



**Interview with Dr. Annette Hilton and Dr. Geoff Hilton and their team**

***Winner of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Research and Practice Project Award 2013***

**1. Can you please tell the EAPRIL community something more about yourself and your research background?**

We were both teachers for many years before making the transition to research. This experience has influenced the type of research we conduct and the methods used. We both focus on science and mathematics education research and are especially interested in the professional development of teachers in these subject areas. Our goal is to support teachers to become more effective practitioners so that students may ultimately benefit. To do this effectively, we are particularly interested in the capacity of practitioner research as a form of teacher professional learning. The other members of the team (Associate Professor Shelley Dole and Professor Merrilyn Goos) were unable to attend the conference. Both have extensive experience in mathematics education research.

**2. Can you please tell the EAPRIL community something more about your awarded project?**

This project focused on the development of effective teaching and learning of proportional reasoning in middle school classrooms. It involved over 120 teachers and school leaders and around 2 000 students in about 20 Australian schools over a period of three years. The focus of the project was an ongoing professional development program combined with multiple opportunities for teachers to engage in practitioner research using an educational design research framework.

**3. What was your motivation to apply for the Best Research and Practice Project Award?**

We were very excited about the outcomes of our project and wanted to share it with the wider research community. We saw it as an opportunity and a challenge to reflect on and draw together all of the aspects of the project into one presentation package.

#### **4. Why did you feel that your project made a good chance to win the Best Research and Practice Project Award?**

We were confident that our project was well designed and had many important outcomes that verified its effectiveness. It aligned well with the criteria for the Best Research and Practice Award and we felt we would be able to demonstrate synergy between the important roles played by the researchers and the participating teachers and school leaders who undertook practitioner research. After seeing the presentations from the other award finalists, we realised how many excellent projects were being presented. It was a wonderful opportunity to discuss the varied research projects with the other finalists.

#### **5. How has the EAPRIL Research and Practice Project Award and/or the experience of competing for this award (i.e. presenting your application at the conference in several timeslots) helped you and your research activities as a researcher?**

This award and the experience we gained from competing against such high quality opponents has helped us to realize how important practitioner research is and the significant contribution it has to make to research and to practice. The award has helped us to refine our presentation skills and made us aware of the key aspects of our project that could be the focus of further research. Receiving the award has drawn attention to the project in our own institutions in Australia and Denmark and has also provided us with the enthusiasm and impetus to continue this research focus. We would like to thank the EAPRIL team for all their hard work in organizing this award.

#### **6. You have been visiting the EAPRIL Conference for quite some years now. What keeps you coming back to the conference?**

This conference truly has a community atmosphere. We have always felt included in that community and the conference attendees are supportive and enthusiastic. Being able to share what you do with like-minded people who share your research interests and goals and who value practitioner research has been very rewarding for both of us.

#### **7. Why would you recommend the EAPRIL Conference to your colleagues?**

We have recommended the EAPRIL Conference to our colleagues, some of whom were with us in 2013, and some who hope to attend future EAPRIL Conferences. There are several reasons for this recommendation (in addition to our answer to Question 6). Firstly, their research interests align with the focus on EAPRIL conferences so this is a perfect opportunity for them to share their work and make contact and learn from others in this field. Secondly, the EAPRIL community is very friendly and supportive with a passion for practice-based research. Finally, everyone who attends is sure to gain great knowledge and ideas from other delegates.

#### **8. What makes a good practitioner researcher according to you?**

We think a good practitioner researcher is someone who maintains a passion for the classroom (or other learning environment) and seeks to minimize any disconnect between research and practice, so that research is accessible to both the research community and practitioners. It also ensures

that research outcomes reflect varied contexts and contextual factors and ultimately have the potential to maximize teaching and in turn learning outcomes. Practitioner research is also a powerful and meaningful form of professional learning. Conferences such as EAPRIL provide a great outlet for presenting and learning about practitioner research.

### **9. Finally, what would be your advice for the applicants of 2014?**

If you believe in your project then enter this award. It is a privilege to be part of such a great conference and the award process is a challenging and rewarding experience. It is a wonderful opportunity to distil the key aspects of your project. Because of the rigorous process, we were afforded a deep insight into the other teams' research approaches and outcomes. This was a valuable learning experience regardless of the outcome of the competition. Once again, many thanks for this great opportunity. We would strongly encourage other research teams to participate.

**Thank you!**

**Interested in applying for the 2014 Best Research & Practice Project Award?**

**Visit our [Conference Website](#) and download the application form!**

**Deadline June 12, 2014**

**Decision nomination, beginning of July, 2014**

