Charting Futures for Education in Rural and Regional Victoria

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Project Title	Forum: Charting Futures for Science, ICT, Mathematics Education in Rural and Regional Victoria
Project Team	Professor Russell Tytler, Dr Coral Campbell, Professor David Symington, Phillipa Hodder (SiMERR Victoria)
Period	February 2008
Funding Agency	SiMERR and Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
Organisational Base	SiMERR Victoria

Description

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The aim of the forum was to provide the opportunity to consider the critical issues in teaching and learning mathematics, science and technology in rural and regional Victoria within the wider context of the changing social and cultural conditions in rural Victorian communities. The forum generated ideas for action to ensure that rural students are well served in the learning of mathematics, science and technology. The forum provided the opportunity to disseminate more widely the findings from the SiMERR project, and to chart ways forward for policy and for research.

The SiMERR program has enabled groups across the country to seriously address issues which have particular relevance to the teaching and learning of mathematics, science and technology in rural and regional areas. The forum was premised on the belief that the findings of the research have great significance for ensuring that students in the non-metropolitan areas of the state are well served by educational systems.

The forum involved participants hearing from experts what is known about the context in which students in rural and regional areas undertake their education, and the findings of relevant educational research, particularly the SiMERR studies. It included small group and plenary discussion of the implications of this information and what steps it would be best to take to ensure that students in rural and regional areas of Victoria are well served in the learning of mathematics, science and technology.

Participants

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46 participants consisting of:

- Science, mathematics and technology university educators;
- School system policy personnel (Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Association of Independent Schools of Victoria);
- Other government personnel (Community planning, Victorian Institute of Teaching);
- Regional consultants, school principals and teachers; and
- Representatives from organizations with rural interests (Country Education Project, Rural Education Forum, SiMERR National Centre).

Findings

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The ideas generated and discussed at, and following, the Forum led to the formulation of the following recommendations for action.

Recommendations for action by Government

1. That Government develop a policy framework and funding base which will facilitate support for activity by schools systems, schools and universities to take appropriate action, including the actions proposed below, to ensure that schools are more effectively and appropriately able to develop the potential of students in rural and regional centres.

Recommendations for action by school systems

2. That school systems develop a strategic plan for the provision of professional development activity and increase the support for the provision of appropriate professional development for teachers in Victorian rural and regional schools.

3. That school systems put systems and people in place to ensure that worthwhile initiatives operating in Victorian rural and regional schools are communicated widely.

4. That school systems initiate a program to raise awareness in rural and regional communities of the value of education in science, mathematics and ICT both to the career prospects of the students and to the community.

Recommendation for action by schools

5. That rural and regional schools explore ways of collaborating with community members and organisations and using community resources, human and material, in programs in science, mathematics and ICT.

Recommendation for action by universities engaged in teacher education

6. That universities engage in partnership with schools systems to ensure that opportunities for students to engage in teaching experience in rural and regional schools are enhanced.

Recommendations for action by researchers

7. Researchers should undertake research into rural education which takes account of their wider setting and news ways of approaching opportunities.

8. Researchers should collaborate with schools and school systems to investigate effective ways of identifying and measuring the outcomes of innovative programs.

Outcomes

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A report has been prepared and is being widely disseminated, to influence policy and practice regarding provision for science, ICT and mathematics education in rural Victoria. Further work includes the development of research proposals (an ARC linkage) and other initiatives based on the recommendations and involving some of the participants.

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The forum provided the opportunity to disseminate findings from a variety of SiMERR and other projects regarding rural science, ICT and mathematics education, to participants from varied settings, most of whom are in a position to act on these either to develop practice, research, or policy and resource provision.

The report and website will be widely disseminated and publicised.

Related documents

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