From the Editor

Ian Smith (Editor)
University of the West of Scotland

This is my sixth, and final, edition as I come to the end of my three-year term as Editor. I would like to begin this Editorial with a series of thanks. Initially, I would like to thank my Deputy Editor, Chris Holligan, for his support during my Editorial tenure. I am also grateful to all the members of the Editorial Board during my time as Editor for their advice and support. More specifically, I would like to thank David Miller for his work as Reviews Editor, and Angela Cowan for her contribution as Business Editor. I also offer thanks to all the anonymous reviewers of papers who have willingly given their time to undertake their invaluable role for the journal. Particular thanks are also due to Morag Redford, for producing her 'Education in the Scottish Parliament' report for every edition. Final texts of the journal could not have appeared without the secretarial contribution of Jean Paton, School of Education, University of the West of Scotland, and the work of Denise Macrae King and her colleagues at Graphics & Print Services, University of Stirling. Finally, I would like to offer my fullest thanks to Mark Priestley. As I mentioned in my opening Editorial three years ago, Mark had already made an enormous contribution to the journal in his period as Editor preceding mine. Since then, his contribution has continued to be very significant, initially in his vital work as Business Editor in 2011, and subsequently as Chairman of the Editorial Board since then. Mark has also maintained the Review's website (which is increasingly important as we now make full papers available online six months after publication, rather than after one year as previously - although I would also emphasise our continuing commitment to producing the journal in printed form). Over the last ten years, nobody has done more to sustain and develop the Scottish Educational Review than Mark.

Moving on to this particular edition, the first three papers are based on keynote addresses at the 2012 annual conference of the Scottish Educational Research Association (SERA). The inclusion of these papers once again emphasises the importance of sustaining the link between the Scottish Educational Review and SERA. The remaining three papers relate to a number of interesting topics particularly relevant to the study of the Scottish school teaching profession and Scottish schools, although the last of these papers, an international comparative study of the higher education experiences of Swedish school teacher students and Scottish community educator students, also has wider implications for educators in Scottish community education, and for teaching and learning in higher education more generally.

The paper by Iram Siraj-Blatchford, Aziza Mayo, Edward Melhuish, Brenda Taggart, Pamela Sammons and Kathy Sylva makes an important contribution to research around the policy imperative of understanding how children should be supported through their learning life course, particularly children from poor homes 'who would normally be facing a low achiever trajectory'. The paper draws upon the major Effective Provision of Pre-School, Primary and Secondary Education (EPPSE 3-16) research project, funded by the English Department of Education from 1997-2014, and in particular fifty in-depth Child and Family Case Studies (CFCS) conducted as part of the project. The Scottish Educational Review is particularly grateful to the research team for its willingness to make such a significant summary and analysis of their findings available to our journal. The CFCS was a mixed-methods study, using in-depth interviews with students, parents and teachers, quantitative data and a literature review. It provides 'thick descriptions' and explanations of how the interaction of child, family and school factors can contribute to certain children 'succeeding against the odds of disadvantage'. The research indicates that these children 'become active agents in their learning life-course', based on 'active cultivation' parenting and

'emotional, practical and relational support' from schools, teachers, peers and the wider community. The paper concludes that the CFCS research can inform policies and practices, including on parenting and home-school relations, in ways which may help 'in closing the gap between those who are academically and socially advantaged and disadvantaged'.

The paper by Walter Humes explores the tensions which can arise between educational researchers and policy makers, principally in the Scottish context, but also relating to themes found in the rest of the UK and internationally. He emphasises that 'the priorities of researchers and policy makers are not the same'. Politicians 'are impatient of too much complexity' and 'generally hope for clear recommendations from research' while researchers 'enjoy complexity' and 'are keen to draw attention to qualifications in their findings'. However, while stressing there 'are always likely to be tensions', Humes gives particular emphasis to how 'issues of power and control' can lead to power holders adopting 'political' stances which fail to recognise 'the potential value of research'. Arguing it is important to 'introduce an historical dimension into the discussion', Humes provides a detailed analysis of Andrew McPherson's 1980s account of the Scottish Education Department's reaction to his research on *The Scottish Sixth* in the 1970s. He then suggests similar stances can be found much more recently in the Scottish Government's reaction in 2012 to research on Curriculum for Excellence by Mark Priestley and Sarah Minty. Certainly, Humes concludes that policy makers 'should be less concerned about the short-term ''public relations'' aspects of research and more willing to think of the longer-term benefits of good research evidence'. However, he also emphasises government is not always 'controlling and oppressive' and researchers must move beyond 'the role of victims'. This should involve being 'self-critical about the quality of their research output' and also identifying 'potential growth areas for future activity' (suggesting for Scottish educational researchers these may include research on further and higher education, the economics of education, and the implications of advances in genetics and neuroscience for human learning and development).

The paper by Yolande Muschamp explores the relationship between research and teaching, particularly in the context of teacher education in Scotland but also in terms of wider implications. The paper sets a context by discussing how key terms such as education, teaching, learning and research are approached. Muschamp refers to Peters' 'achievement-task' analysis of the nature of education and to potentially problematic issues with the use of the term learning relative to teaching, and also suggests that research is not primarily 'the servant of education'. Skelton's 'three identities' for university tutors (the 'teaching specialist', the 'blended professional' and the 'researcher who teaches') are then used by Muschamp to provide a perspective for considering the relationship between the tasks of teaching and research in UK teacher education and higher education generally. The paper then develops an analysis of the role which research could play in the three models of the teacher presented by Winch (the 'craft' model; the 'technology' model; the 'professional' model). Muschamp concludes that only limited roles for research are provided within the craft and technology models. On the other hand, she presents a strong argument in support of the professional model as requiring more significant research skills in methods, theory and scholarship. Muschamp suggests that this model should apply to teacher educators, university teachers more generally, and the wider teaching profession.

