

Book Review

MERGA: The Four Year Review

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Perry, B., Anthony, G., & Diezmann, C. (Eds.). (2004).

Research in mathematics education in Australasia.

Sydney, Australia: Mathematics Education Research Group of Australasia
(MERGA).

397 pp. ISBN 1876682647

Early in the life of MERGA, the then executive decided to produce a Review of recent mathematics education research activity in Australia. The specific purpose at the time was to have a publication available to attendees of the 1984 ICME Conference, held in Adelaide. The intention was to show the International Mathematics Education community that Australia had a vibrant, active, and authentic body of researchers engaging in very worthwhile, relevant, and timely research investigations which were 'world class'. The publication was well received and the credentials of the fledgling MERGA established.

A lot of water has flowed under the bridge since then, so to speak. MERGA has gone from strength to strength, has spread to encompass membership across the Tasman to New Zealand, and come to be recognised as a leading research body in the international world of mathematics education. Further, the Group has maintained the practice of publishing four yearly reviews of Australasian research, the most recent of which is the focus of this critique.

The 2000–2003 Review is organised into four sections, representing areas identified in previous reviews together with a significant 'new' section both to mark the passing of 25 years research and to 'foretell' something of the future. For three of the sections there are a number of more focussed and delineated 'subsections' each developed under the authorship of well known and respected 'cross Tasman' researchers.

The sections, subsections and 'author teams' are:

Contexts for Mathematics Education

Research Trends in Mathematics Education (Margaret Walshaw; Glenda Anthony)

Social Justice and Sociocultural Perspectives in Mathematics Education (Bill Atweh; Tamsin Meaney; Colleen McMurchy – Pilkington; Jim Neyland; Tony Trinick)

Affective Issues in Mathematics Education (Sandy Schuck; Peter Grootenboer)

Gender and Mathematics (Colleen Vale; Helen Forgasz; Marj Horne)

Learning and Teaching Mathematics

Mathematics in Early Childhood Education (Bob Perry; Sue Dockett)

Problem Solving in Learning and Teaching Mathematics (Judy Anderson; Paul White)

Computers, Multimedia, and the Internet in Mathematics Education (Merrilyn Goos; Patricia Cretchley)

Exceptional Students in Mathematics (Carmel Diezmann; Rhonda Faragher; Tom Lowrie)

Learning to Teach Mathematics (Beth Southwell; Allan White; Mary Klein)

University Mathematics Learning and Teaching (Leigh N. Wood)

Perspectives on Mathematics Curriculum

Number Learning in the Primary Years (Brian Doig; Susie Groves; Joanne Mulligan)

Statistics Education (Maxine Pfannkuch; Jane Watson)

Learning and Teaching Algebra (Elizabeth Warren; Robyn Pierce)

Calculators and Computer Algebra Systems (Pat Forster; Peter Flynn; Sandra Frid; Len Sparrow)

Looking Back – Looking Forward

The Impact of 20 Years of Research (Graham A. Jones)

Whilst it is not possible to make comment on each and every section of the Review, I want to single out one for mention, since, to me at least, it says much, directly and indirectly, about MERGA as a 'research community'. The Graham Jones paper chronicles much of the research development of MERGA since its foundation. Graham was the first President of MERGA and has 'made the research journey' with the Group, both nationally and internationally. His paper gives the reader a sense of the great contribution which Australasian Mathematics Education research and researchers have made to 'mathematics education' generally and, in the context of the Review, does much to show MERGA on the 'world stage'.

In my view, the 2000–2003 Review is the most comprehensive and 'professionally compiled' of the Reviews which MERGA has so far published: and this is not to take anything away from the high quality of the 'forerunner' Reviews. The 'executive editors' Bob Perry, Glenda Anthony, and Carmel Diezmann can take a great deal of the credit for this. The structure of presentation enables the 'information searching' reader to dip into the broad categories of focus, and the extensive and detailed lists of accompanying citations of the contributing research papers, make it easily

possible for the reader to 'delve further'. All this both complements and supplements the other refereed papers in the journals and conference proceedings published by MERGA and makes this a very worthy 'purchase acquisition' for researchers, research students, and mathematics teachers.

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