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## Early childhood expert joins ACER

ACER has expanded its breadth of knowledge in the area of Early Childhood Education with the appointment of an internationally renowned expert to the research team.

In October 2010 ACER welcomed Senior Research Fellow Professor Bridie Raban to the Teaching, Learning and Leadership research program. Raban conducts research and development in the field of Early Childhood Education. In addition to her role at ACER, Raban is a Professorial Research Fellow (Early Childhood) at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne and is a Fellow of the Royal Society for the Arts.

Raban's research focuses on language and literacy development, and on curriculum and assessment in the early years of childhood. Raban has published in excess of 150 publications including books and monographs, journal articles, research reports, chapters to books and international encyclopaedias.

Given her impressive list of publications, it is somewhat surprising that Raban confesses to being 15 years old before reading her first book.

"At school during silent reading time, I'd turn the page, wait around 15 seconds then turn the next page," Raban said. "It wasn't that I couldn't read, I just didn't want to."

Raban says that today, reading needs to be introduced at a young age as something fun and never as a punishment.

Originally based in the UK, Raban completed her PhD at the University of Reading and post-doctoral fellowship at Oxford University in 1989. From 1991 to 1995 Raban was Professor of Primary Education (Early Years) at Warwick University and between 1994 and 1995 held the position of President of the UK Reading Association.

Raban arrived in Australia in 1995 to take up the inaugural Mooroolbeek Chair of Early Education Childhood Studies at the University of Melbourne. This appointment saw Bridie become the first early childhood professor in Victoria and only the second in Australia.

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From 1999-2000 Raban was seconded to the federal government department of education (then DETYA) as their first Research Fellow, where she worked with policymakers in developing a research agenda for the early years of education. During this time Raban also worked with the OECD, completing the Country Note for Denmark, which involved travelling throughout that country visiting services provided for children before they entered school.

Raban has raised in excess of \$4 million in research funds while at the University of Melbourne, and is currently a Chief Investigator there of an ARC Linkage Grant "The Young Learners' Project", following the early literacy development of 350 children aged 4, 5, and 6 years-old as they move into school. As part of her role at the University of Melbourne, Raban is also working with Collette Tayler, the Chair of Early Childhood Education and Care, on developing a draft discussion document for the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority on assessment from 0-5 years of age.

Raban has involved herself in a number of research projects since joining ACER in October. In conjunction with ACER Senior Research Fellow Marion Meiers, Raban has already completed an evaluation of the Literacy Lessons implementation pilot for the Victorian Government Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) and is currently introducing the ACER Longitudinal Literacy and Numeracy Study in preschools.

Raban is also currently working with ACER Senior Research Fellow Prue Anderson to develop diagnostic Early Literacy tools for DEECD, with ACER Principal Research Fellow Sheldon Rothman on a National Standards Quality project for the federal government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), and with ACER Principal Research Fellow Glenn Rowley to map and analyse the early childhood education courses available from higher education providers for DEEWR.

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## LSAY Briefing examines apprenticeships and traineeships

A briefing paper published by ACER describes participation in apprenticeships and traineeships reported by a sample of people who were aged approximately 22 years-old in 2003.

The paper reports on the characteristics of young people who become apprentices and trainees and examines the take up and completion of apprenticeships and traineeships.

The report uses data from a nationally representative sample of young people who were in Year 9 at school in 1995 and whose education and occupational activities were traced each year thereafter.

Overall, a little more than one in five members of the LSAY cohort that was in Year 9 in 1995 participated in an apprenticeship (12 per cent) or traineeship (10 per cent) by the end of 2003. Men outnumbered women in apprenticeships by about five to one, while about three out of five trainees were women. Young people of an English-speaking background were around four times likely as their peers from a non-English speaking background to participate in and apprenticeship or traineeship.

