

Recipient Details

Name of organisation or individual: [O] Youth Research Centre - Melbourne Graduate School of Education - University of Melbourne

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Responses

Curriculum and assessment

Rating: 0

Teachers and teaching

Rural Teaching Education Project: Motivations, Opportunities and Barriers for Taking a Rural Teaching Job

Staff at the Youth Research Centre, Associate Dean (Diversity & Inclusion) Hernán Cuervo and Dr Daniela Acquaro, the impact of rural teaching placements on 8 pre-service teachers at University of Melbourne. Participants were interviewed before, during and after the placement to find out if the placement would influence their decision to seek a rural teaching job.

The key messages from this research are:

(1) Despite this positive outlook on rural teaching, all participants before and after their placements held a 'deficit' view about rural schooling. Compared to urban schools, rural schools were described as poorly resourced and poorly staffed with many schools having to 'make do' with teachers on staff teaching in areas outside their expertise.

(2) Participants also suggested that these deficit discourses were constructed through discussions within university subjects, where it was suggested that there is "less academic pressure" in rural schools, greater "classroom management concerns" and an accepted view that rural schools are "disadvantaged".

(3) Interviews revealed that the six students with no connection to rural Victoria never seriously considered applying for a rural teaching position and were simply motivated by the opportunity "to do something different", and "to get more diverse experience and challenge" themselves.

(4) The rural placement was seen as very positive experience by all participants. Interestingly, those from urban background, view the rural placement as a 'frontier' experience, or a "rite of passage in becoming an experienced teacher" as one participant stated.

(5) For the urban background participants, only job insecurity or not finding a job in the city, might move them to seek a rural teaching job.

(6) Pre-service teachers from regional or rural backgrounds are more likely to seek a teaching job in rural places than their urban counterparts, was confirmed.

(7) The two pre-service teachers who had connections to rural communities seriously considered a teaching career in rural schools. Their first hand experiences within rural communities created a familiarity allowing them to imagine a life away from the city.

Rating: 7

Leaders and leadership

Rating: 0

School and Community

The Benalla Rural City Project: A Whole Community Approach to Raise Aspirations

Staff at the Youth Research Centre, Assoc. prof. Helen Stokes and Dr Malcolm Turnbull, have been conducting a longitudinal evaluation of the Education Benalla Program (EBP), a particularly compelling and ground-breaking whole-of-community bid to address challenges surrounding entrenched disadvantage and educational implications in regional Victoria.

Launched in 2009, the program takes a cradle-to-career approach that encompasses a suite of early years Play group, Parent education and school readiness sub-programs; Primary years literacy initiatives; Middle years mentoring; support for assorted alternative Secondary educational programs; and a variety of transitions initiatives.

With a desired outcome of education completion rates at or above the state average by 2030, the project is guided by the long-term aims of:

- Significant and sustained improvement in Year 12 completion rates
- Significant and sustained improvement in transitioning to further education
- Significant and sustained improvement in completing a tertiary degree/diploma or apprenticeship

In seeking to achieve these aims, the Tomorrow Today Foundation has established strong partnerships with Benalla P-12 College and the independent FCJ College, the Department of Education, NE Tracks LLEN, Centrelink, the Careers Education Association, Benalla Rural City Council, etc. These partnerships have enabled a co-funded Careers Intensive program for all Year 9 students, multiple deliveries of a Parents Pathways program (aimed at increasing parents' connections to schools), annual funding for Career Action Plan workshops in schools and a Careers Day, annual University bus trips (enabling Year 10 students to visit and 'sample' metropolitan campuses), a sequence of community seminars such as 'Parents as Careers Advisors' or 'Can my wallet afford it [i.e. university]?', the provision of scholarships to assist young people in transitioning from Benalla to tertiary study in Melbourne.

