

EDITORIAL

April 2017

2017 is shaping up to be a seminal year for the *Australian and International Journal of Rural Education*. We now seem to have the new journal system established and have a large number of high quality papers moving through the editorial system. It has been great to see the increasing number of international submissions the journal is attracting, as well as scholars ranging from early career academics to well known leaders in the field. This edition brings together a range of papers that in their own ways ask us questions about what we value in rural schooling, the preparation of teachers for rural areas and the broader social issues at play in many of the rural contexts we work in and with.

In the first paper Ken Stevens continues a theme that has been through many recent editions – the preparation of teachers for rural schools and the role of technology in this preparation. In this paper Stevens examines a project that examined the use of technology to link pre-service and practicing teachers. This approach, he argues, helps students learn to both effectively use technology as well as explore the integration of educational theory and teaching practices for networked rural schools. Drawing on learnings in one project, but also a careers' experience, Stevens reminds us to consider the use of educational technology from the perspective of educational theory, rather than technology for its own sake or as a tool to overcome distance.

The Pre-service teacher education focus continues in the second paper. In this paper Ben Van Gelderen reports on a 'two way', place-based approach to Indigenous initial teacher education in remote Northern Territory. As he writes the 'paper is both a report concerning the successes of the program thus far and a critical reflection on some of the key findings that have evolved in regards to such a 'two way', place-based, Indigenous andragogic approach'. It is certainly within the scope of AIJRE to publish papers that tend towards a report of a program where the paper is of sufficient academic merit and relate to the journals scope and aims. This paper is an excellent example of how to achieve that for future authors. There is no doubt that in Australia we have a significant shortfall in the preparation of Indigenous teachers. As such the insights explored in this paper are instructive to teacher-educators regardless of their focus. The epistemological dialogues and exchange explored by being 'on country', its place based emphasis, and the incorporation of localised Indigenous Language and Knowledge within the Australian Curriculum all highlight a number of assumptions in modern schooling that may turn out to be problematic for indigenous students, and rural students more generally.

The third paper in the edition sees Krystle Vichie turn her attention to how rural youth come to pursuing a career in digital technology. This examination is situated within a discussion about rural youth's participation in higher education, and the need for digital competencies in the future workforce. Bringing together a synthesis of the current literature relating to Australian regional youth's low participation in higher education, and data on rural youths access to technology, this paper provides a timely update on two pressing issues of our time.

Linking to the theme of the assumptions of modern schooling implied in Ben Van Gelderen's paper, Philip Roberts brings an evolving methodological perspective to re-examining data from a 'rural standpoint'. In so doing Philip raises questions about some of the assumptions of the Australian curriculum, and the perspective from which much research related to rural issues are approached.

The potential for the curriculum to marginalise local knowledges in rural areas is explored, as well as the way the orientation of our research approaches may obscure such insights.

In the follow up to their paper in the last edition on teacher turnover in rural Nigerian schools, Stephen Ajayi and Oluwole Olatunji investigate teachers' intentions to quit the workforce and the relationship between turnover causations and teachers' demographic variables. By identifying the demographic variables that relate to an increased likelihood of leaving teaching, the authors help build an evidence base for policy initiatives that may increase teacher retention in Nigeria. Ajayi and Olatunji present a useful tool to the field for exploring teachers' intentions to leave rural schools within their well-designed quantitative study. The research tool may be of use to researchers in other national contexts.

In this edition's final paper, Jo-Anne Reid challenges both policy makers and practitioners to think differently about the challenges of persistent and entrenched local disadvantage in marginalised communities. Citing the evidence that many communities classified as being persistently disadvantaged are in rural areas, Reid argues that education in these contexts is 'both crucially important and inexorably difficult'. By focussing on a community that has been cited as in danger of 'dropping off the edge' the paper argues that educational solutions on their own are insufficient when such disadvantage has been socially and historically constructed over time. That said, Reid also calls into question some of our most cherished assumptions about rural communities and rural schooling. Given this paper picks up on a number of ideas touched upon in the preceding papers, the editors thought it would be a thought provoking conclusion to this edition and possible starting point for future research.

Looking ahead, with a focus on asset based rural contexts, the second edition of 2017 presents a special edition on 'rural schools as the socio-economic hubs of rural communities' featuring a range of international authors. Also in preparation are a further three special editions. The first examines the unique rural education issues of Australia's largest island state, Tasmania presenting valuable insights related to islands and education. The second edition captures rural education in China and the third examines Indigenous education in rural spaces. If you would like to be considered as contributors to any of these special editions, please contact the editors.

Finally, as we move to progressive publication we encourage readers to visit the journal website between editions for newly released 'pre-edition' papers. The AIJRE is well positioned as the leading journal in the rural education space. Recent changes to online publications, increased quality of papers, and application for Scopus inclusion reflects our editorial commitment to continual improvement and quality contributions to the field.