The following PhD vacancies and research topics within the School of Education were compiled in November 2013 and were correct at the time of publication.

For further guidance on pursuing a PhD in any of these areas, please consult the School of Education website or contact the relevant members of academic staff as listed below.

**Drawing to learn**

Supervisor: **Professor Shaaron Ainsworth** ([shaaron.ainsworth@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:shaaron.ainsworth@nottingham.ac.uk))

When children and adults are learning complicated new ideas, research suggests that drawing can be an effective and engaging way to learn. PhD projects in this area could research how drawing can support learning across the curriculum and in a range of age groups. They could explore how drawing supports observation, how it can be used to learn representational conventions and whether it can be used as learning strategy. They can explore if there are individual differences that moderate the effectiveness of drawing to learn and whether training can help people draw to learn better. Finally, PhD projects could explore how technology mediated drawing (e.g. by drawing with fingers on a tablet) change the process and outcomes of drawing to learn.

**School leadership**

Supervisor: **Professor Tony Bush** ([tony.bush@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:tony.bush@nottingham.ac.uk))

School leadership is increasingly linked to school improvement, with growing recognition that effective leadership leads to enhanced student outcomes. Further research is required to extend understanding of the ways in which leaders operate and about their impact on their schools and students. Ph.D. projects in this area include, but are not limited to,

1. leadership for learning;
2. leadership development;
3. leadership theory;
4. comparative school leadership.

**English Language Teachers: discourse and professional development**

Supervisor: **Dr Jane Evison** ([jane.evison@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:jane.evison@nottingham.ac.uk))

Spoken and online interactions play a key role in the professional development of English language teachers. PhD research projects in this area could focus on the discourse of second
language teacher education in international contexts, especially those which feature teachers and teacher educators from a variety of linguistic backgrounds. Projects might also investigate and develop dialogic models of reflective practice to challenge the orthodoxy that reflection is a solitary activity. Finally, projects could also consider the effects of mobility and place on language teachers’ professional development discourses.

**Drama and Education**

**Supervisor:** **Dr Anton Franks** ([anton.franks@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:anton.franks@nottingham.ac.uk))

Children and young people doing drama and creative arts in and out of schooling; drama, English and media in education; applied drama and theatre; learning in drama and the arts in a sociocultural/cultural-historical perspective; learning as socially organised, meaning making activity; the body, embodiment and affect in relation to mind, learning and development; the making of meanings and multimodal social semiotics; multimodal social semiotic, ethnographically derived, qualitative and interpretative methodologies.

**Mathematical underachievement and pupil social-economic backgrounds**

**Supervisor:** **Dr Peter Gates** ([peter.gates@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:peter.gates@nottingham.ac.uk))

It is very well known that pupils from poorer and more disadvantaged socio-economic background do worse in mathematics than those young people form more affluent neighbourhoods. There is however a need to examine a number of questions that arise from this. What micro-processes go on to sustain this stratification at the level of the classroom? What aspects of pupils’ cognitive development might be connected to pupils early upbringing? How some less-affluent pupils actually do succeeded against the odds? What can schools do to buck the trend and support children from poorer home backgrounds?

**Changing Literacy Practices In and Out of School**

**Supervisor:** **Professor Christine Hall** ([Christine.hall@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:Christine.hall@nottingham.ac.uk))

New technologies are enabling us to communicate in different ways and to different audiences. There is much that is unknown or unpredicted in the field of literacy: new forms and genres are emerging and new literacy practices are developing, often sitting alongside more traditional reading and writing behaviours. Meanwhile – and perhaps in response to these changes – school literacy practices are becoming more tightly circumscribed. PhD projects could usefully add to knowledge about this hybrid and rapidly changing landscape. Ethnographic or interview-based studies might focus on literacy learning either in or out of school, or across home and institutional settings. The focus might be on the literacy practices of particular groups as
defined by, for example, age, location, gender. Pedagogic studies might be focused on aspects of literacy teaching and learning, through textual or discourse analysis. There are interesting philosophical questions to explore, for example about notions of creativity and about the function of the arts in education, and literary critical and cultural questions to take up about, for example, what children read and the changing nature of children’s literature.

**Adult & lifelong education: policies, practices, histories**

Supervisor: **Dr John Holford** ([john.holford@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:john.holford@nottingham.ac.uk))

Across the world, policies now stress the importance of lifelong learning. How are policies and practices in adult and lifelong education made? Where have they come from and why? How are they carried out? Who is most involved? Which social actors and forces have the most influence? Who gains and who loses? Examples of PhD projects could be: how policies are made in the European Union, and how this affects member states and different social actors; how national histories, institutions and cultures shape the development of policies; the role of particular policy instruments such as indicators and "policy learning"; adult learning in particular institutional settings, such as higher education; the role of social movements in shaping adult and lifelong education. Projects may be historical or contemporary, focus on public, private or not-for-profit sectors, and use a range of methodologies.