More than three-quarters (77 per cent) of apprentices and trainees began their course within a year of leaving school. By 2004, 79 per cent of apprentices and 84 per cent of trainees in the LSAY sample had completed their initial post-school training, while one in six (16 per cent) apprentices and trainees had withdrawn from their course.

Reasons for not continuing an apprenticeship or traineeship tended to be health and personal factors, financial matters and issues with the workplace. Future job prospects, the nature training and the difficulty of study were not key reasons for discontinuing an apprenticeship or traineeship.

Ninety-six per cent of those who completed an apprenticeship and 89 per cent of those who did not were employed in 2004, compared to only 80 per cent of those who had not done any post-school study. In contrast, traineeship non-completers fared worse in the labour market than those who had done no post-school study.

LSAY is a research program managed by the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. ACER provides advice and guidance to the LSAY Strategic Advisory Committee and publishes its reports.

Apprenticeships and Traineeships: Participation, progress and completion was published as LSAY Briefing Number 19 and is available from [http://research.acer.edu.au/lsay\\_briefs/19/](http://research.acer.edu.au/lsay_briefs/19/)

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## ACER and UNESCO collaborate in Arab states

ACER and UNESCO Beirut office have signed a memorandum of understanding that creates opportunities for joint research and the development of a learning assessment to monitor educational quality in the Arab States.

The memorandum was signed by Peter McGuckian, ACER Director of International Development, and Abdel Moneim Osman, Director UNESCO Beirut, at UNESCO's Beirut office in Lebanon on 3 November 2010.

The signing of the memorandum heralds joint endeavours to perform educational research in the Arab States, particularly related to UNESCO's Education for All program, to support educational policy development in the region and to organise and participate in jointly sponsored conferences, seminars and workshops.

Under the initiative, ACER and UNESCO Beirut will collaborate to develop a common regional learning assessment framework to be used as a benchmark for measuring educational quality in the Arab States.

Together ACER and UNESCO Beirut will assist in the development of educational assessment and evaluation programs for the Arab States and will facilitate training workshops to build national capacity for the programs' implementation.

The framework will outline the context and define terms for a common regional educational improvement initiative, will propose a management structure, identify appropriate measures, and will develop a model for calculating these measures and interpreting results.

ACER Deputy Research Director of International Surveys Dr John Cresswell is leading the development of the framework, following his preparation of a background note on the Arab States performance in learning assessment and the main challenges for enhancing evidence-based knowledge for policy makers to improve education quality.

In a presentation to the expert group overseeing the initiative, held in Beirut in December, Cresswell described some of the ways that various countries are using international and national assessments and offered a number of different options for the regional initiative.

A draft framework for the initiative is expected on 31 March 2011, after which time it will be subject to review before being finalised in July and presented to the meeting of the Ministers of Education of the Arab states at the UNESCO General Conference side meetings in October 2011.

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## ACER Update

### New Director, Assessment Services appointed

[Mr Ralph Saubern](#) has been appointed to the role of Director, Assessment Services at ACER. This position was previously held by Ms Deirdre Jackson from 1998 until her retirement in late 2010. Ralph has previously held a number of positions at ACER, including Electronic Publisher, Test Publisher and Agencies Manager (2000-2005); Publishing Manager (2005-2006); General Manager, ACER Press (2007-2009); and General Manager, Schools Program in Assessment Services (2010).

### Research Conference 2011

ACER's annual conference heads to the Northern Territory for the first time in 2011. Research Conference 2011 will take place in Darwin from 7-9 August 2011 on the theme Indigenous Education: Pathways to success. Further information will be posted to the ACER website as it becomes available. Registration enquiries may be directed to Margaret Taylor by phone to 03 9277 5403 or by email to [.JavaScript must be enabled to view this email address.](#)

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Australian Council for Educational Research  
Private Bag 55, Camberwell, Victoria Australia 3124  
Tel: + 61 3 9277 5555  
Fax: + 61 3 9277 5500  
Web: [www.acer.edu.au](http://www.acer.edu.au)

