UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA

Staffing Rural, Remote & Isolated Schools in Australia:

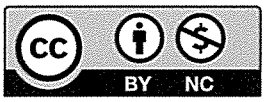
A review of the research literature

(2004-2016).

Natalie Downes & Philip Roberts

February 2017

TABLE OF CONTENTS



1: Overview

The staffing of rural, remote and isolated schools remains a significant issue of concern in Australian education. The starting point of this review is the year 2004. This year marks the publication of Roberts' 'Staffing an Empty Schoolhouse Report' (2005), whilst also being close to Sharplin's 'Rural retreat or outback hell' paper (2002). Roberts (2004) and Sharplin's (2002) work are two of the most cited works in this space and both follow the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Report of 2000 which drew significant attention to the challenges of staffing rural schools. Together Roberts (2004) and Sharplin (2002) provide a summary of the work on rural school staffing in Australia up until 2004.

This is then a review of the related literature for the subsequent 12 year period. Specifically, it covers research into rural, remote and isolated school staffing, including:

1) General trends in staffing rural and remote schools
2) The positives of rural teaching (including why take a rural position, why stay in one, and the opportunities it provides)
3) The challenges of rural teaching (including and reasons for leaving the profession)
4) Overcoming the challenges of rural teaching (including incentives, preparing teachers for rural settings, teacher education courses, and suggestions for policy)
5) Support for teachers already in rural areas (including professional development, mentoring, and leadership)
6) Issues and considerations in rural school leadership

Rural, remote and isolated school leadership has been covered in this review as it is an identified factor that influences the staffing of these schools. As such, it was important to consider the issues surrounding rural, remote and isolated school leadership, not just how leadership influences the staffing of rural, remote and isolated school schools.

Please note that from herein the term 'rural' is used to reference 'rural, remote and isolated' schools, unless specifically used otherwise.

2: Research into Rural and Remote Staffing

Since the 2004 staffing report there have been a number of major national research studies related to rural, remote and isolated school staffing including:

- The R[T]EP rural teacher education and rural schooling project (Green, 2008),
- TERRANova project that explored teacher education for rural areas (Lock, Reid, Green, Hastings, Cooper, & White, 2009),
- The RRRTEC rural teacher preparation project (White, 2011; White & Kline, 2012b),
- The SiMERR study into the needs of science, ICT and mathematics teachers in rural areas (Lyons, Cooksey, Panizzon, Parnell, & Pegg, 2006),
- REFA's project exploring pre-service teacher practicums (Halsey, 2005) ,
- The Bush Tracks teaching transitions project (McConaghy et al., 2006; Graham & Miller, 2015),
- Rural school leadership explorations (see for example the various works of Halsey & Drummond and Clarke, Stevens, & Wildy),
- A project focusing on the quality of pre-service teacher education (Trinidad, Sharplin, Lock, Ledger, Boyd, & Terry, 2011).

There have also been a number of small scale research projects in relation to the experiences of new graduates teaching in rural schools, the experiences of rural teachers, rural practicums and rural visit programs, resources to better prepare teachers at a pre-service level, mentoring of new graduates & pre-service teachers, and rural school leadership.

3: Staffing Trends

Several studies have identified similar staffing trends to the Staffing the Empty Schoolhouse Report (Roberts, 2004) over the last 12 years. For example, the 2013 *Staff in Australia's Schools* Report (McKenzie, Weldon, Rowley, Murphy, & McMillan, 2013) identified that rural and remote schools are harder to staff than metropolitan schools. Teachers in remote schools are more likely to leave before their appointment is complete, and they feel more uncertain about their future in the teaching profession (McKenzie et al., 2013). The 2006 *Science, ICT, Mathematics Education in Rural and Regional Australia (SiMERR)* report (Lyons et al., 2006) identified that the teacher turnover rate was higher in provincial and remote regions among science, maths and ICT teachers (Lyons, 2009; Panizzon & Pegg, 2007a; Panizzon & Pegg, 2007b), and it is harder to fill positions in these areas (Lyons, 2009; Lyons et al., 2006).

Furthermore, a higher proportion of early career teachers work in rural schools (McKenzie et al., 2013), with most teachers in rural areas beginning their career in these schools (Handel, Watson, Petocz, & Maher, 2013; Lyons, et al., 2006). In some rural schools, up to 60% of teachers are newly appointed (McConaghy, 2008) and many teachers have less than five years experience (Lock et al., 2012; McKenzie et al., 2013). They are also more likely to be teaching out of their subject area (Lyons et al., 2006; Panizzon, Westwell, & Elliott, 2009; Panizzon & Pegg, 2007b). Kline & Walker-Gibbs (2015) identified that graduate teachers working in remote and very remote regions of Australia felt less prepared to teach than their colleagues in metropolitan locations.

A survey of new graduates in Victoria (*The Rural New Graduate Survey*: Country Education Project, 2010) and the NSW R[T]EP project (Green, 2008) both identified that the further away from metropolitan areas the more issues schools faced in relation to staffing. In the R[T]EP project, Green & Novak (2008) identified that schools in what they refer to as the 'outer ring' of districts had younger staff, higher numbers of beginning teachers, more transient staff, and staff who moved to other districts. They suggest that this "identifies a relationship between population, spatial organisation, staffing churn and a kind of discontinuity of teacher place" (Green & Novak, 2008 p. 93). This is something that needs to be considered in induction and professional development for teachers, as it indicates that some areas are seen to be more desirable to work in than others (Green & Novak, 2008). McConaghy (2006a) suggests that teacher transience may always be a part of rural schools, linked to the cultural politics of schooling. A positive of this is the innovation and change, and new knowledge that teachers bring with them to these positions (Green, 2008; McConaghy, 2006b).

In terms of age, there is differing evidence. Some reports suggest that teachers in rural and/or remote areas are more likely to be younger (Green & Novak, 2008; McKenzie et al., 2013; Panizzon et al., 2009). However, in the SiMERR (Lyons et al., 2006) survey, the majority of respondents were over 41 years of age, with only 18% younger than 30. Leirich & O'Connor (2009) also identified that the majority of secondary teachers employed on a fixed term contract in their study were over 55 years of age. Frid et al. (2008) found that there were more graduates with a rural background in rural areas, which they suggest indicates that younger graduates are less likely to teach in a rural location as they have never experienced a rural location before. However, in contrast to this, Kline & Walker-Gibbs (2015) found that teachers in remote and very remote locations were less likely to have lived where they were working, or in a similar location.