The paper by Jenny Reeves and Valerie Drew also connects to issues on the relationship between research and teaching. Reeves and Drew look critically at the increasing emphasis by policy makers on practitioner research 'as an important strategy' for furthering 'teachers' professional learning'. For example, they see problematic complexities with the recent recommendation in the Donaldson review of teacher education in Scotland that 'engaging teachers in professional enquiry and research-informed teaching is the way forward for developing the professional capabilities required of ''21st Century teachers'''. In developing their analysis, Reeves and Drew draw upon a series of empirical studies related to aspects of the Chartered Teacher initiative, a scheme established in Scotland in 2002 (but now withdrawn by Scottish Government), which they describe as 'aimed to support the development of accomplished teaching through a qualification process' and requiring those teachers involved to undertake 'an action research project as a compulsory work-based

learning element'. From these empirical studies, Reeves and Drew conclude that any such attempt 'to use practitioner research as a vehicle for affecting classroom practice' must address a range of issues if this is to be effective as a strategy. In particular, this strategy must be seen in 'systemic terms' and 'confront the challenges involved in developing the sets of networked relations that will be essential' for it to 'prove worthwhile'. They describe one underlying issue as 'the need to recognise the discursive conflict between the requirement for compliance with hierarchical instruction embedded in quality assurance and the non-compliant basis of enquiry, which is based on questioning, criticality and debate.'

The paper by Deirdre Torrance focuses on issues of hierarchy in Scottish schools. Torrance suggests that 'Contemporary efforts to reconceptualise the teaching profession in Scotland', such as the Donaldson review of teacher education and the McCormac review of teacher employment, appear to align to a 'core principle' that 'leadership should form an integral feature of the role of every qualified teacher', and that this premises teacher leadership 'on a distributed perspective on leadership'. However, the paper emphasises the problematic nature of defining leadership, distributed leadership and teacher leadership, with particular focus on distributed leadership. Torrance bases her analysis on three headteacher case studies in Scottish primary schools, drawing upon evidence from headteachers themselves and their staff. Six 'dominant themes' were identified from these research findings, with particular emphasis given to the final theme that 'To a large extent, distributed leadership was found to be in the gift of the headteacher', and a 'distributed perspective did not develop naturally', but rather 'was purposefully planned for and continuously supported by each headteacher'. Torrance concludes that these findings have implications for 'educational leadership in relation to contemporary Scottish policy developments'. For example, 'better informed policy discourse needs to develop, based on empirical studies drawing from a more sophisticated leadership analysis', and 'expectations and responsibilities related to discrete and complementary roles within school hierarchies need to be articulated'. It will be important 'to ensure the focus is fixed on educational rather than performance leadership' and that 'Political processes charged with workforce reform' are 'ethically informed'.

The paper by Lena Boström and Annette Coburn focuses on learning styles of higher education students, but also has implications for the professional practice communities of school teachers and educators in community education. The paper is also particularly welcome because it involves a comparative study of the relevant approaches in Swedish and Scottish higher education. Boström and Coburn give general consideration to research on 'learning styles theory', including the suggestion that students presented with learning new and difficult concepts show 'significant improvement when individual learning styles are matched to instructional strategies'. Particular focus is given to Dunn's learning style model and research on it. Making use of Dunn's model, the paper then reports on a comparative study of the learning preferences of 35 Swedish teacher students and 35 Scottish community education students. Findings suggest that the two groups of students may differ in their preferences towards 'sound, design and conformity' in learning styles. Boström and Coburn discuss how these differences may be explained, and suggest possible implications for the teaching and learning of teacher students and community education students in higher education, and for subsequent working in these respective professional practice communities. They conclude that 'An understanding that learning styles preferences may combine with particular practice dispositions to maximise student learning experience can be used to enhance graduate capacity for teaching and learning in future'.

As continuing features, the edition contains Morag Redford's careful review of the activities of the Scottish Parliament's Education and Culture Committee from February to July 2013, as well as a number of book reviews on: Early Childhood Education and Care; Transition to Secondary School; New Trends in Curriculum Policy and Practice (including Curriculum for Excellence); Education, Democracy and Development; A Guide to School-Based Research.

In closing my final Editorial, I would like to return to some more general remarks. It has been a pleasure to be Editor of the Scottish Educational Review for the last three years,

although the role is not without its challenges. We live in a crowded world of educational research academic journal publishing beyond Scotland, with a proliferation of journals, including new, exclusively online journals, offering outlets for the publication of educational research. The current Research Excellence Framework (REF) and its RAE predecessors may have placed particular pressures on Scottish academics to publish in UK and international journals, and the Scottish educational research community is a comparatively small one. However, I strongly believe that it also remains important to maintain the forty-five year tradition of the Scottish Educational Review as a Scottish-based journal for the publication of educational research, successfully providing high quality research-based papers, not only from the Scottish educational research community, but also from distinguished contributors from beyond Scotland. It has been a personal and professional privilege to have had the opportunity to contribute over the last three years to the maintenance and on-going development of this tradition, which I know will remain in safe and very capable hands with the new Editorial team from the University of Glasgow of Christine Forde as Editor, and Stephen McKinney as Deputy Editor.

Ian Smith, November 2013