Looking back to understand the present and future

We are pleased to announce publication of the fourth and final issue of the *Journal of Educational Administration and History* for 2018. The articles in this issue reflect a great depth and breadth of work, in keeping with the scope and focus of the journal. It is particularly interesting to reflect on these articles in the context of a time when global and national politics seem to be rapidly changing in an uncertain direction. While it is unclear where the current wave of populism will leave the likes of the United States, Great Britain, Turkey and many others, it is clear that the arc of history is trending toward the exercise of force rather than compassion, toward isolationism and away from globalism, and toward the consolidation of elite power and wealth rather than an equitable distribution of goods and resources. In the midst of this protean situation, scholars of educational administration are left to ask – what do these socio-political changes mean for the present and future of educational administration? In a way, each of the articles in this issue examine aspects of a response to this question.

In ‘Hegemony and the politics of education: from the post-war era to the post-handover era,’ Tracy Chui Shan Lau examines the process of Chinese nation-building from a critical and postcolonial perspective in relation to the ways they played out during the transfer of sovereignty in two time periods – from both England and China. Her study highlights the ways that colonial power can be used to maintain hegemony, both as a cultural and economic manifestation.

Heather Jacklin’s ‘The Imagined Subject of Schooling in the Logic of Policy’ considers ways in which shifts occur in the social imaginary at moments of substantial social, economic and political change, and draws on an illustrative historical example of the working of this logic in the context of the Cape Colony and apartheid South Africa. In doing so, she examines the extent to which historical trends and behaviours in policy can be used to make sense of current events.

‘From Allocative to Technical Efficiency: Reconsidering the Basic Assumptions of Educational Productivity,’ by Tal Gilead challenges longstanding economic assumptions about educational productivity. In doing so, she unpacks the notions of efficiency and productivity through a fascinating analysis, one which has contemporary application.

Scott Eacott’s ‘Theoretical notes on a relational approach to principals’ time use’ examines his topic not only from a quantitative but also a qualitative perspective, challenging the idea that time use is only about the number of minutes devoted to a certain task. He instead develops a way of thinking about time that is defined in a relational sense, one that perhaps rejects the school as factory model and embraces something based on bonds of intimacy.

In ‘Pre-figurative practice: Alec Clegg’s leadership in the West Riding of Yorkshire,’ Margaret Wood examines Alec Clegg’s educational leadership and practice from 1945 to 1974. In doing so, she and her co-authors identify a variety of practices that seem to promote thriving school systems – a timely message for our era.

The issue concludes with two book reviews. In the first, Taeyeon Kim looks at Scott Eacott’s *Beyond Leadership: A Relational Approach to Organizational Theory in Education* and finds it both challenging and rewarding. The book revolves around the development of ‘relationality’ as both a theory and a methodology that promises to reorient the field toward a more
humanistic way of practice. The second review examines John Smyth’s critique of neoliberalism in the academy, *The Toxic University. Zombie Leadership, Academic Rock Stars, and Neoliberal Ideology*. In the review, Shelleyann Scott argues that Smyth ‘presents a candid exploration of a range of key contemporary issues that have changed the academy.’ She finds the writing engaging and the analysis sharp but also humorous.

Collectively considered these examinations of history suggest ways we can make meaning of a turbulent present and perhaps reconsider our directions for the future. As scholars and practitioners of educational administration attempt to navigate an increasingly complicated and at times fraught system and society, these authors offer much food for thought.

Jeffrey S. Brooks  
*RMIT University, Australia*  
✉ Jeffrey.brooks@rmit.edu.au

Jane Wilkinson  
*Monash University, Australia*

Amanda Heffernan  
*Monash University, Australia*  
✉ http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8306-5202