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A Welcome Message from the SPERA President

It gives me a great deal of pleasure to welcome you to Queensland and Brisbane for the 35th annual Society for the Provision of Education in Rural Australia (SPERA) conference.

This year's conference theme is **Improving Rural Education: Connectedness, Communities and Collaboration**. The choice of theme is quite deliberate as it effectively encapsulates what our association is all about and aligns with the Department of Education's focus of intentional collaboration which is having positive outcomes and the relationship between urban and rural schools. Communities play an important role in supporting schools and educating our young Australians.

SPERA's prime purpose is to prepare teachers for a career in rural, remote and regional parts of Australia, research trends and obstacles in rural education and to work collaboratively to find innovative solutions to these barriers. We want to work towards providing students in rural communities with a smorgasbord of career opportunities. There are many benefits to living, working and being educated in rural communities. The most recent two recipients of the Governor Phillip Scholarship to study at Oxford University, were educated in rural schools in North Queensland. I am also the product of an education in a rural community, having completed my senior through the Secondary Correspondence School (now known as the Brisbane School of Distance Education). I have chosen to teach in rural schools for my entire 38 year teaching career and I have chosen to have my three children educated in schools in rural communities.

SPERA promotes a positive view of education in rural, regional and remote Australia. In order to further the development of these rural, regional and remote communities through education and training, SPERA continues to link people with a diverse range of interests in this area. Collaboration and partnerships are important as "no man is an island" and we need to work together to accomplish common goals.

This year, CQUniversity Australia's Mackay City Campus offered SPERA a large office in order to house our National Headquarter. Other partnerships in which we are proud to be involved are the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE), the SiMERR National Research Centre (Science, Information and Communication Technology, and Mathematics Education in Rural and Regional Australia), Queensland's Department of Education, and the Queensland Association of Combined Sector Leaders (QACSL). I am also looking forward to developing a working relationship with the National Excellence in School Leadership Institute (NESLI). It gives me a great deal of pleasure to welcome Professor Jayne Downey and Professor Hobart Harmon to our conference from the USA. Jayne is a member of the SPERA executive and an editor of the Australian and International Journal of Rural Education (AIJRE).

Welcome to the conference – have fun and make new connections.

Regards

Brian O'Neill

SPERA conference – 2nd – 4th of October

Wednesday 2nd of October – Emerging scholars program ROOM E-557

Time	Session	Overview
9:00-10:00	Welcome & Keynote Address	Welcome to QUT Introduction to the Rural Education Research Student Group Keynote – Jayne Downey
10:00-10:30	Morning Tea	
10:30-12:30	Lightning Talks	5 minute presentations by attendees introducing their research followed by feedback/discussion
12:30-1:30	Lunch	
1:30-3:00	Consult a Colleague: <i>Focusing on rural communities</i>	Session 1: Working with/for rural schools – Peter Shearer Session 2: Working respectfully with Indigenous communities – John Guenther Session 3: Developing partnerships and working with rural organisations – Amanda Heffernan
3:00-3:30	Afternoon Tea	
3:30-5:00	Consult a Colleague: <i>Being a rural academic</i>	Session 1: Methodological considerations in rural education research – Simone White Session 2: Sharing rural research with stakeholders – Hobart Harmon
5:00-5:30	Summit Conclusion	

Thursday 3rd of October

Outline of Day program

Registration open - 8.00 – 9.00am

Building E 5th Floor Lecture room

9.00am **Welcome to Country** – Yuggera/Turbal company

9.15am **Welcome to the Conference and Opening of the conference by the Minister of Education Grace Grace**

9.30 - 10.30am **Key speaker - Director General, Department of Education. Mr Tony Cook**

10.30 -11.00am Morning tea

11.00am -12.30pm **Breakout sessions**

Paper presentations are 40 minutes each with 10 minute interval for room changes

Theme Rural Initial teacher education and Professional Experience Room E557	Theme Rural School innovations and staffing responses Room E558	Theme Rural Community initiatives and student needs Room E563
Presenter/s: Dr. Ange Fitzgerald, Ondine Bradbury Topic: It takes a village: The role and value of communities of practice in supporting preservice teachers in rural professional contexts. 40 minutes	Presenter/s: Megan Brown Topic: How do teachers in remote primary schools experience their work with children living with the effects of complex childhood trauma? 40 minutes	Presenter/s: Mr Robert (Bob) Stephens Topic: The Effects of Rurality on the Aspirations of Secondary School Students in Victoria: Listening to the Student Voice. 40 minutes
10 minute interval	10 minute interval	10 minute interval
Presenter/s: Ms Madelaine Woods Topic: Giving or taking? Service learning and social justice in rural communities 40 minutes	Presenter/s: Ms Carol Steel Topic: Boys in the bush: An investigation of male, early career teacher experiences in regional/rural schools. 40 minutes	Presenter/s: Mrs Annette Morphet Topic: Rural, regional, remote: A question of nomenclature 40 minutes

12.30 - 1.30pm Lunch served in the foyer on Level 5

1.30 - 3.00pm Breakout sessions

Paper presentations are 40 minutes each with 10 minute interval for room changes

Theme: Rural School innovations and responses Room E557	Theme: Rural Community initiatives and student needs Room E558	Theme: Rural Professional learning Room E563
Presenter/s: Jayne Downey Topic: Building Together: Community-University Collaboration to Address the Rural Teacher Housing Shortage 40 minutes	Presenter/s: John Gunther Topic: Mapping choiceless educational choice in very remote locations 40 minutes	Presenter/s: Ms Lauren Elston Topic: Improving access to high quality professional learning 40 minutes
10 min interval	10 min interval	10 min interval
Presenter/s: Melyssa Fuqua Topic: Rural pathways advising and community sustainability: Challenges and influences on advisors 40 minutes		Presenter/s: Brian O’Neil Topic: Connections to the Community: Resources and Strategies to teach community history in rural classrooms. 40 minutes

3.00 - 3.30pm Afternoon tea

3.30 – 4.00 Rural Education Ambassadors – sharing the stories and insights of a Department Initiative

4.00-5.00 INTERNATIONAL PANEL and launch of REIRA

Global and political perspectives panel conversation: How can we work cross-nationally to address rural education issues?

