



# Australian and International Journal of Rural Education

## Editorial: School Communities and Partnerships

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### Abstract

In this issue of the *Australian and International Journal of Rural Education*, our authors explore the impact of partnerships on education in rural communities. Schools are expected to prepare students for an unknown and uncertain future. Partnerships between schools and industry, higher education providers and the wider community can achieve greater outcomes for students than schools working in isolation (Torii, 2018).

**Keywords:** *regional partnerships, regional communities*

### Editorial

In this last issue of the *Australian and International Journal of Rural Education* for 2022, we have six research articles with authors, from Australia, China, New Zealand and the United States, who share perspectives about rural education partnerships.

Molly O' Dea and colleagues' paper discusses peer reviewed literature on industry perspectives of industry school partnerships. Literature published from around the world in English between 2001 and 2021 is included. The literature review shows a dearth of research regarding industry perspectives. The authors discuss reasons for participating and barriers to participation in industry-school partnerships. Elements of successful partnerships are identified. Recommendations from the review will inform school-agricultural partnerships with the intent of promoting careers in agriculture to students.

Jaime Manning and colleagues discuss an agricultural technology teaching resource called GPS Cows which was created through a partnership between the NSW Department of Education and CQUniversity. GPS Cows is aligned to the mandated technology curriculum in NSW, which includes the teaching of agricultural and food technologies. It is designed to engage students in activities for agriculture, food, and other technologies. The paper reviews the impact of a professional learning workshop for teachers delivering GPS Cows. The authors show that inclusion of immersive activities within professional learning provided teachers, including those teaching outside their subject specialisation, with the knowledge required to support student learning.

With fewer students commencing teacher education and an increasing number of teachers leaving the profession, attraction and retention of effective teachers has become critical around

the world. In regional locations, the problem is more significant. Tena Versland and colleagues discuss strategies to address rural teacher recruitment, such as financial incentives, field experiences and recruiting local high school students (grow your own). The paper analyses the impact of rural field experiences on the job decisions of new graduates. The authors summarise that teacher education programs should provide rich rural field opportunities for pre-service teachers.

Kerry Earl Rinehart's article focuses on rural principals and the expectations the school community has of them. The study, based in New Zealand, offers insights into the perceptions of six current principals and eight ex-principals, based on their interactions with members of the school community, which included parents and others from the local community with an interest in what happens at school. The ways that community members influence principals, and how principals respond to the sometimes-competing expectations are brought to light with some rich and detailed quotes from the research respondents. The research reported here, of course, only tells one side of a story about the relationship between principals and their school communities, and it begs the question, "what do community members themselves think?"

Cathy Stone, Sharron King and Chris Ronan discuss how partnerships between universities, regional schools and regional communities in South Australia can assist regional students make informed decisions about post-school options. University participation rates of regional students are lower than those of their metropolitan counterparts. The authors explore how visits to regional schools by universities are perceived by school staff and students. Perceptions were found to be negative and did not answer the practical questions regarding attending university in the city. The authors suggest that universities seek input from regional schools and their communities (including parents) about what they want from these outreach visits, so that they can be tailored to the needs of students.

Liuning Yang takes us to Nanjing, China, where rural-urban migrant groups' children are at risk of educational marginalisation and exclusion. Government policy, called *Tenants Have the Same Right as Householders*, aims to give rural-urban migrants equitable access to a range of services, including education for their children. The study on which the article is based reveals the combined influence of public policy and cultural capital on issues of equitable access to education for this group of people. The research suggests that policy targeted at this marginalised group will not be enough to improve educational equity. Rather, the need for a focus on equitable distribution of resources more generally is suggested as a key lever for change.

The final article in this issue is a written version of a keynote address given by the Regional Education Commissioner, Fiona Nash, who opened this year's *National Conference for Regional, Rural and Remote Education*. The keynote focuses on aspiration, access and attainment for rural, regional and remote students. Fiona shares some of the challenges and solutions she sees from her perspective. This is a timely article, as it brings to our attention the importance of "backing ourselves" to take hold of opportunities that those of us in regional communities have. Fiona also comments that "keeping rural regional and remote Australia in the forefront of the minds of decision makers is absolutely vital."

Taken together, this interesting set of articles places schools at the nexus of community, government policy, the local community, other education providers and industry. And this is perhaps exactly where they should be. Torii (2018) argues that "intermediaries that facilitate partnerships play an important role in the education ecosystem, and include organisations like industry associations, universities, not-for-profit organisations and government departments." This issue of the *Australian and International Journal of Rural Education* brings these "intermediaries" to the fore.

As the year draws to a close, as the Editor, I (John) want to acknowledge the outstanding and dedicated work done by members of our editorial team who volunteer so much of their time,

putting love and passion into the Journal. I also thank the newly established International Editorial Advisory Board, who have fielded many, many papers for review and have provided constructive feedback to our authors. Last year, we set out to improve the quality of the Journal and increase the readership. The achievement of Scopus listing has been an important milestone for the Journal and paves the way for better recognition of the Journal as an outlet of choice for academics and practitioners. I thank Sue Ledger for her persistence on this, and for registering the Journal with CrossRef for DOIs (Digital Object Identifiers), which now provide a unique identifier for every article we publish, and again make them more accessible. The combined impact of these initiatives has seen downloads from our website increase from about 500 files per month in 2019 to more than 2500 files per month. We are also working on a project that will see all historical articles of the Journal and its predecessor, *Education in Rural Australia*, available for download. We are looking forward to many more contributions in the coming year.

### References

Torii, K. (2018). *Connecting the worlds of learning and work: Prioritising school-industry partnerships in Australia's education system*. Mitchell Institute. <https://cica.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Connecting-the-Worlds-of-Learning-and-Work.pdf>