Preface

Introducing the authors

All researchers have stories to tell about why they chose to work with particular topics and approaches; and Creative Research Methods in Education: Principles and Practices is very much a reflection of the authors’ journeys. Creative approaches often involve techniques that invite participants to engage differently from more conventional methods employed in education research, and in our own practice and teaching we have frequently wanted to refer to or recommend a book that brings together creative methods and the field of education studies. This book has emerged from a collaborative venture between four authors, Helen Kara, Narelle Lemon, Dawn Mannay and Megan McPherson, and we offer brief introductions to provide some insights about our relationships with creative ways of working in educational spaces.

Helen Kara is an independent researcher based in England with interests in the areas of social care, health and the voluntary sector. She teaches research methods to practitioners and students through training and through speaking at conferences nationally and internationally. Helen wrote the key texts Creative Research Methods: A Practical Guide (Policy Press, 2nd edn 2020) and Research Ethics in the Real World: Euro-Western and Indigenous Perspectives (Policy Press, 2018). She has become a well-known figure on social media through her blog at https://helenkara.com/blog/ and her creative research methods chat on Twitter. Helen uses the hashtag #CRMethods for general discussions on creative methods and #CRMethodsChat for a monthly discussion on a key topic – and everyone is welcome to contribute.

Narelle Lemon is an education researcher and Associate Professor based at the Department of Education, Faculty of Health, Arts and Design in Swinburne University of Technology in Melbourne, Australia. Narelle has a wealth of experience in educational practice, having been a primary and secondary school teacher, and now works with undergraduate and postgraduate students in the university sector. Narelle has produced numerous research outputs focusing on arts education, creative pedagogies, digital technologies and well-being, including her edited book Revolutionizing Arts Education in K-12 Classrooms through Technological Integration (Hershey, 2015) and the co-authored book Representations of Working in the Arts: Deepening the Conversations (Intellect, 2014).

Dawn Mannay is a Reader (Associate Professor) in the School of Social Sciences at Cardiff University in Wales, with interests in education, inequalities, children and young people and identities. Dawn teaches creative methods in the UK and internationally, and authored the book Visual, Narrative and Creative Research Methods: Application, Reflection and Ethics (Routledge, 2016a), based on her lectures with undergraduate and postgraduate students. Dawn also co-edited
the second edition of *The Sage Handbook of Visual Research Methods* (Sage, 2020) with Luc Pauwels. Dawn is committed to working creatively with communities to produce data and disseminate the messages from research findings in innovative ways that move beyond the standard academic report or journal article, thereby increasing impact and the potential for social and educational change.

**Megan McPherson** is a practising artist, educator and Tutor in Art and Intercultural Research at The University of Melbourne, Australia. As an artist, Megan has exhibited professionally since 1989 and her artwork has featured in significant printmaking and installation works in the state of Victoria and regional art galleries. Megan has published widely on the topics of creative practice, social media and arts education (McPherson, 2018, 2015).

Having offered brief introductions, it is important to explain why we came together to write this book. We were primarily motivated to work together because of the conversations we had with students and practitioners, face-to-face and online, in our working lives. Although there are a range of useful books on visual and creative methods (see Pink, 2001; Reavey, 2011b; Harper, 2012; Banks and Zeitlyn, 2015; Rose, 2016), these do not have a specific focus on education research or practice. Consequently, students and practitioners often ask us about where they can find a text about how to work creatively in the field of education, preferably one with a range of concrete examples, case studies and practical advice. This book is an attempt to attend to these requests and is the result of a collaborative journey of bringing together best-practice examples and reflecting on creative research in education in all its stages – design, data gathering, analysis and dissemination. We invite you to join us on the journey that this book represents and engage with familiar and unfamiliar materials, ideas, concepts, frameworks and reflections across the pages of *Creative Research Methods in Education: Principles and Practices*.

**Who this book is for**

You do not have to be an artist, designer or engineer to use creative research methods. Everyone is creative, and engaging with creative research methods offers many opportunities to support learning, whether your own or that of others. Singing, dance, theatre, movement, crafting, sculptures, drawing, crochet, cartoons, poetry, writing, blogging, journaling, photography or visual representations (to name a few) within the space of education offer powerful ways to ignite and illuminate voice, participation and engagement. This book will be of interest to anyone wanting to find out more about creative research methods and research projects across the field of education. However, primarily the book was developed for undergraduate education students, educational practitioners and postgraduates in the field of education who have had little access to teaching on creative research methods. This audience has influenced the design of the book, and each of the chapters offers a background to contextualise the set topic, a range of best-practice case studies and reflective questions to support the reader.
How to use the book

We have written this book to illustrate how creative methods can be accessible and connect theoretical positions with practical solutions. The book brings together concrete applications of creative research methods in education research, with a range of case studies and reflective and discussion questions to support learning. We have aimed to inform and inspire education researchers and practitioners to conduct more creative research.

The following chapters unpack case studies through the format of ‘Who and where’, ‘What’, ‘Why’, ‘How’, ‘Tips’ and ‘Traps’ and a series of ‘Reflective questions’. Given the central importance of ethical practice, each chapter also features a section dedicated to ethics in education research. The book is intended to support students who want to draw on creative approaches in their undergraduate projects and dissertation studies; postgraduate researchers in the field of education; and practitioners, researchers or students interested in implementing education-focused forms of inquiry. As such, all phases of the research process are explored so that the reader can be supported with designing and implementing a study and analysing, writing up and sharing research findings.

The book offers:

• insights into the potential of creative methods in education research;
• case studies providing concrete real-life examples;
• practical advice and tips on how to use creative methods in education research;
• reflective and discussion questions to support learning.

Importantly, you can engage with this book in any way that suits your needs and preferences. You may want to read from front to back, dip in and out of different chapters and case studies, or read in line with particular topics and assessments linked with your taught modules or practice-based experience. It is your book. However, we have written it to reflect the specific detail that students, researchers and practitioners would require in order to consider and reconsider how to engage with and implement creative research methods in education. Consequently, the ordering of the book offers some contextualisation for the reader before reflecting on the stages of the research process.

We welcome you to the book and hope that here you will find answers to questions about the thinking, planning, doing and disseminating of creative research in education. We very much enjoyed researching for and writing Creative Research Methods in Education: Principles and Practices. We hope that you too will enjoy the journey – and that the case studies and examples presented will be a source of support and inspiration in trying new approaches and working more creatively.