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Change: Transformations in Education seeks to promote discussion of a wide range of issues, themes and problems arising from the varieties of change which now impact upon education at every level, in differing contexts and with enormously varied results. The orientation of the journal is cross-disciplinary and critical. The journal's intended readership is that of educational policy-makers, analysts and activists working in contexts of social and organisation change and development. It also aims to interest professionals involved in the planning and implementation of educational programs across all education sectors nationally and internationally. The journal is published twice a year, in May and November. These two issues constitute one volume.

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CHANGE
TRANSFORMATIONS IN EDUCATION
Youth sport in Australia and New Zealand

GUEST EDITORS: RICHARD LIGHT (UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY) 
CLIVE POPE (UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO)

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Foreword

SOMETIMES academics feel jealous of the media coverage and attention given to sport. Only a week or so ago a young Australian, Terry Tao, won a Fields Medal, the mathematical equivalent of a Nobel Prize, and the newspaper stories were muted compared with, say, Lleyton Hewitt’s triumph at Wimbledon. Bob Hawke famously urged bosses to pardon workers who had celebrated late for our America’s Cup victory and the nation stops on each first Tuesday in November for a handicap horse race.

This volume accepts the prominence of sport in Australian culture and goes on to explore the implications for education and community. There is emphasis on sport, not necessarily élite sport nor even competitive sport, as part of personal development, the making of friendships, discovery of identity and the formation of habits engendering an active lifestyle.

Such activities are by no means confined to schools or universities, as for example the surf life saving movement shows, but sport does play a prominent role in our educational institutions. At Sydney University we have highly successful teams and individuals at élite level and in recreational sports. We compete hard and achieve champion status in professional leagues for rugby, cricket, men’s and women’s water polo and women’s basketball. We outdo many nations in the Olympic Games. At the same time general sporting activities at social level form a pillar of university provision for students.

It was therefore a pleasure for me to attend and make a presentation at the forum on youth in sport which was organised by our Faculty of Education and Social Work. The forum took place when the debate over voluntary student unionism (VSU) was at its height. We understood that governments might be uncomfortable that students could be levied fees which, passed to elected student organisations, might be applied to political advocacy and action. Most found it perplexing, however, that a university education could be defined so instrumentally as to ignore the community value of all activities outside the formal classroom. How could a country with Australia’s pride in sporting achievements rule out sport as a legitimate part of the university experience?

We are now living with the consequences of a decision to implement VSU and to eliminate the possibility of a compulsory fee for sports participation. Sport is so important to youth development that it will survive in universities despite the cuts and our century-old clubs will live on.

The papers in this collection tell us why such optimism is justified. They describe the intimate synergy between sport and educational development and I am very pleased to see valuable reflections on sport forming a special issue of the Faculty journal Change: Transformations in Education.

PROFESSOR GA VIN BROWN AO F AA
Vice-Chancellor and Principal
Editorial:

Youth Sport in Australia and New Zealand

THE prominence of sport in Australia and New Zealand culture and its powerful influence on cultural and social life in both countries has significant implications for the human development of children and young people. This occurs, not only through children’s and young people’s participation in sport, but also through the influence of the discourses of sport including the pervasive influence of media sport. Sport also forms an important component of school curricula in the form of school sport and the teaching of sport and games within physical education programmes, yet it has been largely ignored in the general education literature. Over the past few decades there has been growing recognition of learning as a both a life-long process not confined to schools or classrooms and as a complex process involving more than just a disembodied individual mind. Recent developments in learning theories also highlight the importance of the body and its senses for learning and the significance of non-conscious, embodied learning. This all suggests that children’s and young people’s experiences of sport can make a very significant contribution toward their social, cognitive, affective and physical development and that it deserves more attention from researchers in the education field.

In redressing this oversight in the education literature this special issue of Change comprises a selection of papers that examine issues in the practice and meaning of sport in the lives of young Australians and New Zealanders. These papers build on presentations made at the Forum on Youth Sport in Australia and New Zealand held on November 25, 2005 in the Faculty of Education and Social Work, University of Sydney. Twenty-two presentations by academics, coaches, athletes and teachers from across Australia and New Zealand covered a range of areas from school sport to indigenous sport. The forum also enhanced the growing relationship between the Universities of Sydney and Waikato, with five presentations made by colleagues from Waikato. The forum also featured a presentation by the University of Sydney Vice Chancellor, Professor Gavin Brown, entitled Combining Sport and Education in the Community.

The papers in this collection deal with a range of issues for children, young people and young adults in schools, community-based clubs and universities with a range of
foci from the affective dimensions of youth sport and physical education to youth coaching and sport in universities. As a distinctive feature of Australian cultural life the surf life saving movement forms the focus of the lead paper. Drawing on Lave and Wenger’s (1991) notion of situated learning, Richard Light examines the depth and range of learning arising from children’s participation in the nippers, the junior surf life saving activities programme run by most Australian surf clubs. Richard highlights the importance of this learning for the development of children’s identity and sense of belonging to a community of practice to suggest that schools may have something to learn from surf clubs. In Clive Pope’s paper on the importance of affect for youth sport and the need to maintain the qualities of sport as a form of play for children and youth, he warns that the imposition of competitive adult values in youth sport presents it as something that is a far too serious matter and devoid of fun and delight. He suggests that a dominant view of sport as a form of work requires critical scrutiny and provides the example of Samba Soccer as an example of how youth sport can be returned to its ludic roots. The third paper by Donna O’Connor and Andrew Bennie examines the issue of why youth sport coaches continue or discontinue with coaching. It examines their initial motives for coach participation and reasons for their withdrawal to suggest strategies for maximising coach participation at youth level.

The controversy about voluntary student unionism (VSU) raised questions about the place that sport holds within university life and in the fourth paper Steve Georgakis addresses this issue. He argues that the promotion of sport has been one of the significant functions that Australian universities have performed with obvious benefits to the community, that sport has always loomed large within university student life and that universities have made a major, and sometimes unrecognised, contribution to the organisation, development and promotion of sport within Australia. The last two papers in the collection address issues of children’s and young people’s attitudes toward, and attachment to, sport in quite different settings. Sunny Chen and Richard Light draw on research conducted in a Sydney primary school on the capacity of pedagogical innovation, Game Sense, to make an impact upon year six children’s attitudes toward sport (cricket and softball). Their intervention over one term resulted in very positive responses to the Game Sense approach reported by the ‘less sporty’ children in the class. This was not only in terms of their attitude toward cricket and softball, but also in the relations between students in the class and in general class behaviour. The final paper, by Andrew Bennie and Donna O’Connor, examines the problem of youth drop-out in track and field in elite junior athletes during the transition years (18–24). The paper draws on a recent study to examine the psychological, social, economic, educational and political forces exerting pressure on the athlete during the transition years but suggest that there are also increasing opportunities for elite athletes to continue participating at an elite level to conclude with proposals for addressing this drop-out.

It is not often that education journals feature issues devoted to sport and we are very thankful for the opportunity provided to us to present this special issue. The papers in this issue of Change offer some valuable insights into the practice and meaning of children’s
and youth sport in Australian and New Zealand and we are hopeful that they will contribute toward stimulating some debate on the place of sport in the development and education of children and young people. Most importantly we trust that this issue will highlight the significance of children’s and youth experiences of sport for learning and development as part of an ongoing process and, in doing so, contribute toward the inclusion of sport in educational debate.

RICHARD LIGHT AND CLIVE POPE, GUEST EDITORS