5.00-5.30 AGM

5.30 – 6.30 Drinks and President Awards on Level 5

Friday 4th of October9.30 - 10.30am **Key Speaker – Ms Alison Quin – Indigenous education**

10.30 – 11.00am Morning tea

11.00am - 12.30pm **Break out 3 rooms and 45 minute each**

ITE partnerships Room E557	Schools Room E558	Community Room E563
<p>Presenter/s: Dr Kenneth, Ms Catherine Thiele</p> <p>Topic: Developing school/university partnerships in rural Queensland.</p> <p>40 minutes</p>	<p>Presenter/s: Dr Sue Duchesne</p> <p>Topic: Students as Partners in Learning and Teaching: developing connectedness, community and collaboration on regional campuses through course design</p> <p>40 minutes</p>	<p>Presenter/s: Dr Susan Hopkins</p> <p>Topic: Life Literacies and Digital Literacies: The Challenges and Opportunities of Social Media in Enabling Education</p> <p>40 minutes</p>
10 min interval	10 min interval	10 min interval
<p>Presenter/s: Ms Anna Day</p> <p>Topic: Embedded outreach – widening participation outreach in regional NSW</p> <p>40 minutes</p>	<p>Presenter/s: Dr Bronwyn Relf</p> <p>Topic: Practitioner and researcher resources for improving access for mature-aged students in regional and remote Australia.</p> <p>40 minutes</p>	<p>Presenter/s: Monica Davis</p> <p>Topic: Country Universities Centres – increasing access and success for regional university students</p> <p>40 minutes</p>

12.30 - 1.30pm Lunch**2.30 - 3.10pm Presentation Hobart Harmon****Topic:** Innovating a Model of Shared Responsibility for Rural Student Success in High School Mathematics**3.10-3.30 pm Thank you and farewell**

Key Note Speakers



Hon Grace Grace MP

Minister for Education and Industrial Relation

Queensland State Government

Grace Grace was first elected to State Parliament in October 2007 and remained the Member for Brisbane Central until March 2012. She was re-elected as the Member for Brisbane Central in January 2015 and again in November 2017, after the seat was re-named McConnell.

Grace was appointed *Minister for Employment and Industrial Relation, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs* in December 2015 and successfully implemented a series of important legislative reforms including the *Racing Integrity Act*, the *Multicultural Recognition Act* and the *Industrial Relations Act 2016*.

Following the 2017 state election, Grace was appointed *Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations* – both areas she is passionate about. Grace understands the importance of education and her tireless advocacy in this area will see a new school built in Fortitude Valley to be opened in 2020.

During her career, Grace has had extensive board experience with organizations including Sunsuper, Energex and Southbank Corporation.

She has worked with local community organizations in her electorate including P&C, the New Farm Neighbourhood Centre, Teneriffe Progress Association, Queensland Aids Council (QuAC), Fortitude Valley Chamber of Commerce and many more,

Grace has lived her whole life in her electorate where she and her husband Michael raised their daughter Alex.



Tony Cook

Director-General - Department of Education - Queensland

Before joining the Queensland Department of Education in April 2018, Tony worked for the Australian public service as the Associate Secretary for Schools and Youth within the Department of Education and Training.

Tony previously held several senior executive positions in the Victorian public service, including Deputy Secretary, Government and Corporate with the Department of Premier and Cabinet; Deputy Secretary, Office for Children and Portfolio Coordination; and Deputy Secretary, Office for Planning, Strategy and Coordination within the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. He began his career with Education Queensland.

Tony is a registered primary school teacher with a major in early childhood education. He has been a deputy principal and has taught in schools and preschools in Queensland and the United Kingdom. He holds a Bachelor of Education from the Queensland University of Technology.

In October 2013 Tony was made an Honorary Fellow of the Australian Council for Education Leaders, and in January 2014, he was awarded a Public Service Medal for outstanding public service, especially in driving schools policy and funding reform in Australia.



Ms Alison Quin

Lecturer – Queensland University of Technology (QUT)

Hello. My name is Alison, and I'm of Tagalak descent from far north Queensland. I started out teaching English in Japan then studied to be a high school English teacher in Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory. I spent many years teaching in the informal education sector, working with Indigenous communities all over Australia on a range of school and community education programs. While living in country NSW, I started working as a university lecturer in Indigenous Australian Studies and Indigenous education, sharing what I know to help students studying to be teachers. This is what I do now, at QUT. I'm interested in the ways and places

Indigenous and Western knowledge paradigms come together and diverge, in teaching practice, in curriculum, in person and online, to create an Australia built on all its knowledge traditions and that respects all its peoples. I'm looking forward to talking with you.