4: Positives of Rural Teaching

There have been many reasons identified that encourage teachers to take up a rural appointment, and to stay. Those who do stay also identify many positives to rural teaching. These will be covered in the following section.

4.1: Reasons for taking up a rural or remote teaching appointment and staying in one

Rurality, rural experiences, and views about rurality were all influential factors in taking up teaching positions in rural areas. Teachers were more likely to teach in areas similar to where they lived while they were at university (Haynes & Miller, 2016; Jenkins, Reitano, Taylor, 2011; Jenkins, Taylor, Reitano, 2015; Lyons, 2009; Lyons, et al., 2006; Somerville, Plunkett & Dyson, 2010). This indicates that rural universities are an important consideration when thinking about rural staffing issues (Haynes & Miller, 2016). If they grew up in a rural location, or if they felt that being rural was part of their identity (Hazel & McCallum, 2016), also influenced their choice to teach in a rural school. Kline & Walker-Gibbs (2015) also identified that graduates who feel a personal connection to, and prefer to live in, a rural community are more likely to stay and teach in these communities for longer.

Yates (2011) surveyed pre-service teachers about their desire to teach in the country and found that how they rated their own metrocentricity (identification with a 'city' habitus) was a predicting factor in how hey viewed rural teaching and whether they wanted to take up a rural teaching position. This was more of a predictive factor than whether the students had a rural or metropolitan background (Yates, 2011). A teacher's perception of rural teaching also influences their ability to adjust to rural teaching. If they have positive attitudes they are more likely to adapt successfully to a rural teaching position (Hazel & McCallum, 2016). Hardy (2015) also found that positive emotions such as happiness and enjoyment also play a role in teachers' experiences.

Some other reasons teachers choose to take up a rural appointment include:

- An interest in rural teaching (Lock, Budgen, Lunay, & Oakley, 2012b; Lyons, 2009),
- To make a difference, (Jenkins et al., 2011; & Jenkins et al., 2015; Lock et al., 2012b),
- For a challenge (Lock et al., 2012b),
- Opportunistic reasons - more jobs, the transfer system, financial incentives (Hazel & McCallum, 2016; Jenkins et al., 2011; Jenkins et al., 2015; Lyons, 2009; Lyons, et al., 2006; Plunkett & Dyson, 2015),
- Personal circumstances (Jenkins et al., 2011; Jenkins et al., 2015; Lassig , Doherty, & Moore, 2015; Lyons, 2009),

- Inspired by a rural practicum (Lock et al., 2012b) ,
- Small class sizes (Lyons, et al., 2006),
- Placed by authorities/job available (Lassig et al., 2015; Lyons, 2009; Lyons, et al., 2006; Plunkett & Dyson, 2015),
- Opportunities for professional growth (Hazel & McCallum, 2016; Jenkins et al., 2011; Jenkins et al., 2015; Lock et al., 2012b),
- Lifestyle-including benefits such as relationships & school ethos (Jenkins et al., 2011; Jenkins et al., 2015; Lassig et al., 2015; Lyons, 2009; Plunkett & Dyson, 2015).

The SiMERR survey (Lyons, 2006) identified differences in what attracted older and younger teachers to rural areas. Older teachers were more likely to go to rural areas because of departmental placements and bonding, and when they got there, they were influenced to stay by the lifestyle. They were also influenced by promotion and the transfer system. Younger teachers were more influenced by financial incentives such as rent and allowances. This indicates that teachers require different incentive schemes to attract and retain them (Lyons, 2009; Lyons et al., 2006). In particular, to attract teachers, Lyons (2009) recommends financial incentives for younger teachers and career development, more leave, relief staffing, and a progressive system of financial incentives for older teachers.

In a study of newly appointed teachers in Western Australia, Sharplin (2009b) identified that a teacher's decision to stay or leave rural areas is in influenced by protective and risk factors. One of the most important factors is the ability of teachers to integrate into different environments. This influences the quality of their work life, and includes integrating into the sociocultural community, the geographic location, the organisation, the workplace, their role at work, and also working through family and social relationships. Furthermore, Sharplin, O'Neill, & Chapman (2009) identify that teachers' expectations and experiences and the way they evaluate these, influences how they integrate into a new school and community. These factors will result in the teacher either being resilient and integrating into their new environments, or they will withdraw (Sharplin et al., 2009).

Plunkett & Dyson (2015; Somerville, Plunkett & Dyson, 2010) identified that 69% of teachers they surveyed wanted to stay at least three years, and 44% wanted to stay at least 5 years or more. This indicates they are looking to stay long term and want stability. This is supported by McKenzie et al. (2013) who identified teachers in remote and rural areas intend on staying longer than their

metropolitan & provincial counterparts. However, being on contracts often prevented this from happening.

Contracts were also problematic as they influenced the way new teachers connected to their school and community (Somerville, et al., 2010). This is problematic as the community is a source of learning (Somerville & Rennie, 2012) and is seen as a source of support (Haynes & Miller, 2016). This includes looking at the community as a geographic space (knowledge of the community, their neighbourhood) a moral space (school holds the values of the community), a curriculum space (a place for teaching and learning experiences and resources), a social space (relationships), and as self (belonging or deficit views).

Lierich & O'Connor (2009) also identify that fixed term contracts cause higher job insecurity among staff than permanent positions. Short-term appointments interfere with staff being able to develop a sense of belonging and create connections (Plunkett & Dyson, 2015). Lierich & O'Connor (2009) also identify staff organisational commitment as essential to retaining staff and job satisfaction as a way to increase staff commitment to their job. These are factors that are influenced by being on short-term contracts.

4.2: The Opportunities of Rural Teaching

Lock et al., (2012b) identified that teachers felt there were more challenges than benefits to rural teaching, and the challenges and benefits resulted from each other. The benefits of rural teaching and the reasons teachers stayed in rural schools include:

- Feeling like they were accepted by the community & enjoying the rural lifestyle (Jenkins et al., 2011; Jenkins et al., 2015; Lock et al., 2012b; Lyons, 2009; Lyons, et al., 2006; White et al, 2009),
- The natural environment (Jenkins et al., 2011; Jenkins et al., 2015; Lock et al., 2012),
- They had an interest in rural teaching (Lyons, 2009),
- They felt that rural teaching was rewarding (Jenkins et al., 2011; Jenkins et al., 2015), and satisfying (Lock et al., 2012b),
- The teaching environment encouraged professional growth (Jenkins et al., 2011; Jenkins et al., 2015; Lock et al., 2012b),
- They felt they had more autonomy (Lock et al., 2012),
- Their relationships with others, their family (Lyons, 2009; Lyons, et al., 2006) and their attachment to their students (Lock et al., 2012),

- Small class sizes (Lyons, 2009),
- Good support (White, Lock, Hastings, Reid, Green, & Cooper, 2009),
- The benefits of their school leadership (White et al., 2009),
- Financial incentives (only a small number of teachers identified this) (Lyons, 2009),
- The transfer system (Lyons, 2009).

