
Cranston, N.	8	4.28
McCormick, J.	8	3.83
Wildy, H.	8	3.67
Niesche, R.	5	3.33
Ehrich, L.C.	8	3.24
Clarke, S.	7	3.17
Archard, N.	3	3.00
Blackmore, J.	3	3.00
Caldwell, B.	4	3.00
Smyth, J.	4	3.00
Bezzina, M.	4	2.83
Andrews, D.	4	2.08
Lakowski, G.	3	2.00
Starr, K.	2	2.00

While an analysis of individual contributions is of interest (at least to some), in the context of this article, an institutional level analysis may provide greater insight into any changes in practice and productivity. Table 5 displays the data using institutional affiliation. As with previous tables, this combines the 1977-2007 data with the latest data generated. I have only included institutions with affiliated data in the past five years. A number of things stand out. First, the number of non-university affiliated publications (the dominant category in the past three decades) has significantly reduced. Such a dramatic shift in such a short period of time, as the data from 1977-2007 show a very different narrative, is potentially pointing to the impact that the shifting research policy environment has on researchers and research productivity. Second, unlike past time periods, the last five years has seen a flattening of research productivity in the area. The time of domination from New England, Melbourne and Monash appears to have been replaced with a more evenly distributed spread of research productivity.

**TABLE 5: DISTRIBUTION BY INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATION**

Institution	Time Period				
	1977-1979	1980s	1990s	2000-2007	2008-2012
ACU		0.87	1.31	3.06	4.18
Ballarat		1.31	0.87	2.62	2.76
Canberra		0.44	1.75	1.75	1.61
CSU			0.44	1.75	4.07
Curtin		1.75	6.55	0.87	1.46
Deakin		4.80	6.55	6.99	3.68
Edith Cowan		0.87	5.24	3.06	1.61
Griffith		0.87	1.31	7.86	6.36
La Trobe		1.75	0.87	3.93	2.38
Macquarie		0.44	0.44		7.90
Melbourne		7.42	11.35	10.48	7.03
Monash	5.56	10.04	11.35	14.41	2.30
New England	16.67	15.28	12.23	3.49	1.07
NSW		3.06	5.24	3.93	2.61
Newcastle	2.78	0.87	3.49	2.62	7.75
Non-affiliated	27.78	21.40	10.04	17.47	4.64
Queensland	11.11	4.80	4.80	7.86	2.74
QUT	2.78	0.87	7.42	10.04	5.79
South Australia		0.44	2.18	3.49	3.05
Southern Qld				2.18	2.34
Swinburne		0.87	1.31	0.87	1.15
Sydney	2.78	1.31	4.80	3.93	2.22
Tasmania		2.62	3.93	6.55	6.74
Western Aust	13.89	4.37	12.23	6.55	5.59
Western Syd		0.87	2.18	4.37	2.15
Wollongong		1.31	0.87	3.06	2.53

## Discussion

In the 2009 article it was noted that the number of non-university affiliated papers was in decline, and this trend has continued at a rapid rate. This is understandable given the annual Higher Education Research Data Collection (HERDC) by the Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (DIICCS RTE). These data are used in

the distribution of the Australian Government's research block grants, including the Research Training Scheme (RTS), Australian Postgraduate Awards (APA), International Postgraduate Research Scholarships (IPRS), Research Infrastructure Block Grants (RIBG), Joint Research Engagement (JRE), and Sustainable Research Excellence (SRE). With increasing fiscal contraction in the sector, maximising the funding allocation to institutions to support a range of different schemes through research output is central to ongoing research viability. This is also played to through the increasing attention – particular in the natural sciences – to the PhD by publication and the assigning of university (rather than school/workplace) affiliation by candidates.

The funding implications and the broader goals of improving rankings in global league tables are the contemporary conditions of the Australian academic. ERA is a separate but related issue (especially with the next round scheduled for 2015, with the end of 2013 as the deadline for the publication audit). With increasing calls for transparency and accountability in the allocation of public funds, research productivity and quality is a perpetual issue for universities. This operates at two (at least) levels: first, there is the distribution across institutions; and second, the distribution within institutions. In the former, despite claims of Australia having a relatively flat university system, when it comes to research the system is highly stratified. The dominant group (e.g. the Group of Eight – Adelaide, ANU, Melbourne, Monash, NSW, Queensland, Sydney, and Western Australia) has considerable sway, primarily on the basis of history and track record. This trajectory however is rarely, if ever, built on education, not to mention educational leadership, research. This speaks to the point of distribution within institutions. On average, education research in Australia was rated as below world standard. Even in the institutions where it was rated at or above world standard, rarely is education one of the identified research strengths. Therefore, it is an ongoing struggle for legitimacy in the academy for education researchers and a need to demonstrate an upward trajectory in research productivity.