More information for this project can be found at:

Stokes, H., & Turnbull, M. (2016). The Education Benalla Program: A case study of place-based action and collective impact in regional Australia [Research Report 46]. Melbourne, Australia: Youth Research Centre, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne.

http://education.unimelb.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/2124314/Stokes-And-Turnbull-Final-EBP-SEPT-2016_Final.pdf

Rating: 7

Information and Communication Technology

Rating: 0

Entrepreneurship and schools

Rating:

Improving access – enrolments, clusters, distance education and boarding

Rating for enrolments: 0

Rating for clusters: 0

Rating for distance education: 0

Rating for boarding: 0

Diversity

A recent book by Associate Dean (Diversity and Inclusion) Dr Hernán Cuervo of the Melbourne Graduate School of Education (University of Melbourne) explored the meaning of social justice for rural school participants in a P-12 school in the Mallee region and a Secondary School in East Gippsland.

See: Cuervo, H. (2016) *Understanding social justice in rural education*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

In this book Dr Cuervo offers an important contribution to understanding what is going on in rural schools, which dimensions of social justice are being applied and what the real needs are.

Cuervo finds that staff, parents and principals were very proud of their schools. Particularly the Mallee region school was seen as a model in the region and capable to attract students from nearby towns. Nonetheless, all interviewees in both schools believe that what is to be equalised is an opportunity to enjoy access to different material resources. In both schools, interviewees compare themselves with urban schools and feel lagging behind on staffing and breadth of curriculum. Nonetheless, they are able to perform at excellence through the striving to success by staff and support of community. This more so the case in the Mallee region school.

The research also examines the post-school pathways for rural students and the influence teachers and parents have in students' post-school choices. Young people and adult members of the communities are aware of the need for youth to migrate to gain further and higher qualifications to gain access to meaningful employment opportunities.

Finally, Cuervo argues that rural school participants should be viewed as 'social actors' rather than 'victims'. In other words, rural school participants can be agents of social change rather than mere passive recipients of state policies. A good quality of education that contributes to redress issues of social injustice in schools needs a better and greater distribution of resources but it also fundamentally requires an understanding of issues of recognition and participation in areas of schooling, such as policy-making, curriculum issues and teachers' professional needs, and in young people's possibilities of meaningful post-school pathways.

Rating: 7

Transitioning beyond school

The Life Patterns Program: A Two-Decade Longitudinal View of Rural Youth Transitions

Analysis of two decades of data, by Associate Dean (Diversity & Inclusion) Hernán Cuervo and Professor Johanna Wyn, of rural Victorians who left school in 1991, shows that a significant proportion of them have used their tertiary education credentials to remain “rural” (see Cuervo & Wyn 2012; Cuervo & Wyn 2014; Cuervo & Wyn 2017).

The data analysed comes from the Life Patterns project, based at the Youth Research Centre and led by CI Prof. Wyn. Data stated in this submission can be found in:

* Cuervo, H. & Wyn, J. (2012) Young people making it work: continuity and change in rural places. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.

* Cuervo, H. & Wyn (2017) A longitudinal analysis of belonging: temporal, performative and relational practices by young people in rural Australia. *Young*, 25(3), 1-25.

The Life Patterns project follows a cohort of young Australians that left secondary school in 1991 (loosely known as Gen X) in the state of Victoria, using survey and interviews as research techniques. With attrition, the sample is of 272 participants in 2017.

The main messages from the analysis of rural data for this cohort of Victorians spread in different publications by Cuervo and Wyn (2012, 2014, 2017) is:

(1) Participants pursued tertiary education to gain qualifications that would allow them to stay or return to rural places. Women were more likely to study nursing and teaching and men agricultural business; thus maintaining gender structured differentiation in occupation roles.

(3) Over two decades, Gen X participants from rural areas affirmed that family, friends, community and landscapes were crucial for them to strive to remain rural.

(4) A significant majority of Gen X participants that migrate from rural to urban did it to study at TAFE and/or university. Many participants complained in the 1990s surveys and interviews of the lack of tertiary education institutions in rural communities.

(5) A belonging to people and place has been found a powerful explanatory tool to understand the motivations of Gen X participants to remain rural.

Rating: 7

Additional Comments