5: The Challenges of Rural Teaching

Most of the challenges teachers in rural areas identified related to adapting to, and catering for, the distinctness of teaching in rural settings. This was also the case for practicum students, however, in this section we will focus on teachers.

The challenges and reasons teachers considered leaving include:

- Teaching multi age groups (Country Education Project, 2010; Frid et al., 2008).
- Professional isolation issues (Country Education Project, 2010; Handel et al., 2013; Jenkins et al., 2011; Jenkins et al., 2015; Kline & Walker-Gibbs, 2015; Lock et al., 2012b; Lyons, et al., 2006; Maxwell, et al., 2006; Panizzon et al., 2009) such as being the only new graduate in their school (Country Education Project, 2010), teaching out of their subject area (Handel et al, 2013; Kline & Walker-Gibbs, 2015; Lock 2012; Lyons, et al., 2006; Panizzon et al., 2009; Panizzon & Pegg, 2007b), being the only subject specialist (Handal, Watson, Petocz, & Maher, 2013) and lacking curricular support (Handal et al., 2013). In a study of newly appointed rural teachers, Sharplin (2013) found that the quality of teachers' work life and level of dissatisfaction as a teacher was influenced by teaching a subject area or year level that wasn't what they trained for. These factors also seemed to be influential on the teachers' decision to leave teaching. Professional isolation also influences their confidence (Kline & Walker-Gibbs, 2015).
- Lack of support (Country Education Project, 2010; Kline & Walker-Gibbs, 2015; Lock et al., 2012b; Sharplin, 2013; Young & Kennedy, 2011).
- Issues specific to rural settings such as instructional, curriculum, and organisation factors, and the demands of these (Country Education Project, 2010; Frid et al., 2008; Handal et al., 2013; Haynes & Miller, 2016; Lock et al., 2012b). This includes the lack of relevance of the curriculum, the need to adapt pedagogy, and difficulty engaging students (Lock et al., 2012b)
- Exhaustion & stress (Lock et al., 2012b).

- Personal and social isolation (Country Education Project, 2010; Handel et al., 2013; Haynes & Miller, 2016; Lyons, 2009; Lyons et al., 2006; Maxwell et al., 2006) including a lack of social activities nearby (Country Education Project, 2010).
- Adapting to the context they live and work in (Maxwell, et al., 2006).
- Professional development issues, including a lack of access to professional development (Jenkins 2011; Kline & Walker-Gibbs, 2015; Lock et al., 2012b; Lyons, et al., 2006; Panizzon & Pegg, 2007a; Panizzon & Pegg, 2007b), needing more professional development for teaching Indigenous students and students with diverse needs (Lock 2012; Lyons et al., 2006), specific professional development for maths, science and ICT (Frid, Smith, Sparrow, & Trinidad, 2008; Lock et al., 2012b; Lyons, et al., 2006), a lack of access to opportunities such as HSC marking (Handel et al., 2013, Lyons et al., 2006), and a lack of time to access professional development (Frid et al., 2008).
- Staff conflict (Lock et al., 2012b).
- Changes in the staff transfer system & a lack of job security (Handel et al., 2013).
- Not enough access to resources (Haynes & Miller, 2016; Lock et al., 2012b, Frid et al., 2008).
- The cost of living (Handel et al., 2013; Lock et al., 2012b, Lyons et al., 2006).
- Needing to adapt to a new personal and professional environment, their visibility within the community (Country Education Project, 2010; Young & Kennedy, 2011), living so close to other staff members (Lassig et al., 2015; Lock, et al., 2012), integrating into a new community (Young & Kennedy, 2011) and developing and maintaining relationships in the community (Kline & Walker-Gibbs, 2015).
- Language barriers (Lock et al., 2012b).
- Feeling less satisfied (McKenzie et al., 2013).
- Their own family reasons, such as their partner's job or to improve their own children's educational opportunities (Lassig et al. 2015; Lyons, 2009; Lyons et al., 2006). There was also a perception that moving for males was easier than for females (Young & Kennedy, 2011).

Building on the last point above of family reasons, Lassig et al. (2015) also identified that teachers in rural areas also have the concern of balancing the needs of their family with the demands of their job. For instance, young teachers are more likely to be able to move more often, while older teachers find it more difficult to move due to having a family. They also feel it is important to consider their children's futures over their role. This can put them in a difficult position for reasons

such as deciding where to send their children to school, particularly if they choose not to send their children to the school where they teach. As such, their knowledge of the schooling system is potentially a problem. If they felt that their children's education needs were being met, and that they lived near to their extended family, they were more likely to stay (Lassig et al., 2015).

As part of the SiMERR national survey (Lyons et al., 2006), teachers who had never taught outside a metropolitan location were asked why they wouldn't teach in a rural school. The reasons they indicated were having family and friends in metropolitan regions, their partners were employed in metropolitan locations, and their assumptions about resources , or lack thereof, in rural locations (Lyons, 2009).

Kelly & Fogarty (2015) argue that pre-service teachers and early career teachers are those who need the most support and therefore, are where policy should be targeted. They propose a model that explains the barriers teachers face in taking up a rural teaching position (see below). In doing so, they argues that if those factors are addressed, along with factors in attraction and retention, then the staffing issue can begin to be solved.