Breakout Sessions – Abstracts

Thursday 3rd October

11.00 – 12.30 – Location Room E557

It takes a village: The role and value of communities of practice in supporting preservice teachers in rural professional contexts

Dr. Ange Fitzgerald, Ondine Bradbury & Tania Leach

University of Southern Queensland; Monash University

Rural contexts provide numerous opportunities for graduate and early career teachers both in terms of employment prospects and career growth. Often these experiences do not turn out to be as positive, productive or sustainable as hoped – from the perspectives of both the teacher and the school community – due to a lack of understanding of what it means to live and work in a rural setting (Roberts, 2004; Kline, White, & Lock, 2013). This reality gap poses initial teacher education providers with an interesting challenge in terms of preparing preservice teachers to teach in a range of contexts. In Australia, initial teacher education providers are leveraging professional experience as a possible solution.

In being solution-focused, this presentation will focus on rural professional experience programs supported by two Australian universities – one based in regional Queensland and the other in urban Victoria. The two programs that form the focus of this work both had a number of support mechanisms built into their design, including academic support in-situ and remotely. These decisions were informed by a move toward a quality rural-based professional experience grounded in the construct of communities of practice (CoP) (Wenger, 1998).

The two cases have been constructed using the voices of three key stakeholders: (i) program co-ordinators, (ii) university staff members and (iii) participating pre-service teachers. Through these cases, this presentation will highlight the similarities and differences in these CoPs and uncover practical solutions in how to best nurture a teaching workforce that is knowledgeable and skilled regarding rural contexts.

Biographies

Dr. **Ange Fitzgerald** is an Associate Professor (Science Curriculum and Pedagogy) at the University of Southern Queensland. She has extensive experience supporting pre-service teachers as part of their learning to teach journey in regional, rural and international school contexts. Ange was also the Director of Professional Experience (Development and Research) in the Faculty of Education at Monash University supporting the facilitation of 7000 placements in a wide range of settings and contexts.

Ondine Bradbury is a Professional Practice Consultant at Monash University. Previously a classroom teacher, Ondine brings her knowledge of current professional practice to the tertiary setting supporting mentors, pre-service teachers and partner schools before, during and after Professional Experience in Initial Teacher Education. Ondine currently supports Rural Professional Experience at Monash University within Mildura and the Bass Coast Shire.

Tania Leach is currently the Director of Professional Experience, Curriculum and Pedagogy

Lecturer and member of the Leadership Research International at the University of Southern Queensland. Prior to this she was employed by the Queensland Department of Education for over sixteen years. She has taught students from prep to year 12 and worked within the roles of Head of Department and Head of School in both rural and urban contexts. Tania's passion to maximise student learning through the building of school leadership, teacher and pre service teacher capabilities, has seen her support state improvement strategies to contextualise and translate system policy into practice.

11.00 – 12.30 – Location Room E558

How do teachers in remote primary schools experience their work with children living with the effects of complex childhood trauma?

Meegan Brown

Queensland University of Technology

Children from Australian remote areas are vulnerable to complex childhood trauma (CCT) as their communities face higher rates of disadvantage and exposure to traumatic circumstances such as natural disasters, and family and community violence. This is compounded by difficulties associated with the tyranny of distance in accessing effective support. In such contexts, the role of schools and teachers in addressing trauma's debilitating effects is both vital and amplified. Yet in the field of education, trauma-aware practice is in its infancy, and research reveals that teachers feel ill-equipped to deal with its challenges. This is exacerbated by a context in which many teachers working in remote areas are early career teachers, and little is known about their experiences and how to best support them. A research program located in Queensland University of Technology's Faculty of Education is aiming to change this by identifying what can be done to better prepare and sustain teachers in their work with children who have experienced CCT. This presentation will describe a Doctor of Philosophy study using qualitative constructivist grounded theory methodology which will investigate how teachers in Queensland's remote primary schools experience their work with children living with the effects CCT. The research will contribute important insights into the scope and nature of teachers work with children experiencing CCT and recommend how cognate systems can prepare and support teachers in rural and remote areas in their important role as key professionals in the lives of children who have experienced CCT.

Biography

Meegan Brown has over 20 years of experience in rural and remote education. She has held school and regional positions as a teacher, small school principal, regional complex case support officer, Guidance Officer and is currently Senior Guidance Officer based in

Mount Isa. Meegan is undertaking a Doctor of Philosophy study at the Queensland University of Technology under the supervision of Professor Kerryann Walsh and Dr Judith Howard. Her research is investigating how teachers in remote primary schools experience their work with children who are living with the effects of complex childhood trauma.

11.00 – 12.30 – Location Room E563

The Effects of Rurality on the Aspirations of Secondary School Students in Victoria: Listening to the Student Voice.

Mr Robert (Bob) Stephens

Monash University

Rurality has a significant effect on student aspirations and post school opportunities. In this presentation, I will outline research undertaken with students in sixteen schools on the urban fringes and in rural Victoria. The research, which focused on the voices of students, examined the differences between rural and metropolitan students' experiences and perceptions of schooling in Victorian government secondary schools. The research was based upon surveys of 400 students, together with school based focus groups involving 100 year 10 and 12 students.

In this presentation, I will discuss data from the year 10- and 12 students from sixteen Victorian schools. The theoretical lens that underpinned the research included the concepts of rurality, student self-efficacy and identity, to critically interrogate the factors that shape student aspirations. These aspirations were explored in terms of the influence of family, school and rurality.

