

EDITORIAL

December 2016

This final edition of 2016 features two very different articles that represent the growing diversity among the rural education field both here and internationally. The first paper examines access to basic education and teacher turnover in Nigeria, and the second looking at the affordances of online learning and flipped classroom approaches in a rural university. Together these two papers open up exciting avenues for rural education research.

Olatunji and Ajayi introduce us to the context of rural educating in Nigeria. Given, as they note, that 70 per cent of Africa's population lives in rural areas, it would seem that rural education research has many issues to engage with, insights to offer, and lessons to learn from, the African continent. Olatunji and Ajayi's paper provides us with a detailed overview of the challenges of education in rural areas in Nigeria, and Africa generally, such as poverty, access and resourcing. The paper contextualises the issue of teacher turnover, specifically teacher separation, as a significant issue in rural areas. The issue of teacher separation is examined in relation to the challenges of the rural context and the 'pull of the urban' – something that will be familiar to readers in all national contexts. While the paper in this edition is an introduction to rural Nigeria and the challenges of rural schooling there, it is followed up by their study of rural teacher turnover in rural school in Nigeria in the next edition of the journal. The growing body of research on the African context provides rich comparative data for our readers. The latest research builds on recent contributions by Manwa, Mukeredzi and Manwa (2016) who explore the issue of mentoring of beginning teachers in Zimbabwe.

In the second paper in this edition Hajhashemi, Caltabiano and Anderson examine the implementation of the 'flipped classroom' approach, where students engage with recorded lectures before student focussed tutorials/seminars, in a rural university. They position the approach as one that helps to ameliorate disadvantages experienced by rural university students, such as access to campus, and by scaffolding learning for often more socio-economically disadvantaged students who may otherwise face challenges in their learning. The paper highlights a number of issues for teachers, both in universities and schools, to consider in designing and delivering such a unit. Why is this an issue for rural universities? It would seem that many rural universities are in a precarious position, with limited research funding subsequently ensuring that the quality of the student learning experience essential to the institutions reputation. This however has its dangers, as we need to guard against a developing position of rural universities as teaching institutions, or institutions that research teaching for the professions. When considered in light of Heffernan, Fogarty and Sharplin's paper in the last edition on gamification, this paper by Hajhashemi, Caltabiano and Anderson reinforces the important role of technology in rural education. Many teachers in rural areas themselves engage with technologically enhanced preparation, or 'teach' over multiple sites - thus such work raises possibilities for informing more than university practice.

Undoubtedly some readers are wondering why this issue has two papers. It seems we may have been premature in stating that the last edition completed our transition to an online format. In the last editorial we noted some 'teething problems'. We subsequently discovered a few back house production issues didn't move to the new system as smoothly as hoped. We also discovered that our contact points did not forward as intended – for example if you have been attempting to contact the journal or journal manager on an address you used before November 2016 you need

to update your records and re-send any correspondence to 'journal@spera.asn.au'. It is important however that we meet publication schedules, hence this somewhat briefer edition, and to ensure we continue to highlight the exciting work moving through the review and editing system of the journal. The journal editors greatly appreciate the patience of our authors and readers over this time.

As we look ahead we have an exciting general edition of recent research coming your way in the April edition. In development for publication over the next couple of years are a number of exciting special editions. The second edition of 2017 features a special edition on 'rural schools as the socio-economic hubs of rural communities' featuring a range of international authors. Also in preparation are an edition examining the unique rural education issues of Tasmania, Australia, which holds valuable insights related to islands and education, an edition on rural education in China and one examining Indigenous education in rural spaces.