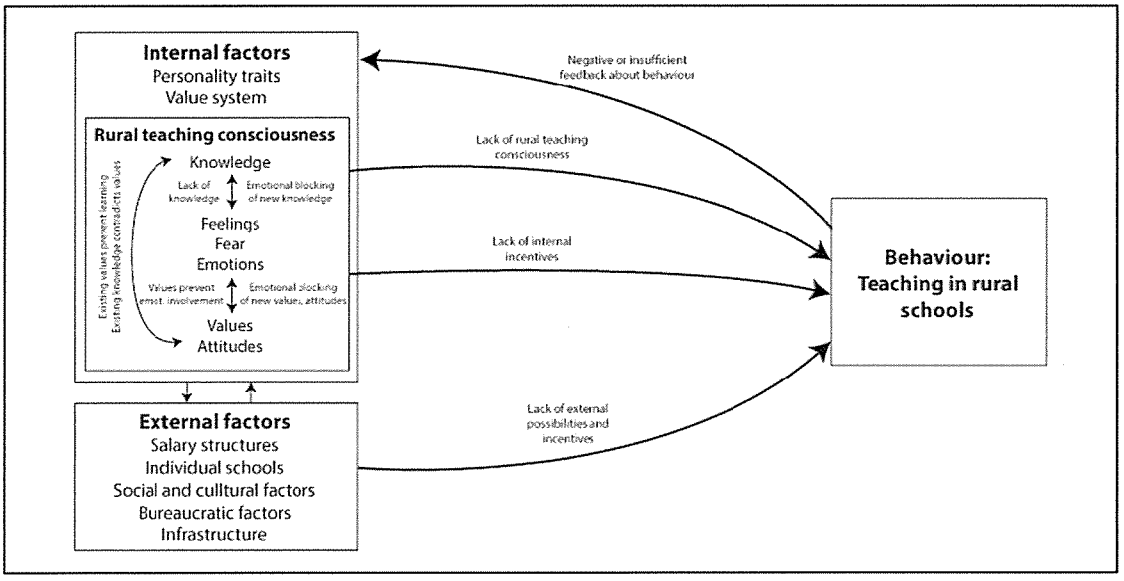


Fig 1: (Kelly & Fogarty, 2015, p.5)

In the model, Kelly & Fogarty (2015) propose that "taking up a rural position is an action that follows a behavioural intention. It's an action that is a function of both the attitudes of the individual teacher and the norms of their culture and social environment" (pp. 4-5). Furthermore, they argue that there is a link between the "psychology of a teacher, their sociological context and the resulting behavioural intentions" (Kelly & Fogarty, 2015 p. 5). Policy needs to take into Consequently, consideration all of the factors in the model (Kelly & Fogarty, 2015).

6: Overcoming the challenges and staffing issues

There have been a number of strategies, and recommendations to help support teachers in rural areas to stay in rural areas, and to attract them to rural teaching. These include:

- Incentives,
- Acknowledging the need to, and working to, prepare teachers for the unique nature of rural settings, and encouraging them to develop knowledge of this. This involves strategies to prepare them at a pre-service teacher level (such as changes to teacher training, rural practicums and rural visits).
- Support and professional development for those already in rural settings, particularly for understanding and working with issues of 'rural difference'.

6.1: Incentives

There are divided opinions about incentives and their role in attracting and retaining teachers to rural and remote areas. Some research recommends financial incentives are reviewed and expanded (Lyons, et al., 2006) and incentives such as scholarships are considered (Lock et al., 2012b). In particular incentives have been suggested to target maths, science and ICT teachers, and school leaders (Lyons, et al., 2006), as well as provide specific incentives for 'older' teachers. Rewards for long-staying teachers have also been recommended (Lyons, et al., 2006). Lock et al. (2012) also recommends that the housing standards for teachers are improved and schemes to manage the cost of living are created.

Other research suggests incentive schemes are less effective. Handel et al. (2013) noted that incentive systems might effectively attract teachers to rural locations, however, they do not manage to keep teachers in rural locations. Lyons (2009) suggests that teachers may not go to rural areas without financial incentives, however, it is factors such as the rural lifestyle that assists in getting them to stay. Halsey (2012) suggests that incentives are a start, but are not enough. He argues that there is a need to "look at other ways to enhance the status, esteem and value placed by the teaching profession and others on being a rural teacher" (p. 1). White, Green, Reid, Lock, Hastings, & Cooper, 2008) argue that incentive schemes are unlikely to succeed, as teachers need to be prepared for teaching in rural locations. McConaghy (2008) suggests that rather than focusing on incentives, pedagogy needs to be focused upon, because getting to know the community and gaining a sense of place and belonging is important to teachers. Furthermore, White & Reid (2008; White et al., 2008)

suggest that by advertising state-based incentives universities don't see the issue of rural staffing as something to consider.

6.2: Preparing Teachers For Rural Settings

The issue of attracting and retaining staff in rural areas is an issue for universities (White & Reid, 2008), and all stakeholders (Green & Reid, 2004), not just education departments. A national approach to rural teaching (the attraction and retention of staff) is necessary (Lock, Green, Reid, Cooper, White, & Hastings, 2008; Lyons et al., 2006; Trinidad et al., 2014) with a national rural education strategy including partnerships and collaborative, co-ordinated initiatives to address the issue. However, there is a lack of political interest to make this happen (Trinidad et al., 2014). Lock et al. (2008) identify that it is necessary to focus on factors such as incentives for teachers to go to rural areas, why teachers stay long-term in rural areas, leadership and mentoring in these areas.

To better prepare teachers for rural appointments at university, there are three main areas that have been focused on in pre-service teacher education:

- Exposure to rural teaching and living through practicums,
- Exposure to rural teaching and living through rural school visits,
- Changes to pre-service teacher education programs.

These areas all aim to change students' attitudes and prepare them for 'rural differences'. Rural practicums and rural visits had similar challenges, benefits and outcomes for students as outlined below.

6.2.1: Pre-Service Teacher Rural Practicums

Jenkins (2011; 2015) recommends that more opportunities are provided for students through rural practicums to view the rural in a positive way, rather than in a deficit way. Teacher education programs in metropolitan locations need to find ways for pre-service teachers to make links to rural locations, with rural practicums being one of the suggested ways for this to occur (Frid et al., 2008). This section focuses on studies that evaluate practicums in rural areas.

The benefits of participating in rural practicums include:

- Students were more willing to teach in a rural location when they graduated (Halsey, 2009b; Lock, 2008; Trinidad et al., 2013; White & Kline, 2012a).
- Assisting students to decide if they want to teach in a rural location (Kline et al., 2013).

- It benefitted their professional learning, as they were able to teach more age groups and subjects, and gain experience and knowledge of teaching and living in a rural location (Halsey, 2009b; Kline, White, & Lock, 2013).
- The experience helps when they move to a rural location as a teacher (Halsey, 2009b; Kline et al., 2013; Lock 2008).
- They were able to challenge their preconceptions about rural teaching (Adie & Barton, 2012; Kline et al., 2013; Lock, 2008) and gain more realistic expectations (Lock, 2008). It also reinforced the positives of rural teaching (Halsey, 2009b).
- The community they teach in gains benefits as well as the students and the supervising teacher (Halsey, 2005).
- Students develop an interest in community (Halsey, 2009b).

