

Editorial introduction

Women in Research: Contemporary issues in research (Part B)

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Central Queensland University's *Women in Research* and *Studies in Learning, Evaluation, Innovation and Development* have combined efforts to present two very special editions of *SLEID*. The overall theme of both editions is *Contemporary issues in research*. We appreciate the importance of the extraordinary journeys in research and our theme gives emerging and experienced researchers scope to engage in discourse about their research practice, processes and outcomes.

As the editors, we explored the current research environment and felt there were three main issues facing today's and tomorrow's researchers. These three contemporary issues are:

1. the need to set an agenda to showcase Australian academic research with specific emphasis on developing a forum for emerging researchers to gain exposure to the publication and review process;
2. the need to understand future directions for research and the globally competitive environment in which academics must compete;
3. the need to incorporate the teaching and learning discipline as a cornerstone of all higher education institution research plans.

We believe that future university success hinges upon training emerging researchers to take up the mantle from their more senior counterparts and understanding the teaching and learning drives of a university operating in a competitive, product-driven market place. We discussed the contemporary issues with prominent Australian academic researchers and their comments and our thoughts are presented below.

Australian research is highly competitive and making its presence felt on the global scene. Associate Professor Stewart Lockie (CQU) believes that "Australian research is as important as representation from European, North America and Asian researchers." In fact, Professor Michael Beverland (RMIT) believes that in some disciplines Australian research is "punching well above its weight." But while Australian research is doing well on the global scene there is room for improvement. Professor Beverland believes that while we have an emerging sense of quality, our current focus may be too much on quantity. As Australian researchers we need to benchmark globally, (for example, through using impact scores), in order to "lift the game", particularly in the social sciences, suggest both Professor Beverland and Associate Professor Lockie.

The academic research scene in Australia is increasingly competitive. While the Research Quality Framework (RQF) was postponed with the change in Australian government, most expect some style of quality framework to be implemented. Such an implementation would put even more pressure on researchers to match quality with outputs. As Professor Beverland suggests, “funding has gone through a competitive patch ... and research time will be given to those who deliver.” Professor Beverland’s concern is that Universities, even those focussed on research, are driven by student numbers and may not allocate sufficient time for top quality outputs. The new Government’s metric model “may well see some redistribution of existing funding, but ... [hopefully] will allow smaller institutions to receive recognition where they have shown capacity to perform”, says Associate Professor Lockie.

However, it is not just academics who face increasing competition—research publishers are not immune. As Professor Beverland suggests, as more and more nations develop and introduce quality frameworks, journals will receive a greater number of submissions which will mean a corresponding increasing in rejection rates. Retired Professor Chad Perry gives the *European Journal of Marketing* (EJM) as an example of the increasing competition within the research environment. He suggests that the EJM “has seen an increase in submissions by 30% in one year.”

Research into teaching and learning “is vital”, says Professor Beverland, and “more research should be done in this field” agrees Professor Perry. The topic deserves more specialised attention than as a “default research specialisation” (Associate Professor Lockie). Research into this topic often follows one of two approaches. First, research grounded in education and learning theories with publishable results. And second, research that investigates teaching and learning activities and results with limited theoretical or methodological linkages and, while not published, is used for self improvement or promotion applications. We believe that the increasing need for academics to undertake teaching qualifications means that these two approaches need to merge.

Thus, these two special editions of SLEID offer the opportunity to explore these contemporary issues in research through presentations from a diverse cohort of researchers. As the editors, we are proud to offer this opportunity to showcase quality Australian research and provide a forum for both emerging and experienced researchers to present their findings in a broader scope than those presented in discipline focussed journals. To become an experienced researcher takes time and practice, sometimes difficult to manage in the myriad of other tasks required of a researcher. Thus, on the local scale, CQU Women in Research and SLEID are working towards the goal of encouraging and presenting quality research for emerging and experienced researchers.

This second edition will present papers on research into media, television and health (including, nursing, disease and dying).

We would like to again thank our reviewers (listed in the editorial for the first issue) for their time and insights. Their support has been essential in bringing this issue to print. We also wish to thank Sue Woodfield and Peta-Anne Higgins for their invaluable assistance.

We hope you enjoy this special edition.

Regards
Kylie Radel (CQU) and Angela R. Dobeles (RMIT)