

Teachers' lives in rural and regional schools

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Project Title	Nice Work: Teachers' lives in rural and regional schools
Project Team	
Period	Ongoing
Funding Agency	SiMERR
Organisational Base	SiMERR Victoria

Description

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The primary aim of this project is to examine the professional and social lives of primary and secondary mathematics and sciences teachers in Victorian rural and regional schools in order to understand how these two aspects impact upon a mathematics and science teachers' decision to teach in non-metropolitan schools.

The research strategy involves researchers becoming observers of mathematics and sciences teachers' professional and social realities. As Tim Costello says "you don't really know a place until you see it through the eyes of a local". This is accomplished by 'shadowing' six maths and sciences teachers during a week of their professional and social lives. Additional data will be gathered through questionnaires and face-to-face interviews. Audio and visual data will also be collected to complement other data. Selected subjects of this 'shadowing' will include mathematics and sciences teachers who are either committed, or not, to country teaching in Victorian schools.

The outcomes of this study will be refined surveys, interview questions, and observation protocols that will provide fully detailed case studies of the lives of mathematics and sciences teachers in Victorian rural, and regional situations; that will inform policy directions and practice for better addressing the professional and social needs of non-metropolitan mathematics and science teachers. This study will deliver three case studies, based on location type, on the experience of six maths and science teachers that will illuminate and guide further research into the retention of country educators.

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The assumption that teaching is the same in schools in geographically different locations is ill founded, a fact that can be attested to by country teachers the world over. This study should enable a clearer picture of what it means to be a country teacher. In particular, the study aims to describe the social factors that affect the country teacher. In this way a better understanding of the issues for country teachers can be formed. This better understanding of the teacher's place in their local community will allow discussion of ways to ameliorate negative factors and to maximize positive aspects. A further benefit is that preparing teachers for country teaching, before they take up their posts, can become a reality.

It is suggested that being prepared for country teaching can minimize the loss of country teachers to metropolitan schools.

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