Participating in rural practicums also has disadvantages, however, the perceived benefits outweigh the disadvantages (Halsey, 2005). The disadvantages include:

- The costs of a rural practicum, including through a loss of income from a job (Halsey, 2005, Halsey, 2009b).
- Travel (Adie & Barton, 2012; Halsey, 2009b; Lock 2012).
- Isolation, including loneliness because of being separated from friends and family (Adie & Barton, 2012; Halsey, 2009b; Lock 2012).
- Lack of support from the university (Halsey, 2009b).
- Fewer students and less options (Halsey, 2009b).
- A lack of privacy (Adie & Barton, 2012).

For rural practicums to be a success, pre-service teachers need the support and involvement of the community (Adie & Barton 2012; Halsey, 2009b; Kline et al., 2013) and pre-service teachers need to understand the role of schools in rural communities (Halsey, 2009b). Practicums also need the involvement of universities (Halsey, 2009b; Kline et al., 2013). This includes having access to university resources, teacher educators and mentoring by their peers (Kline et al., 2013). These factors also increase the willingness of pre-service teachers to undertake a rural practicum (Kline et al., 2013). An example of this is having a community liaison officer who was a member of the community (Kline et al., 2013).

Students who participated in these programs felt that it was important for their pre-service teacher education to include a rural practicum and information about rural teaching. This included information such as how to cope with the isolation and teaching multi age groups (Lock, 2008).

Trinidad et al., (2012) identified that students who did complete a module of work before undertaking a rural practicum felt it would increase their knowledge and skills to undertake the practicum.

Pre-service teachers need to develop place consciousness (Kline et al., 2013) and understand the local community and the rural knowledges the children bring (Adie & Barton, 2012). These practicums enable pre-service teachers to gain benefits that can only be gained from being immersed in place (Halsey, 2009b, citing Gruenewald, 2003 on place). Adie and Barton (2012) suggest that pre-service teacher training needs to help students understand local rural knowledge and how this relates at a global level. They also need assistance to see the rural differently, not as a deficit, or in an idyllic way. However, they identify that it is unlikely that this can occur in a four-week practicum. To overcome this, Page (2006) recommends students experience living and teaching in rural locations through extended practicums to learn in a rural place and gain the skills to teach multigrade levels. One way to enable students to undertake a semester long practicum is for the government to make resources available similar to those used to prepare rural health professionals (Trinidad et al. (2012).

Halsey (2011, 2012) evaluated a program where students participated in a semester long practicum and found that the extended period of time benefitted students. Students had more time to develop relationships, develop their confidence, understand more about rural teaching, and to feel supported by the school and community. The teachers involved also felt the students gained more of an understanding about successful teaching working in a new environment and community, that assisted in helping develop their identity as a teacher. They also experienced issues such as isolation, and fitting in in a small community, and the associated professional benefits and problems. However, funding was an issue with the program. They recommended that the government provide more funding for semester long practicums, particularly as funding is much less than that given to rural health practitioners (Halsey, 2012). The additional time and resources needed for extended practicums also present a challenge (Halsey, 2011). One way to overcome barriers such as these is partnerships between universities so they can share the supervision responsibilities of students on rural practicums (Ryan, Jones & Walta, 2012).

Although rural practicums are beneficial, they are not always encouraged by universities and are usually optional (Halsey, 2005; Kline et al., 2013). For instance, fewer than 23% of practicums are in rural locations (Halsey, 2005), with the majority undertaken by students at universities located outside metropolitan areas. Kline et al. (2013) found that students with rural backgrounds were more likely to undertake rural practicums.

The costs involved with undertaking rural practicums were an influential factor for students undertaking them. The distance and length of time the student needed to travel to the community influenced that cost (Halsey, 2009). Other reasons for not undertaking rural practicums include family responsibilities, a lack of interest, fear of the unknown, the view that a rural practicum will mean a rural job, personal circumstances, and accommodation (Halsey, 2005). To overcome the isolation, cluster placements have been recommended (Halsey, 2009b; Kline et al., 2013).

Financial incentives have also been recommended to encourage students to take up rural practicums (Halsey, 2009b; Lock, 2008; Trinidad et al., 2013; Trinidad et al., 2012). These need to be based on the actual costs of undertaking a practicum (Halsey, 2009b). Halsey (2009b) recommends changes to policy to encourage students to undertake rural practicums, with incentives for metropolitan universities take up a rural practicum. However, in the rural practicum program that Lock (2008) evaluated, just over half of the students indicated that they would have undertaken the practicum without any financial support.

6.2.2: Rural Visit Programs

Following the suggestion that it is necessary to expose pre-service teachers to rurality to encourage them to teach in a rural area, many universities have began programs where students visit rural areas to get a feel for what they are like. This is a different model to practicums. Trinidad et al. (2014) identified that 1st year students felt positive about participating in such a program.

Reasons for applying for these programs include:

- Exploring possible teaching locations (Beutel, Adie, & Hudson, 2011; Hudson & Millwater, 2009).
- To experience the rural lifestyle (Hudson & Hudson, 2008a; Hudson & Hudson, 2008b; Hudson & Millwater, 2009).
- For a valuable experience (Hudson & Millwater, 2009).
- To learn about rural teaching and rural settings (Hudson & Hudson, 2008a; Hudson & Hudson, 2008b; Hudson & Millwater, 2009).
- To understand the differences in rural and metropolitan schools (Hudson & Hudson, 2008a; Hudson & Hudson, 2008b).
- They felt it would help them to become better teachers (Hudson & Hudson, 2008a ; Hudson & Hudson, 2008b).

- To assist them to make an informed choice about living and teaching in a rural location (Richards, 2012).

Prior to participating in a rural visit program, students felt that rural schools lacked resources and experienced teachers, and they didn't want to move away from their familiar surroundings (Richards, 2012). They were also concerned about professional and social isolation (Trinidad et al., 2014). However, by participating in a rural visit program, pre-service teachers challenged their negative views about rural teaching and started forming more positive views about rural teaching (Beutel et al., 2011; Hudson & Hudson, 2008a; Hudson & Hudson, 2008b; Hudson & Millwater, 2009; Sharplin, 2010; Sharplin, 2009a; Trinidad et al., 2014). In particular, pre-service teachers felt that the experience helped them gain an understanding of rural places (Beutel et al., 2011; Hudson & Hudson, 2008a; Hudson & Hudson, 2008b; Hudson & Millwater, 2009; Sharplin, 2010; Sharplin, 2009a; Trinidad et al., 2014).