The findings showed that rurality is significant. The research found that :

- (a) Where a student lives affects their aspirations;
 - (b) Rural students have high aspirations for the future;
 - (c) Rural families affect student aspirations in specific ways;
 - (d) Student perceptions of the comparative effectiveness of rural schools and their teachers are important in student aspirations;
 - (e) Student self-efficacy, identity and connectedness to place affect aspirations;
- Male and female students have significantly different perceptions of the effect of their family, school and community on their aspirations.

Biography

Bob Stephens has had a long career in government school education and recently was Executive Director (School Improvement) in North Eastern Victoria Region, a role that saw him travelling to many rural and metropolitan schools to discuss school improvement, principal selection, accountability, emergency management and facilities.

Since retiring in 2016, Bob has focused on his PhD studies at Monash University. Bob's research focuses on rural students, their aspirations and the barriers and enablers that they face, particularly those related to rurality, school, family and self.

In 2016, Bob received a Public Service Medal for his contribution to education in Victoria.

11.00 – 12.30 – Location Room E557

Giving or taking? Service learning and social justice in rural communities.

Ms Madelaine Woods, Dr Philip Roberts & Miss Natalie Downes

University of Canberra

Service learning is being increasingly embraced as a way of extending students' learning through meaningful experiences and relationships created beyond the classroom. This is often enacted by school students visiting rural, remote or Indigenous communities. Trips such as these are often portrayed as both an opportunity to educate students about social justice and as an actor social justice for the community students visit. However, such programs raise questions about the nature of social justice, particularly issues of recognition and associational justice (Cuervo, 2016). Specifically, these programs raise concerns about how the supposed 'needy' subjects of these trips are positioned and what capacity they give to self-recognition and association.

In raising this issue we focus on a case study of an metropolitan school that has a proud history of service learning in rural, remote and Indigenous communities. Using a framework of critical theory, social justice and standpoint theories, publicly available documents were analysed to evaluate the perspectives of participants and subjects of a service learning trip in a remote community. These documents included the school website, participant and subject accounts, and school plans that include reference to service learning. This analysis focused on understanding what participants in subjects perceived to be the purpose and benefits of service learning and also how service learning is promoted at the school.

This analysis found that in this school's service learning program the position of the subject is ambiguous. On one hand disadvantaged rural and Indigenous students are identified as subjects of the program while on the school's website and promotional material it is the students of the school who are positioned as the beneficiaries, developing compassion and empathy. Consequently acting in 'socially just' ways are constructed as character virtues developed uniquely by the school in this program, and used as positional goods in an educational marketplace. Using a redistributive lens, the marginalised are 'giving' further status and opportunity to the already advantaged, whilst simultaneously reinforcing their peripheral position and entrenching notions of charity, servitude and dependence through the maintenance of deficit discourses.

Thus, this service learning program primarily benefits the participants, and enhances their reputation through it's promotional material available to prospective students and the broader community. There is in fact, no concrete forms of social justice outcomes for the communities that participate. This then has the potential to perpetrate negative understandings of rurality and indigeneity, rather than achieve their promoted purpose of social justice. More research is needed to understand this phenomenon on a wider scale to ensure that service learning outcomes are positive for rural remote and indigenous communities.

Biographies

Madelaine is a high school humanities & English teacher in Townsville, QLD. She gained her Master of Teaching at the University of Canberra, and began her teaching career in a small rural school in QLD. Madelaine has a strong interest in social justice and rural education, specifically how rural students are marginalised through the dominant social justice approaches in education. Madelaine was a recipient of a 2016 SPERA pre-service teacher scholarship and attended the conference held that year. She will soon begin post-graduate studies in education.

Natalie is also one of the co-ordinators of the International Research Network 'Rural Education Research students', which hosts the International Emerging Rural Scholars Summit each year. She has previously worked as a Faculty Research Officer, and has experience in peer tutoring and assessing student work in teacher education courses.

11.00 – 12.30 – Location Room E558

Boys in the bush: An investigation of male, early career teacher experiences in regional/rural schools.

Ms Carol Steel

Central Queensland University

For decades, discussion, both national and international, surrounding the declining number of male teachers has continued to resurface in the popular media, government and academic discourse. This decline is even more apparent in regional and rural Australia where male graduate teachers often find themselves the sole male staff member. The consequence of this scenario can manifest as a crisis in the teacher's professional confidence which, in turn, may result in the teacher re-evaluating their future career objectives.

Despite many studies and government reports aimed at addressing the recruitment and retention rates of male teachers, little emphasis has been placed on the early professional experiences of male teachers and the effect these experiences have on their career trajectories.

This presentation reports on the early results of a research project that focuses on the 'voice' of beginning male primary school teachers, as they transition to teaching in a regional or rural Queensland primary school. The project aims to provide deep insights into male teachers' professional experiences and explore strategies to support and retain them in regional and rural primary classrooms.

The preliminary analysis of the early data resulting from this project provides an initial understanding of the complex issues facing male early career teachers working in regional and rural schools. It is anticipated that more detailed data analyses may discern potential changes to both initial teacher education and ongoing professional learning, whilst reshaping our understanding of what it means to be a male professional educator in regional and rural Australia.