**Transitions into school and ‘school readiness’**

Supervisor: **Dr Philip Hood** ([Philip.hood@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:Philip.hood@nottingham.ac.uk))

There is currently in England a vigorous debate between policy makers and early years specialists about the nature of the provision for children aged 3-5. The term ‘school readiness’ (where the child should be made ready for school) is used by some to support a move towards more formal teacher-centred instruction. Others believe that the school setting should be designed to be ready for the child (ie for the full range of different children who appear in school at age 3 or 4. The transition into more formal schooling at age 5-6 is also a subject of hot debate. This broad theme encompasses a great range of research possibilities not just with regard to the UK but with a focus on the age range internationally. These might include the nature of the curriculum for that age group in the UK and in other nations, issues of appropriate pedagogy, issues of assessment of young children, or an exploration of young children’s physical, socio-emotional and linguistic developmental stages. Collaboration within the School of Education is possible with specialists in Special Needs Education and through the University’s Children and Childhood Network there could be opportunities for joint supervisions with lecturers in Psychology or Health Sciences.

**Authenticity in learning**
When children and adults are learning new information and skills, research suggests that those who are using their strengths and who feel intrinsically motivated will learn faster and achieve a higher level of competence than those whose learning is extrinsically motivated. The result will be a sense of authenticity in the person and ownership of the new information and skills. PhD projects in this area could research either naturalistically or experimentally how the sense of authenticity, intrinsic motivation and the use of personal strengths can support learning across the curriculum and in a range of age groups. They could explore how different activities for different individuals, such as acting, drawing or writing can be effective learning strategies when the person is most authentic. Finally, PhD projects could also explore how teachers engage with young people in such a way as to support their intrinsic motivation, such as the role of dialogic teaching, or youth-driven learning, and the ways in which these foster authenticity in young people and enhance learning.

Vocational education and training for human development

Supervisor:  Professor Simon McGrath (simon.mcgrath@nottingham.ac.uk)

The current VET orthodoxy assumes that economic rationality is everything and focuses narrowly on immediate employability. Yet, development theory increasingly accepts the need to think about broader human development. Are vocational learners, often already relatively marginalised and poor, to be deemed unworthy of benefitting from broader human development? Do the poor only have an economic rationale? PhD projects in this area would explore aspects of a counter-position through one or more of the following approaches:

1. work on alternative indicators for measuring VET success;
2. ethnographic study of learners, teachers and or institutions in the VET sector;
3. life histories of workers from groups neglected by the dominant discourse (e.g., women, informal sector workers or people living with disabilities); or
4. philosophical work on aspects of a theory of vocational learning for human development.

Education for Sustainable Development

Supervisor:  Dr Sarah Speight (sarah.speight@nottingham.ac.uk)

Education for Sustainable Development is a research field with increasingly practical applications within higher education pedagogy and curriculum development. The ESD agenda is being linked to employability and internationalisation - is how we learn as important as what we learn for the development of sustainability literate global graduates equipped for current and future worlds of work? PhD projects in this area could explore assessment strategies for ESD,
co-curricular awards and their impacts upon formal academic outcomes, the relationship between sustainability and employability, online and blended learning within ESD programmes, and the impact of cross-cultural teaching and learning upon ESD.

**Teachers’ work, teacher professionalism and education policy**

Supervisor:  **Professor Howard Stevenson**  ([howard.stevenson@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:howard.stevenson@nottingham.ac.uk))

Teachers’ work is changing. Although classrooms continue to look much like they have done for decades there are real signs that the basic nature of teaching is changing. New routes into teaching, shifting demographic profiles within teaching, new modes of managing teachers’ labour and the possibility of technology having a significant impact on the teaching process are common experiences in many parts of the world. These shared experiences in part reflect the growing influence of transnational edu-businesses as educational ideas, innovations and policies circulate around the globe with increasing rapidity. There is therefore a need to understand the changing nature of teaching. Are changes we see further incremental change in an on-going evolution of the role, or are we at a point when a number of factors may genuinely transform teaching, and what it means to be a teacher? What will the educational workforce of the future look like? What will teaching as work look like, and how might the professional identities of education workers be shifting? PhD studies in these areas may take a range of different methodological approaches, but offer the possibility of helping analyse and understand significant developments in the work of teachers and the teaching profession. Quite how significant is what we need to better understand and highlights the need for new work in this area.

**Suicide, self-harm and substance misuse (including alcohol and drugs) in educational settings**

Supervisor:  **Dr Gary Winship**  ([gary.winship@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:gary.winship@nottingham.ac.uk))

From primary schools to higher education settings. The role of teachers, tutors and allied health professionals. Education settings as primary mental health environs. Schools as therapeutic communities and the development of pupil well-being and emerging group and social dynamic of democratic citizenship, especially through social games and sport.