Students who participated in rural visit programs were able to describe benefits to rural teaching, including the professional opportunities it offered (Hudson & Hudson, 2008a; Hudson & Hudson, 2008b), teaching in multi-age classrooms (Beutel et al., .2011), valuing the sense of community, lifestyle, the people and students (Beutel et al., 2011), their understanding of both the benefits and demands of teaching in rural areas, and recognising the diversity of students (Trinidad et al., 2014). Also, as the program described by Trinidad et al. (2014) involved collaboration between four universities, students found it beneficial to collaborate with students from other institutions. The schools that students visited also gave positive feedback (Sharplin 2010; Sharplin, 2009a). Importantly, as a result of participating in the program, many pre-service teachers indicated that they would consider applying for a rural or remote position (Hudson & Hudson, 2008a; Hudson & Hudson, 2008b; Hudson & Millwater, 2009; Richards, 2012; Shaplin, 2010). Those who indicated they would not consider a rural teaching position indicated reasons such as work or family commitments (Sharplin, 2012). Richards (2012) identified that 8/9 students on one trip asked to return for a rural practicum and some had convinced others to undertake a rural practicum.

The success of one program was contributed to the involvement of the local community. This included students staying with local families and being involved in community events (Beutel et al., 2011). Although there were some challenges identified to these programs, these mainly relate to the itinerary, the time of the trips, a lack of funding (Sharplin, O'Neill & Chapman, 2011) and the isolation students experienced (Hudson & Millwater, 2009). Other issues include students' prior commitments such as family and jobs (Trinidad et al., 2014). A model trialled by White (2006) for first year students that was based on the concept of multiple learning spaces and knowledge producing teams, where students did both coursework and a rural fieldtrip, was considered

beneficial. This was because students felt less isolated due to corresponding with and getting to know the people they would be working with prior to visiting the area (White, 2006).

Richards (2012) argues that rural visit programs reinforce that pre-service teachers need experience teaching in rural areas for them to change their attitudes, and this may increase the number of teachers in rural areas. As there are different contexts for teaching, the advantages of rural teaching need to be highlighted to pre-service teachers (Hudson & Hudson 2008a; Hudson & Hudson, 2008b; Hudson & Millwater, 2009). Schools and universities need to work together to give pre-service teachers opportunities to live and work in rural communities. In particular, programs where students visit rural schools need to be expanded (Beutel, et al., 2011; Hudson & Hudson, 2008a; Hudson & Hudson, 2008b; Lyons et al., 2006) and universities in metropolitan locations need to provide opportunities for this to occur outside practicums and with low cost to the students (Hudson & Hudson, 2008a; Hudson & Hudson, 2008ab).

6.2.3: Teacher Education Courses

Preparing teachers for rural settings needs to be part of teacher education curriculum and not just included as supplementary programs where students visit rural areas (Green & Reid, 2004). Green & Novak (2008) indicate that it is necessary to focus on quality teaching, not just staffing, something that involves pre-service teacher education. However, Trinidad et al. (2014) identify that only 11 out of 39 universities in Australia provide a course on rural education. Highlighting Halsey's (2005) findings about rural practicums, White et al. (2008) found that regional universities are more likely to encourage a rural focus. However, as mentioned above, few universities focus on preparing pre-service teachers for working in rural schools (Green, 2008) or for the challenges that arise from providing education outside metropolitan areas (Trinidad et al., 2013). There are some departmental programs (Green, 2008), and some universities have schemes to encourage the uptake of rural practicums, however, from an evaluation of Australian universities' websites, there is little rural focus in universities' teacher education coursework (White et al., 2008). This is problematic as Kline & Walker-Gibbs (2015) identified that while teachers in rural and remote locations indicated they felt just as effective overall as their peers in metropolitan regions, there were some differences where they felt less prepared. These related to contextual factors that their studies didn't assist them with.

It has been argued that, presently, teacher education has a metrocentric approach (Green & Reid, 2004; White & Reid, 2008) despite the identification of rural difference in education (Green & Reid, 2004). These contexts require different professional learning (Jenkins, et al., 2011; Jenkins et

al., 2015) and training (McConaghy, 2008). Teacher education does not consider rurality as a social context for schooling (McConaghy, 2008) and needs to take a more place conscious/place based approach (Lock et al., 2008; McConaghy, 2008; Page, 2006; White & Reid, 2008; White, Lock, Hastings, Cooper, Reid, & Green, 2011) as context is important (Green, 2008) and 'place' shapes a beginning teacher's experiences (Green, Noone & Nolan, 2013).

Schooling is a situated practice (Green & Reid, 2004) and "is best conceived as always located somewhere, socially, spatially and historically" (Green & Reid, 2004, p. 225). As such teacher education programs need to change (Green & Reid, 2004). This will help "bring a particular sort of curriculum, and as teachers come to know about a particular rural place, they are developing knowledge, sensitivities, awareness, skills, attitudes, and abilities that will allow them to feel more at home and more powerful in rural communities" (White & Reid, 2008, p. 6). Noone (2015) argues that to overcome the deficit views of the rural, teacher education (both in-service and pre-service) needs to consider relationships with place. She describes it as a teacher place assemblage, with a focus on place, in particular communities, and how these will affect the students' education. This is important as preparing more teachers may not be the solution, instead, teacher educators need to take a rural standpoint to prepare teachers for rural appointments (White, 2015, citing Roberts, 2014 on rural standpoint).

Reid et al. (2010) argue that teachers need to recognise and value the social and symbolic capital of the place they are in, and utilize the communities' resources and people, rather than privilege metropolitan knowledge. Pre-service teacher training needs to assist them to do this. They propose a model of rural social space (Reid, Green, Cooper, Hastings, Lock, & White, 2010), a theoretical model for understanding rurality, that aims to help prepare teachers for working and living in rural communities. It brings together three interrelated factors, the economy, geography and demography that are "connected both in practice and in place" (Reid et al., 2010 p. 269) and interrelated interdependently with policy.

Considering rural social space is a factor that White et al. (2011) identifies as important for schools in solving their staffing issues. This is because it makes the community more sustainable as it becomes more appealing as a place to live and work. Drawing on the rural social space model (Reid et al., 2010 as cited in White, 2015 p. 50), funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzales, 1992 as cited in White, 2015 p. 50) and place consciousness (Gruenewald, 2003 as cited in White, 2015 p. 50) White (2015) argues that these theoretical tools help add the rural to the knowledge and professional learning of teacher educators, and encourage thinking in terms of 'third or hybrid spaces' (Zeichner, 2010 as cited in White 2015 p. 57) to prevent thinking in terms of binaries between the rural and urban. Walker-Gibb, Ludecke, Kline (2015) propose connecting "place, space

and identity" (p. 87) to look at influences at a meso and macro level. They describe this as 'pedagogy of the rural', with the aim of flipping conversations from what teachers bring to the rural, to what the rural can bring to education.