Biography

Carol Steel is a PhD candidate at Central Queensland University. Her research interests relate to the decreasing number of male teachers in primary schools, children's literature and early childhood development. Carol is a lecturer in the School of Education and the Arts at Central Queensland University. She lectures Bachelor of Education students and supervises pre-service teachers completing their professional practice. Carol has taught in Early Childhood – Year 10 settings in both Australia and Great Britain and has postgraduate Qualifications in Literature (K-12) and Global Education. In her spare time, Carol enjoys reading, film, musical theatre and growing tropical water lilies.

11.00 – 12.30 – Location Room E563

Rural, regional, remote: A question of nomenclature.

Mrs Annette Morphet

University of South Australia

Rural Australia has long been prone to metrocentric governance and a deficit discourse in relation to education. The realities of rural Australia offer a very different view, one of a diverse range of people and places. 'Rural', however, is an ill-defined term, with a range of classification systems used to define rural places and people. For the purposes of this study, rural is conceptualised not as a label, but as a unique context located a significant distance from highly populated areas. This research defines rural schools and areas as being located in geographically isolated areas outside the commuting zone of large urban areas and major cities reflecting their lack of access to facilities and services commonly available in urban areas (including access to reliable internet, phone and electricity). The research focus centres around the mathematics teaching and learning in middle primary classrooms on Yorke Peninsula in South Australia; a context rich in diverse landscape, economies, and people, and a context where the unique identity of its people create a spirit of community of which they are very proud. A context, like many rural locations, which experiences significant inequities and issues of access to education.

Biography

Annette has taught both Practitioner Inquiry and Inclusive Education in the Master of Teaching programme at the University of South Australia and is currently a PhD candidate.

She has been a classroom teacher in rural primary schools for over thirty years with leadership roles in mathematics, literacy, National Partnerships, and Inclusive Education. More recently her teaching role has been as a Learning Support teacher.

Annette's PhD research is investigating the ways in which mathematics is taught in middle primary rural classrooms, with a particular focus on the experiences of rural teachers of mathematics, and how their pedagogy connects to the maths knowledge and life-worlds of their rural students.

1.30 – 3.00 – Location Room E557

Building Together: Community-University Collaboration to Address the Rural Teacher Housing Shortage.

Jayne Downey

Montana State University

In the effort to increase the recruitment and retention of teachers for rural schools and communities, studies have found that teachers' employment decisions are shaped by both objective factors, such as salary, benefits, and cost of living, as well as subjective factors such as personal goals, working conditions, and critical contacts (e.g., Goff & Bruecker, 2017). Research has also revealed that available, affordable, and contemporary housing is an important factor in teachers' employment decisions and a lack of satisfactory housing in a rural community can seriously diminish a rural school's ability to attract and retain new teachers (Verdin & Smith, 2013). Thus, rural school districts and communities have been working to identify innovative ways to increase available, affordable, and contemporary housing options for teachers.

This presentation will describe the process of how faculty members from five departments (Architecture, Art, Film, Extension, and Education) at Montana State University came together to collaborate with a rural education professional organization, a rural school district and its community, and pre-service teachers to develop and build innovative housing options for rural teachers. The presentation will also present the outcomes of this undertaking and the findings from the data analyses. The presentation will conclude with recommendations for establishing a multi-disciplinary team of contributors who design and enact a comprehensive strategy for contextually relevant solutions that address the needs of rural schools to attract and retain high quality educators, strengthen rural education, and contribute to the vitality and success of their rural communities.

Biography

Jayne Downey, PhD, is an Associate Professor in the Department of Education at Montana State University where she serves as the Director of the Center for Research on Rural Education. She has worked in the field of educator preparation for over 20 years and her research focuses on strengthening the preparation of prospective rural teachers and improving outcomes of P-20 education across rural contexts.

1.30 – 3.00 – Location Room E558

Mapping choiceless educational choice in very remote locations.

John Guenther

Bachelor Institute Indigenous Tertiary Education

The term 'choiceless choice' in education arises from the ethical dilemma where parents are left with no option other than one they do not want to choose. In Australia, this choiceless choice is given to many rural and remote parents where the local school does not offer secondary education options. They then must 'choose' a boarding option for their child. This often causes parents angst and creates stress for young children who must leave home. Based on My School data, this presentation uses a series of Google Maps to show where in very remote parts of Australia parents have this choiceless choice (i.e. limited access to local secondary schooling). It shows how choiceless choice is related to primary school size, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolments. The presentation considers models that might offer choices and reviews the ethics of policies that have led to choiceless choice in Australia.

Biography

John Guenther is the Research Leader for Education and Training at the Bachelor Institute, based in Darwin. His research has focused mostly on education issues for remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

1.30 – 3.00 – Location Room E563

Improving access to high quality professional learning.

Ms Lauren Elston

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership

Students, teachers and communities in regional, rural and remote areas face complexities that are unique to, or exacerbated by, their geographical circumstances. As quality teaching is the greatest in-school factor to improving student outcomes, access to high quality professional learning for teachers in these settings could contribute in some way towards improvements in achievement and attendance gaps.

We know that the most effective professional learning approaches are education settingbased. These approaches focus on improving teaching practice, taking into account the specific site's context. Opportunities for site-based, collaborative professional learning such as observing a colleague teach or participating in collaborative learning communities, are often harder to access in regional, rural and remote (RRR) contexts. There is often also a shortage of casual/relief teachers in RRR areas to cover teachers to participate in professional learning – both external and school based.

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) has consulted widely with the profession, including through a survey of over 400 teachers from RRR contexts, in order to understand the challenges these teachers face in accessing high quality professional learning, as well as what potential solutions might be.