The data presented in this article are far from definitive. They were not generated from a comprehensive analysis of all publications by Australian educational leadership, management and administration scholars. After all, it would be impossible to conduct such an audit. In addition, such an exercise would be equally problematic for who it did include and who it did not. But the data generation is not random either; rather it is reflective of the ongoing efforts of Australian based researchers. What the data generated for this article show is that on average each year there is a wealth of educational leadership, management and administration research being conducted by Australian based scholars. While I accept that this article has not conducted an analysis of the 'quality' of this research, all of the papers identified in the sample were published in international peer-reviewed journals recognised by major agencies. This provides a built-in quality assurance measure – even if peer-review is not a flawless system.

As noted previously, I will be pursuing a content analysis of this work elsewhere. This is to enable the ongoing research program to speak to Smyth's (2008) observation that educational leadership, management and administration has been marginalised and suffered a rapid departure of scholars whose work is beyond the pursuit of technical and operational matters. At this point therefore, I can only comment on the quantity of research. The number of repeat names from the 2009 article is a positive sign that there is a core group of Australian based researchers producing a significant amount of peer-reviewed papers. In addition, the emergence of newer voices in the

mix is a positive sign for the area. With the demographic shift in the profile of Australian based scholars, it is important that those current performers continue and we see the emergence of the next generation of key scholars. Both of which I believe is evidenced in these data. Furthermore, we are seeing a far greater spread of research from different institutions. Unlike different times in the past, there is no clear cut institution that dominates the production of research in the area. There are clearly pockets, especially with groupings such as Leadership Research International (University of Southern Queensland), the Centre for Creative and Authentic Leadership (ACU), and the Australian Educational Leadership Centre (Wollongong), just to name a few. To look closer at the three highest producers in the sample (Macquarie, Newcastle, and Melbourne), all had many contributors to their result. Macquarie's performance of 17.16 weighted publications was constituted through the work of a critical mass of 20 individuals, led by Nicole Archard with 3.00. Newcastle's 16.83 publications drew on 12 different researchers (although 60% of that came from one person). Melbourne's 15.27 publications came from 16 different researchers, ranging from 0.33 through to 2.00 publications.

Research has many different audiences and arguably academic papers are written for any audience of fellow academics and university students – in the case of educational leadership, management and administration, post graduate coursework students and higher degree researchers. Therefore, it is difficult to equate the production of research with impact – even potential – in practice. However, if education is to flourish as a profession, then the construction of research informed policy and practice is an imperative. This goes beyond the linearity of either research driving policy / practice or policy / practice driving research. The relationship is one of reciprocity with research informing policy and practice as much as it does in reverse. As a result, unlike the natural sciences where constructs are frequently universal, education policy and by virtue leadership, management and administration is parochial. This is an important observation. During a time when researchers are increasingly encouraged to publish in leading international journals, at the same time as there are increasing calls to demonstrate impact, we are arguably at a key junction for the relationship between Australian based researchers and school systems, individual schools and staff. While there remains an ongoing fascination with shiny things from afar (e.g. the obsession with Finland; calls to replicate South East Asian models; or the North American keynote), on the basis of the data presented in this article, I argue that it is time to re-engage with the breadth of Australian based research.

## **Conclusion**

This article revisits early work on the contribution of Australian based scholars in a sample of international peer-reviewed journals in educational leadership, management and administration. The data presented have confirmed the previous work that since 2000 we have seen an increase in the quantity of articles and individual contributors to the discourses. In itself this is not surprising given the shifting research policy conditions, and arguably a trajectory that will continue as education research, and specifically educational leadership research, aims to establish and sustain itself – at scale – at or above world standard. It is in this particular time and space that I argue we have a unique opportunity to bring schools, school system, professional associations and the Australian educational leadership academy into greater conversation with one another. As a

nation, Australia has long punched above its weight in the production of peer-reviewed research and this article has demonstrated this continued performance. The challenge now lies in integrating the work of policy, practice and research. This is a challenge for each and every Australian educator and one where the stakes – our children’s learning – can get no higher.

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