

## Editorial



There is a persistent debate among education researchers about whether we are researching a ‘discipline’ or a ‘field’ (see Wyse (2020) for a recent example). Newcomers to the research are sometimes puzzled by the contours of the debate and many more are puzzled about why it should matter. To those for whom such distinctions matter, the strength of feeling reflects the connotations of the two words – a ‘discipline’ is something that someone submits to, a professional community, a narrow set of epistemic rules which takes decades to master. The metaphor ‘field’, meanwhile, conjures an image of a sprawling wild space, ungoverned and uncharted. For Richard Peters (1963), such a field could only be truly understood according to the component disciplines of history, psychology, sociology and psychology; inevitably prompting further debate about whether these could, themselves, be considered disciplines. Behind these esoteric debates lies the key strength of education studies: its breadth of study. This edition of *Scottish Educational Review* reflects the eclecticism of the subject and its concerns.

The edition opens with **Biesta** considering probably the broadest question in education, that of purpose. Drawing on his keynote presentation from the 2022 SERA conference, Biesta challenges the assumption of learner-centred education which underlies a lot of Scottish educational policy. In its place, Biesta recommends a world-centred education which acknowledges that ‘the world is real and this puts limits and limitations on what we can want from it and do with it.’

The contribution by **Wilson and Hunter** has a much narrower scope: a case study of a single applicant to medical school. Taking a broadly Bourdieusian approach, the authors suggest that policies and strategies aimed at encouraging social mobility must take account of the importance of relational and community-level practices in developing the kinds of capital which still influence entry to elite professions. Also drawing on Bourdieu, **McCartney and Forbes** explore the importance of social capital to the work of speech and language therapists during the Covid-19 lockdowns and explore how collaboration and

horizontal networking allowed a more agile response to disruption than might otherwise have been possible.

Inevitably, the effect of the Covid pandemic also features largely in the summary of issues provided by the **SERA Poverty and Education Network**. Adherents to a narrow disciplinary conception of education studies might be surprised to read a single paper discussing digital technology, music tuition, school uniform and teacher training, others will be grateful for a stark reminder of the myriad ways that poverty permeates the work of educational professionals.

**Macleod and colleagues** explore the findings of a large-scale survey of children's views on parental support with their learning. The diligent analysis in the paper gives reasons for optimism – parents are helping children learn and this help is appreciated. Listening to the views of children also challenges some important common-sense assumptions – twelve-year-olds are not, it transpires, embarrassed by seeing their parents in school! The edition concludes, as is customary, with **Redford's** summary of education in the Scottish Parliament and book reviews.

As an aside, this is the first edition of the journal to be entirely produced by Brill Publishing, ending a period of transition for the journal. Our relationship with Brill means that we now have access to an automated editorial management system, expert typesetters and library databases. These developments are not just a boon to our editorial workload, but also increase the visibility and searchability of the work we publish. This edition is a first in another way, as we welcome Duncan Mercieca to his first edition as Associate Editor.

As always, we are enormously grateful to colleagues who have acted as reviewers for this edition, and we continue to invite submissions on any and all educational issues.

*Joe Smith, Robert Doherty and Duncan Mercieca*  
Editors

## References

- Peters, R. (1963). *Education as initiation: An Inaugural lecture delivered at the University of London Institute of Education 9 December 1963*. London: Harrap and Co.
- Wyse, D. (2020, October 19). *Education: An academic discipline or a field?* Retrieved from BERA Blog: <https://www.bera.ac.uk/blog/education-an-academic-discipline-or-a-field>.