This workshop will provide an opportunity to discuss the research findings and unpack what high quality professional learning means. This understanding ultimately enables rural and remote teachers to improve their practice and have the greatest impact on their students as well as supporting school leaders to leverage expertise within rural and remote school communities.

Biography

Lauren Elston is a Senior Project Officer in the Quality Teaching Team at AITSL (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership) and is responsible for leading AITSL's work on high quality professional learning and beginning teacher induction. Previously, Lauren worked as a Parliamentary Officer for the Commonwealth Department of Education, managing Ministerial letters and briefs and the Senate Estimates process for the Schools Group. Lauren has presented to and consulted with a wide range of groups within the education sector including; teachers and school leaders, pre-service teachers and universities, early childhood educators and stakeholders, and system and sector representatives.

1.30 – 3.00 – Location Room E557

Rural pathways advising and community sustainability: Challenges and influences on advisors.

Melyssa Fuqua

Monash University

In a time when many rural communities are facing economic uncertainty and the world of work is rapidly changing, careers education and pathways advising is becoming increasingly important. Pathways advisors are meant to assist students in successfully transitioning from school to work. In a rural school, this role becomes a potentially influential and powerful position as their advice may affect not only their students' futures, but that of the local workforce and so the community's sustainability.

This paper is based on the findings of a PhD study using narrative inquiry into the experiences of six rural Victorian careers advisors. Participants' narratives were explored through a conceptual framework using Reid et al.'s (2010) rural social space model and Cuervo's (2016) pluralised conceptualisation of social justice in rural schools. Some

elements of their work that effect the wider community are their understanding of locally available jobs, their approach to managing the potential 'brain drain' from the community, as well as the importance of cultivating and maintaining strong relationships with local employers. Advisors often serve as the only up-to-date source of careers and pathways-related information in the community, so their work extends beyond the school gate and hours as they also informally advise community members. Implications of this research include the need for more professional learning opportunities for pathways advisors that are tailored to suit their community. There is also a need for greater communication between pathway advisors, families, and their wider local community about the changing nature of work facing their youth.

Biography

Melyssa Fuqua is a PhD candidate at Monash University, exploring what it means to be a careers educator in a rural context. She taught in a rural Victorian P-12 school for 10 years and has completed a Diploma of Education (Secondary) at the University of Melbourne as well as a Master in School Leadership at Monash University. Currently, she is the Rural Education SIG Convenor for the Australian Association for Research in Education, cofounder of the Rural Education Research Student group, and represents SPERA on the Australian Alliance of Associations in Education's Board of Directors.

1.30 – 3.00 – Location Room E558

Community influence on rural Australian students' higher education decisions: exploring community, school and family.

Dr Krystle Turner

Queensland University of Technology

For people living in rural towns, a sense of community is real and important. The neighbourhood that young people live in affects how they function socially, and therefore how they perform academically. Education is the particular concern of this article. Remote and very remote students in Australia hold the lowest proportion of higher education enrolments nationally. The role of family and rural communities is critical in students' post school choices. Research suggests Australian rural youth can be reluctant to leave their community, or align with traditional jobs for their demographic due to lack of information. This article draws on six selected student interviews from a sample of 25 interviewed rural Queensland students, and aims to outline the influence of the students' rural communities on their aspirations and decision to pursue higher education. Bourdieu's habitus is used to provide an understanding of the relationship among the community in which students live, their families, and their university aspirations. By analysing the school students' communities, the article begins to uncover the depth of the influence of the community on its younger members. Aspects of rural living and the community's perceptions of value have an effect on students' post-school decisions. Students are exposed to a general sense of community values simply by being part of that community, and more implicitly through school. Interviews show the community has some influence, in both positive and negative ways, on the interviewed students' decisions about higher education, however this influence is foreshadowed by the family.

Biography

Krystle Turner is a first in family university attendee from rural Queensland. Combining her rural roots with her interest in widening participation, Krystle's PhD, completed by

publication in 2019, focused on the factors influencing rural students to pursue higher education study and careers in digital media. Krystle plans to continue working and researching in the rural education arena remaining based in rural Queensland.

1.30 – 3.00 – Location Room E563

Connections to the Community: Resources and Strategies to teach community history in rural classrooms.

Brian O’Neill

Central Queensland University & Calen District State College

History is the story of real people and any topics which have connections or relevance to students and their community,

This paper examines the History sub-strand of HASS in the Australian Curriculum and how community resources can be used to teach the subject specific skills and capabilities. The concepts of contestability, the cross curriculum priorities and embedding indigenous perspectives into the classroom will also be considered.

The paper will provide practical examples of the strategies which can be applied to develop these skills as well as how a school can obtain the necessary resources from the local community to teach this subject.

Biography

Brian O’Neill has a Bachelor of Education degree from James Cook University, a Master of Learning Management from CQU and is currently completing a Diploma of Family History with the University of Tasmania before he embarks on his doctorate with Flinders University. Brian has been teaching for thirty-eight years (the last twenty as a principal), all of which have been in rural schools in Queensland. For the past four years he has been a casual lecturer at CQU’s Mackay City campus. He is the author of three local history books.

Friday 4th October

11.00 – 12.30 – Location Room E557

Developing school/university partnerships in rural Queensland.