An important factor in rural staffing is schools and communities working together to support each other (Lock et al., 2009), as these relations are strengthened by long staying teachers (Wallace, Boylan, Mitchell, & Streckfus, 2008). This is because teachers need time to develop an understanding of the place they work in, and for trust to be developed. The RRRTEC project (see White & Kline, 2012a) identified the importance of preparing pre-service teachers for life in rural communities, and developed a framework that focuses on school, classroom and community readiness (White, 2009; White & Kline, 2012a; White, 2010 as cited in White & Kline, 2012b p. iv). Somerville et al. (2010) identify the importance of teachers seeing the classroom and community as interrelated, and the children as a great source of learning about their community. They also identified, however, that some teachers were more connected to their school than their community.

The RRRTEC project highlighted the importance of focusing on the difference in teaching in rural settings (White & Kline, 2012a). In rural settings, pre-service teachers identified that they wanted to know more about developing relationships, understanding the places and communities they will work in, how they will be perceived as a teacher and leader, their visibility in the community, working with a diverse student population, effective communication, collaborating using technology for professional development, and working with the curriculum in meaningful ways (White, 2011; White & Kline, 2012a & White & Kline, 2012b). Frid et al. (2008) also identified a need for pre-service teacher programs to prepare students "personally and socially, as well as professionally, and academically, for the adaptability and resilience needed to live and work in schools and communities that are very diverse in social, political, geographical, and economic features" (p. 53). This includes learning to balance their professional and personal lives (Miller & Graham, 2015) and emotions (Hardy, 2015; Miller & Graham, 2015). Halsey (2006) proposes a spatial self-help map to help teachers and pre-service teachers professionally, personally and publically, "locate, monitor and continuously adjust their relationship dynamics in a rural and remote locations'" (p. 492)

Jenkins et al., (2011; 2015) see it as the role of teacher educators to develop modules of work for students that focuses on rural teaching. Based on the RRRTEC model (school, classroom and community ready) the RRRTEC team developed resources and modules of work for universities to use in preparing students for teaching in rural areas (White, 2009; White, 2011). A recommendation

from the RRRTEC project and the SIMERR survey, as well as Trinidad et al. (2012), is that more resources such as these are developed to assist teachers working in rural areas.

The RRRTEC resources have been built on by the TERRR network (Trinidad et al., 2014; Trinidad et al., 2013) which has developed resources (available on the SPERA website) that aim to increase pre-service teacher knowledge about rural teaching and living (Trinidad et al., 2013) - these resources link to the National Professional Standards for teachers (Trinidad et al., 2014). This approach is supported by Jenkins et al. (2011; 2015) who suggest that modules of work in teacher education about the experiences of teachers working in rural areas can assist in preparing teachers for teaching in rural areas. The TERRR resources have also been implemented in association with a rural field experience at four universities in Western Australia, where they draw on the model used in rural health (Trinidad et al., 2011). They aim to both attract students from rural areas into teaching, prepare students for teaching in rural areas, and create collaborative relationships between universities, the community and industry partners through this program.

Students who have participated in units of work to prepare them for rural teaching felt positive about these (Heffernan, Fogarty & Sharplin, 2016; Jenkins & Cornish, 2015). This was especially the case in a gamified, case-based unit of work that enabled students to imagine themselves teaching in a rural school, and as such, reduced their concerns about teaching in a rural school (Heffernan, et al., 2016). The approach also increased student engagement in the course, and collaboration between students (Heffernan, et al., 2016).

To assist in preparing pre-service teachers for working in rural schools, Lyons et al. (2006) recommend that centres for excellence in rural and regional pre-service teachers preparation are developed in each state, focusing particularly on maths, science and ICT teachers. Furthermore, the teacher professional standards should include something about teachers addressing the needs of students in rural areas (Lyons et al., 2006).

6.3: Other Suggestions

The research suggests that in order to encourage pre-service teachers to teach in rural areas, the positive factors associated with working in a rural community need to be publicised to pre-service teachers and teachers (Jenkins et al., 2011, Jenkins et al., 2015; Lyons et al., 2006). This may include providing more information about teaching in rural locations and promoting positive stories from teachers currently working in rural locations (Lyons et al., 2006). Such an approach is supported by Boylan (2011) who identified that people go to rural schools late in their career

because they want to move to a more rural location for the benefits they feel a rural location provides. Teachers already in-service also need assistance to develop a home for themselves in a rural location, and help them feel included in their community (Leirich & O'Connor, 2009).

Boylan (2011; Wallace & Boylan, 2009) suggests adopting a rural lens, by beginning with the rural communities' staffing needs, rather than working from policy that is developed in "other places and other times" (p. 345). Boylan (2011) also suggests targeting tree changers, in recruitment policy, that is, older more experienced teachers who move to rural schools later in their careers for reasons such as the perceived lifestyle. This includes focusing on identifying and targeting tree changers, policy to assist them relocate, induction and mentoring, and professional development that targets their needs. However, tree changers also experience similar challenges to new teachers, including isolation from services and amenities, costs of living, travel costs, highly demanding workplace, being visible in the rural community.

6.4: Support for Teachers Already in Rural Areas:

For teachers already in rural schools, professional development & support, and leadership, are recommended to assist with the challenges of rural teaching and the retention of staff. In policy, Sharplin, O'Neill & Chapman (2009) recommend that the experience and skills of those appointed needs to be better matched to what is needed in vacancies.

6.4.1: Support & Professional development:

A survey of new graduates in Victoria identified that a teacher's decision to stay or leave a rural teaching position was influenced by the support they received in the first three months of their position. They were more likely to stay if they felt they were being supported (Country Education Project, 2010). Sharplin (2013) identified that there are specific periods during a teacher's first year where they need to feel supported for different reasons. In the first few weeks it is crucial they are supported with information, in the first semester supported with assistance, support and feedback, and in the three months leading up to the end of the year, they need support for certainty in their position.

In Victoria, most new teachers indicated that they received support at a school level, rather than at a regional level and felt that informal mentoring and rural cluster activities were more useful than Victorian Institute of Teachers (VIT) activities. Less than 50% accessed activities by the VIT, due

to barriers such as time, distance, availability, and the process of registration (Country Education Project, 2010). These are similar barriers that mid to late career teachers identified to accessing professional development: time, distance, resources, motivation, cost, and access to a casual teacher (Jenkins et al., 2011; Jenkins et al., 2015).

