

Recipient Details

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Responses

Curriculum and assessment

To respond to this question it is important to consider if the learning needs of regional, rural and remote students are being taken into account. According to research by Drummond, Halsey & van Breda (2012) rural principals were concerned about the resource implications of the Australian Curriculum (AC) and how much consultation they had in relation to the needs of their communities. Extending this research Roberts (2017) identified that many respondents felt that local knowledge, and the specific learning needs of communities, were not taken into account and would likely be impacted negatively. To explain this we reference Roberts (2014) and the idea that the curriculum privileges forms of knowledge that marginalise rural communities. This is reinforced by NAPLAN and other forms of assessment that are based upon the norms of non-metropolitan communities. Furthermore, the 'climate' in Australian education is a limitation here, as achievement is limited to narrow forms of 'high stakes' assessment and public reporting.

To counter these limitations we advocate place-conscious pedagogies and broader forms of assessment. Research suggests that teachers who are prepared specifically for rural contexts are more able to meet the needs of their students. A key component here is preparation to see the curriculum as a guide to be interpreted rather than implemented. Consequently, responses to these questions need to be noted in relation to responses related to Teachers and Teaching.

Drummond, A., Halsey, R. J., & van Breda, M. (2012). Implementing the Australian Curriculum in rural, regional, remote and distance-education schools. *Curriculum Perspectives*, 32(1), 34-44.

Roberts, P. (2014). A curriculum for the country: The absence of the rural in a national curriculum. *Curriculum Perspectives*, 34(1), 51-60.

Roberts, P. (2017). A curriculum for whom? Rereading 'Implementing the Australian Curriculum in Rural, Regional, Remote and Distance-Education Schools' from a rural standpoint. *Australian and International Journal of Rural education*, 27(1), pp. 69- 87.

Rating: 7

Teachers and teaching

The review notes the important role that initial teacher education can and has played in the preparation of quality teachers for regional, remote and rural locations. A number of initiatives have been instrumental in helping to attract 'top teachers' – these include initiatives that support the creation of innovative professional experiences for pre-service teachers and of curriculum units that also provide vital insights in to the professional learning needs of 'rural' teachers. A large number of

Australian Learning and Teaching grants have produced publicly free and accessible higher education resources and materials. These include:

- www.rrrtec.net.au – This resource has been developed to support teacher educators to prepare future graduates for the challenges and opportunities of teaching in rural/regional communities. Key US States are now building similar resources – see Montana as an example. Further cross country institutional research and scholarship will continue to improve the attraction and retention of quality teachers.
- www.prepared.net.au – This resource is newly completed (2017) and has been created to support all institutions to best prepare a remote education experience.

These initiatives are key to addressing the professional learning needs of pre-service teachers, teachers, leaders and key community stakeholders and we strongly advocate for the continuation of such grants to ensure the professionalization of teaching in rural, regional and remote communities.

Rating: 7

Leaders and leadership

Rating: 6

School and Community

Rating: 6

Information and Communication Technology

ICT is increasingly seen as the solution for many of the issues around 'access' in rural schools. It can connect students to opportunities they may not have been able to access, e.g. connecting students to teachers in other schools or virtual tours of museums. However, it is not enough to equate virtual to physical access.

If ICT is to be used, then issues around pedagogy, and student learning need to be considered. For examples, in distance education schools teachers need a different pedagogy than in a traditional classroom. They need to adapt their pedagogy to suit the uses of ICT and the needs of the learner at the other end (Lowrie & Jorgensen, 2012). This is not always easy or part of teacher training. More needs to be done to assist teachers who teach using ICT.

An example of this is distance education schools, where the use of ICT is only one part of these schools. ICT is used to connect students with their teachers for a small part of the day, and the rest of schooling is completed with the assistance of a home supervisor, through lessons at home (Lowrie, 2006). While much of the lessons are being moved to online means, there is recognition that ICT cannot be used for all learning, especially in the younger years. Where ICT is not being used, home supervisors are involved with adapting lessons given to them by the teacher to meet their children's needs and to contextualise the lessons. So for example, a child may learn to count while mustering, or complete math and science activities while cooking dinner. Everyday activities play an important part of distance learning (Lowrie, 2006) which highlights the limitation of the reliance on ICT to solve all issues around access in rural schools.

References:

Lowrie, T. (2006). Establishing School-Family Partnerships in Distance Education Contexts: Pedagogical Engagement in Isolated Settings. *Journal of Distance Education*, 21(2), 96-114.

Lowrie, T. & Jorgensen, R. (2012). The tyranny of remoteness: Changing and adapting pedagogical practices in distance education. *International Journal of Pedagogies and Learning*, 7(1), 1-8.

Rating: 7

Entrepreneurship and schools

There are other types of hands on learning that “reach out into their communities and beyond to explore and engage with ‘real world’ possibilities” occurring in rural schools. Inquiry models of learning and project based learning are becoming more widespread. The Australian Curriculum encourages inquiry learning where students develop and address their own critical questions in an area of interest. Project-based learning is similar and involves students working on real world problems. These types of programs help students refine increasingly important skills such as problem-solving, project management, and creativity by having them engage with authentic tasks, making the curriculum more meaningful to them through place-based learning.

While many schools are incorporating more inquiry learning into various classes in line with the Australian Curriculum and some Victorian Certificate of Education subjects, project based learning is a popular aspect of the Advance Program in Victorian schools. The Advance Program is not specifically a rural school program, but rural schools use it and its funding, to develop engaging programs. Many schools run programs where students develop their own community service projects from conception to completion. This allows students to identify problems and solutions to what they see as local issues. The success of these programs can be seen in an increase in engagement and connectedness to school and peers, particularly from ‘at risk’ students.

There are several considerations to be made going forward to encourage the expansion of such programs. A significant barrier is professional learning for teachers and school leadership. Accessing effective professional learning usually requires considerable time, money, and travel from rural areas. These types of programs require a shift in pedagogy and resource allocation to implement. More support for professional learning, especially in rural areas- opportunities, recognition of time, and costs is required.

The report highlights several important aspects of entrepreneurial education that would make an excellent base for developing professional learning opportunities for schools. Developing an understanding of why this type of learning is beneficial should help stakeholders embrace the challenge of a shift away from more traditional teaching and learning.

Rating: 5

Improving access – enrolments, clusters, distance education and boarding

Rating for enrolments: 6

Rating for clusters: 7

Rating for distance education: 6

Rating for boarding: 5

Diversity

Rating: 7

Transitioning beyond school

Rating: 7

Additional Comments