Dr Kenneth Young & Ms Catherine Thiele

University of the Sunshine Coast

Attracting graduates of Initial Teacher Education programs to teaching positions in rural communities has long been a backdrop to the provision of state schooling in Queensland. Attracting teachers to rural schools continues to be identified as a priority area by the state government, and continues to pose challenges in the Queensland context. The evolving demographic of university teaching graduates, the changing nature of rural communities, and the continued requirement for the Department of Education to provide high quality, equitable educational opportunities to young people across Queensland are contexts that call for innovative solutions. The creation and development of structured, sustainable and mutually beneficial school/university partnerships, as proposed by the Teacher Education Ministerial

Advisory Group (TEMAG), is an initiative that one regional university in Queensland has undertaken to support rural school communities and provide realistic pathways for early career teachers to confidently take up teaching positions in rural schools. This paper continues research directions undertaken over recent years that explored preservice teacher's experiences of rural communities and positive attitudinal change towards rural school teaching positions upon graduation. Additionally, this paper draws on recent research into professional partnerships (Gutierrez, A., Young, K. & Jordan, K., 2019) to further scrutinise the existing school/university partnership against the Principles of Partnership framework proposed by Hobbs et al. (2015).

Gutierrez, A., Young, K., & Jordan, K. (2019) Exploring What It Means to Be a Professional Partnerships: Reflecting on Teacher Educator Narratives. In Gutierrez, A., Fox, J., & Alexander, C (Eds.), *Professionalism and Teacher Education - Voices from Policy and Practice* (pp. 91–115). Singapore: Springer Nature.

Hobbs, L. Campbell, C., Chittleborough, G. Herbert, S., Jones, M., Redman, C., Kenny, J., King J. & Gilbert, A. (2015). STEPS Interpretative Framework. Science Teacher Education Program.
http://www.stepsproject.org.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/341010/STEPSInterpretive-Framework-Final-May-2015.pdf

Biographies

Dr Kenneth Young has been a lecturer at the University of the Sunshine Coast since 2007. Kenneth's current roles are the position of Program Coordinator for the Master of Teaching (Secondary) program and developing pathways for preservice teachers into rural schools in Queensland. Kenneth's doctoral research focused on preservice teacher education - in particular, the perspectives of preservice teachers on the roles and identities of secondary teachers within Queensland state schools. This qualitative research focus on preservice teacher experiences and perspectives is continuing with current research agendas which investigate preservice teacher perspectives of rural schools and teaching experiences.

Ms Catherine Thiele is an educator, early career researcher and the Professional Experience Coordinator for all USC Education programs. Since beginning her career over 20 years ago, Catherine has taught in primary schools and tertiary institutions. Through her various academic roles and research interests, Catherine contributes to deeper understandings about mathematics education, teacher professional development, preservice teacher preparation for placements, rural and remote education, and the affective experiences of data in primary schools.

11.00 – 12.30 – Location Room E558

Students as Partners in Learning and Teaching: developing connectedness, community and collaboration on regional campuses through course design.

Dr Sue Duchesne & Dr Saskia Ebejer

University of Wollongong

Student engagement is essential to effective learning. In the higher education sector, student partnerships in teaching and learning have been established to facilitate such engagement (Cook-Sather, Bovill & Felten, 2014). In this project, students were invited to partner with academics to design teaching and learning activities for their subjects in the Master of

Teaching course on regional campuses of a multi-campus university. The paper reports on ongoing evaluation of the approach, and in particular on how the approach has contributed to collaboration and community among the students on UOW's regional campuses.

Evaluation took place during the course of the 2018 and 2019 academic years, through interviews with staff and students, surveys of students, and reflections by campus coordinators drawing on their anecdotal notes of student engagement in teaching and learning activities in the program. Ethics approval for the research was granted through the university's HREC unit.

Support was seen as the main benefit of the approach, from the students' perspective, as they collaborated together to discuss assignments and subject activities. Staff identified strong student engagement, in keeping with broader 'students as partners' research, as well as strong communities developed among the students on each campus. Implications are drawn for the consideration of course and curriculum design in building community collaboration and connectedness, as well as engagement.

Biographies

Sue Duchesne is Associate Academic Program Director (Regional Campuses) of the Master of Teaching at UOW. She also coordinates and teaches into the program at the Bega campus, and across the regional campuses, as well as teaching in the undergraduate program at UOW Bega. Sue researches in the role of peers in language learning, and in teacher education. She is co-author of *Educational Psychology for Learning and Teaching*.

Saskia Ebejer is coordinator of the Master of Teaching at UOW's Bateman's Bay campus. She teaches into the program both at that campus, and across campuses as well as in the undergraduate program. Saskia has also been involved at the campus in careers, community engagement and Indigenous support in past years.

11.00 – 12.30 – Location Room E563

Life Literacies and Digital Literacies: The Challenges and Opportunities of Social Media in Enabling Education.

Dr Susan Hopkins

University of Southern Queensland

This paper argues that students from rural and low socio-economic status (LSES) backgrounds, who undertake university based enabling education, benefit from the social, cultural and network capital which digital literacies workshops using social media platforms may provide. In particular, this paper discusses the trial of the use of the social networking site Facebook as a learning management system within the HEPFP funded *Life Literacies* project, designed to raise the aspirations and widen the participation of economically and geographically disadvantaged young people. It also discusses the role of new media in an approach to Tertiary Preparation which recognises that *to succeed in their university study, non-traditional students need to develop not only academic skills,*

but the connections and confidence to survive and thrive in the broader digital society. The HEPPP funded *Life Literacies* project was designed to reach and engage marginalised and isolated learners, including university students from rural, regional and low socioeconomic areas who may be suffering from financial hardship. The project aimed to make their journey through higher education less stressful, more empowering and more relevant to everyday life through innovative educational approaches and materials centred on essential 'life literacies,' including digital literacies. This renewed alternative approach to tertiary preparation takes a multi-dimensional approach to developing multiple literacies, which in turn supports student readiness and retention. The project also encountered, however, unexpected challenges and limitations which will be discussed during the presentation.

