

Report on behalf of the National Refereeing Panel for the reviewing of papers for the NZARE 2006 conference

Report prepared by Dr Richard Smith (NRP co-convenor, VP NZARE) on behalf of the NZARE NRP subcommittee consisting of: Professor Clive McGee (chair); Dr Lynne Whitney (co-chair); Dr Colleen McMurchy-Pilkington (NZARE council, Māori caucus); Dr Airini (NZARE council, Pasifika caucus); Ms Anne Elliot (NZARE council, student representative); Dr Joanna Higgins; and Dr Shirley Gillett.

In total there were **40** full papers sent in for review, 34 of these were single papers and six of these were papers as part of symposia (one with four papers, and the other two).

Of these 40 papers **26** (65. %) were accepted outright, or with minor amendments; and the remaining **14** had at least one of the two reviewers rejecting the paper and were sent to a third reviewer. After the third review, and additional **5** (12.5%) more papers were accepted as attaining the *standard* for the conference and the remaining **9** (22.5%), were rejected by the third reviewer, thus did not make the standard. Interestingly, one of the authors of a paper which had been accepted decided to withdraw the paper from the refereed stream and place the paper in the non-refereed section. Thus, the acceptance rate for papers that were refereed for the 2006 NZARE conference was a pleasing **77.5%**.

Two authors submitted two papers for refereeing, whilst the rest submitted only one paper for refereeing.

In terms of the increasing internationalisation of the NZARE conference were three papers submitted from authors located outside of Aotearoa/New Zealand (all were from Australia).

NRP reviewing for 2006

The NRP 2006 database consisted of some 84 potential reviewers, and five (nearly 6%) of these are located outside of Aotearoa/New Zealand: two in Australia; two in the USA and one in the United Arab Emirates. The remaining 79 are mostly located within tertiary institutions in NZ. Over a fifth of the pool of reviewers were not currently NZARE members, but members of other professional associations.

In total of **70** reviewers from the pool of **84** (some almost 81%) refereed papers for the conference. Most referees (almost four fifths) reviewed only one paper, but some did two or more, and this was especially true for those reviewing papers associated broadly with Māori education. (See table 1 below).

Table 1: The number and percentages of papers reviewed by NRP

No. of reviewers	No. of papers	Percentage
56	1	80.00
8	2	11.42
3	3	4.28
3	4	4.28
70	-	99.99

In the process for reviewing adopted was to send the papers to two reviewers with content knowledge of the broad area and to try to send to at least one very experienced reviewer and a second who was relatively experienced, or preferably an ‘emergent’ reviewer. In some cases this was not always possible given the topics and content of the papers. In virtually all cases requiring a third reviewer the paper was sent to a very experienced reviewer.

NRP quality assurance processes

Each of the seven member NRP sub-committee was assigned about six papers from the 40 submitted. They all read the reviewers’ reports for quality assurance purposes, to ascertain that the referees’ review was ‘rigorous’ and that feedback was fair and that there was ‘sufficient’ commentary to justify their decisions. The NRP sub-committee commented on issues where there might have been inconsistencies in awarding of grades/categories and comments made. Each member of the sub-committee was asked to provide written feedback to the co-convenors and other panel members on the overall quality of reviewing.

Overall comments on the quality of the reviewing, suggestions for improvement

The comments below were indicative of what the NRP sub-committee noted and recommended for ongoing development and change of the NRP process. The NZARE is a research conference which aims to build capability in the sector, and is also engaged in building up a reviewer base. Quality in the reviewing/refereeing process is a crucial element. The following comments are intended to enhance the review process:

5. Section: Brief Comments:

It would be appreciated by *all* authors to have some critical feedback, no matter how exceptional their paper. In some cases the advice was two sentences ('good, look forward to seeing presentation'). This might be seen to be seems inadequate.

There is a tension between what the association stands for and what we expect in refereed papers. This is a research conference and therefore the expectation is that the papers being presented especially for refereeing would have a research base or at least be written from an informed position that has taken cognisance of the literature in the area. Although it is worth noting that some research areas have limited amounts of published writing.

Another consideration is the need to build capacity and to support emerging researchers, although even emerging researchers need to have some idea who is saying what in their field in order to identify the gaps, that is what is not being said.

We need to consider our standing as a research organisation if papers accepted in the refereed category are not scholarly, that is they appear more 'show and tell' or descriptive with little or no reference to literature or with a theoretical base. These papers should be REJECTED as refereed papers, but accepted as oral presentations to encourage new and emerging researchers.

Specific advice for those reviewing Pasifika research

Research involving Pasifika peoples as participants or as researchers or as methodologies should be referenced to Pasifika research methods literature and examples, in addition to general research methods and literature. This should be done by people with expertise in Pasifika research methodologies (e.g. Ministry of Education Pacific Education Research, Pacific Research: Health Research Council, PBRF Pasifika Research Guidelines).

Recommendations for changes for the 2007 NRP and 2007 NZARE conference

1. That more Māori education scholars be encouraged to become members of the NRP to share the load for reviewing.
2. That more Pasifika education scholars be encouraged to become members of the NRP to share the load for reviewing.
3. That more emergent researchers (and student members) be encouraged to become members of the NRP to build the research capacity of the NZARE for the future.
4. That changes be made to the NRP on-line application form to make it both easier to fill in and also contain more information on experience, and specific information on research outputs.
5. That the dates for submitting *full* papers for refereeing for NZARE conferences be much earlier than in the past. Tentatively this could be as early as the *1st of August*.

These proposed changes will make the process more helpful, transparent and professional, will hopefully assist in building a cabal of researchers and reviewers and also the credibility of the refereeing process. It will also tighten up the timeframes overcoming the long delays from 2006, and make the authors, referees and the NRP sub-committee more accountable for timeliness, quality and outcomes.

Richard Smith
March 2007