Biography

Dr Susan Hopkins holds a PhD in social science and a Masters (Research) in education and currently lectures within the Open Access College of the University of Southern Queensland, Ipswich campus, Australia. Susan is also a fully registered Queensland secondary school teacher and has extensive experience teaching and mentoring regional and low SES students at both secondary and tertiary levels of the Queensland education system. Her research interests include sociological approaches to the education of disadvantaged groups including LSES youth and rural, regional and incarcerated university students

11.00 – 12.30 – Location Room E557

Embedded outreach – widening participation outreach in regional NSW.

Ms Anna Day

11.00 – 12.30 – Location Room E558

Practitioner and researcher resources for improving access for mature-aged students in regional and remote Australia.

Dr Bronwyn Relf

University of Newcastle

This paper will showcase the website developed as an output of a 2017 HEPPP grant building the evidence base for improving access to higher education for mature-aged students in regional and remote Australia. The website provides a resource for practitioners and researchers working with mature aged adults in regional and remote areas. **Biography**

Dr Bronwyn Relf is employed at The University of Newcastle and is responsible for coordinating and teaching the 'Science for Nursing and Midwifery' courses in the Open Foundation Program. Bronwyn's research interests include curriculum design and equity in access to higher education for mature aged students in regional and remote Australia. She recently lead a Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program grant investigating the role of tertiary preparation programs in increasing access to university for mature aged students in regional and remote areas and an Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching grant investigating curriculum design principles in enabling programs.

11.00 – 12.30 – Location Room E563

Country Universities Centres – increasing access and success for regional university students.

Monica Davis

Country University Centres

Regional Study Hubs (RSH) are an emerging tool developed to assist regional students to participate and succeed in higher education. Regional and remote Australians hold Bachelor degrees at approximately half the rate of metropolitan Australia. In 2018, 22.7% of people aged 25 - 34 years in regional or remote Australia had obtained a Bachelor degree or higher, compared to 44.6% in metropolitan areas.

The Country Universities Centre (CUC) is a community owned network of regional study hubs. The hubs offer campus-like facilities to any student studying at an Australian university. . The centres typically offer high speed internet (100 Mb/s symmetrical), videoconferencing facilities, computers and printing; as well as tutorial spaces, and areas for social collaboration. Beyond the facilities, the CUC staff offer students' academic, administrative and pastoral support. They also advocate events for the CUC centres that promote educationally meaningful activities to encourage student engagement.

The study hubs have been demonstrated to increase student engagement, which in turn improves student retention and success.

Biography

Monica Davis is the Director of Educational Delivery, Country Universities Centre. Monica completed a Bachelor of Science (1st Hons) from the University of Newcastle, and Masters of Geostatistics from the University of Adelaide.

2.30 – 3.10 – Location 5th Floor Lecture Room

Innovating a Model of Shared Responsibility for Rural Student Success in High School Mathematics.

Hobart Harmon

Appalachian Intermediate Unit 8, Altoona

The presentation will reinforce the SPERA Conference subtheme “Sharing Innovations in Rural Collaboration.” Many rural communities in the United States are seeking to grow a new economy consistent with changing realities of global competition and regional economic development opportunities. Workforce preparation for STEM occupations that require a technician level postsecondary credential is critical in many of these communities. This session will describe the process and results of the 5-year Rural Math Excel Partnership (RMEP) project.

Funded by a \$2.7mil investing in innovation (i3) development grant from the U.S. Department of Education (USED) and local matching funds of \$430,000, a non-profit organizations and six rural school divisions partnered to develop a model of shared responsibility as support for student success in math. Teachers of four foundational math courses (i.e., Algebra 1, Algebra 2, Geometry, and Algebra Functions & Data Analysis),

parents/family members of students, and the community STEM team each had specific support roles. As the former RMEP project director, Dr. Harmon will share components of the shared responsibility model, key lessons learned in the journey, and evaluation results. Audience participants also will learn about the “math gap” discovered in the project, as much of the math actually used in the workplace by more than 30 technicians in STEM occupations was different from the math students learn in the high school courses. Session participants also will learn about an important project activity innovated for specific use by the local community team called “Math at Work in Our Community.”

Biography

Hobart Harmon, Ph.D., is Leader of Strategic Advancement at Intermediate Unit 8 in Altoona, PA (USA). A former director of two investing in innovation (i3) projects (\$6 mil.) funded by the U.S. Department of Education, previous experiences include executive assistant to state superintendent of schools, high school agriculture teacher, university visiting professor, R&D specialist, ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools’ associate director, state Rural Development Council vice-chair, adjunct Associate Professor of Educational Leadership at Penn State University, and Graduate Faculty Scholar in the College of Graduate Studies and co-director of the Institute for the Advancement of Research, Innovation and Practice in Rural Education at the University of Central Florida. A recipient of the National Rural Education Association’s *Stanley A. Brzezinski Memorial Rural Education Research Award*, Harmon resides in Timberville, VA.