To increase access to support, Jenkins et al. (2011; 2015) recommended teachers have access to a rostered casual system for professional development and increased mentoring (Jenkins et al., 2011; Jenkins et al., 2015). The areas these teachers felt they most needed professional development was in leadership, ICT, literacy subject specialist support, pedagogy and behaviour management (Jenkins et al., 2011; Jenkins et al., 2015). 15% of those surveyed in the Rural New Graduate Survey (Country Education Project, 2010) indicated that they received little support from their school. Smaller schools had less opportunity to share with other teachers (professional isolation) and some schools were not undertaking induction for new staff. However, what was provided was useful (Country Education Project, 2010; Jenkins et al., 2011; Jenkins et al., 2015). The professional development provided also needs to be specific to rural contexts (Jenkins et al., 2011; Jenkins et al., 2015). This is important as place shapes a beginning teacher's experiences (Green, Noone & Nolan, 2013).

All new teachers surveyed by Sharplin et al. (2011) encountered stress and reacted with coping strategies. If they had protective factors, they coped more effectively with stress (Sharplin et al., 2011), something that was crucial to reduce the negative impact on teachers who were teaching out of their field (Sharplin, 2013). New teachers were more likely than experienced teachers to use avoidant strategies to deal with stress (Sharplin, 2013). Many new graduates in Victoria would have preferred it if they had the issues they faced discussed in their final year of university, or in their induction programs (Country Education Project, 2010). They felt that university and rural cluster programs helped them become more aware of these issues (Country Education Project, 2010). Maths, Science and ICT teachers felt their professional development needs were not being met, and they wanted more professional development for Indigenous, special needs, and gifted and talented students. New graduates also wanted more professional development in ICT, the curriculum, literacy and numeracy, and rural issues (Country Education Project, 2010).

A recommendation of the rural new graduate survey in Victoria was to develop a framework of support at a state level for new graduates and have universities focus on working in rural areas as part of the final year of teaching degrees. The framework needs to include orientation, induction, mentoring and professional development, with access to more online induction resources (Country Education Project, 2010).

Green (2008) argues that new staff need better induction and mentoring programs, with Lyons et al. (2006) identifying that this need to focus on rural specific needs. This includes focusing on things such as out of area teaching, multi-age classes, living in a rural community, and the needs of Indigenous students. These are also similar to the areas that have been suggested as necessary to focus on in professional development, including a focus on contextual factors specific to rural communities, and cultural awareness (Lock et al., 2012). Lyons et al. (2006) also recommends a focus on professional development for strategies to work with Indigenous students, special needs, and gifted and talented students. Sharplin et al. (2011) identifies that professional development is needed to improve teachers' awareness of mental health issues and to improve their resilience. Teachers also need access to professional activities such as national assessment and curriculum development (Lyons et al., 2006).

To enable teachers to access professional development, Lyons et al. (2006) recommends that it be offered both in face-to-face mode, and online, and more flexible timetabling to allow teachers to attend professional development. Furthermore, more research is needed on strategies to help teachers with teaching in rural regions. Lyons et al. (2006) also recommends that a professional association for rural educators is developed to assist with orientation and collegial support of teachers, as well as to promote rural teaching. This is supported by the recommendation that the rural educators' network is expanded (Country Education Project, 2010). A leadership program in rural schools would assist with this (Lyons et al., 2006).

To assist teachers who are teaching outside their area of expertise, Sharplin (2013) recommends that teachers receive support as no teachers are currently receiving this. This includes at a policy level to improve system based support structures and processes (Sharplin et al., 2011). Lyons et al. (2006) also recommends that the number of support workers, including teacher's assistants and Aboriginal and Islander Education Workers, are increased.

6.4.2: Online support & mentoring: Professional Development for In-service & Pre-service Teachers

There have been a number of trials of mentoring programs for beginning teachers and pre-service teachers. This includes face-to-face and online mentoring programs to overcome the professional and personal isolation experienced by teachers.

Young & Kennedy (2011) argue that a community based mentoring program helps teachers improve their relationships with the school and community, and in turn, assists with how the

community views teachers. Programs such as these that involve the community are also important as a teachers' work is influenced by issues in the community. It also helps teachers to understand this through involvement with community members (Young & Kennedy, 2011). Mentoring programs also had the benefit of reducing social isolation and increasing professional support for teachers. While Young & Kennedy (2011) recommend mentoring programs should occur regularly, a problem with this is the time demands required of those involved in the mentoring programs (Young & Kennedy, 2011). Sharplin, O'Neill, & Chapman (2009) recommend that there are more opportunities for mentoring and professional development for teachers to help them develop self efficacy in their role and positive collegial networks. However, formal means to do this are currently not present in rural schools.

Online professional development sessions have also been recommended (Country Education Project, 2010; Kelly, Reushle, Chakrabarty, & Kinnane, 2014; Lyons et al., 2006; Maxwell et al., 2006; Miller & Graham, 2015). Kelly (2013) suggests that universities need to start online mentoring programs for students while they are pre-service teachers, then continue this into the first years of teaching. This creates a virtual community of practice where support can be provided and isolation reduced. At a pre-service level, online forums have also proved to be beneficial for students in sharing resources, ideas and building relationships (Ryan, et al., 2012). Redmond (2015a & 2015b) trialled online mentoring of pre-service teachers on rural practicums and found both positive and negative outcomes.

Some of the positive outcomes for mentors and mentees included:

- Increased knowledge about their discipline area,
- An easier transition between university and teaching,
- More resources,
- Improved communication skills,
- Increased understanding of the teaching profession,
- Advice from peers,
- Able to discuss and share ideas and issues,
- Networking opportunities,
- Own personal development opportunity,
- Easy to participate in due to the online nature (Redmond 2015a, 2015b).

However, some issues include a difference in the advice they received and their experiences in the classroom, and a lack of time to participate. To improve the experience Redmond (2015a, 2015b) suggests synchronous communication be included as well. Another observation was that there were

many people viewing the posts, but fewer posting, suggesting that people might have been unsure about participating. Similarly, Maxwell (2006) trialled an online support program for beginning rural teachers where 1/3 of participants identified that it reduced their social isolation, and others felt it was professionally worthwhile. Maxwell (2006) suggests implementing online programs such as this as an option for policy and a way to provide beginning teachers with the support they need.

6.5: The role of leadership

School leadership was identified as a key influential factor in staffing rural and remote schools (Lock et al., 2009; McConaghy, 2008; White et al., 2011; White et al., 2009). Novak, Green & Gottschall (2008) identify that staffing is about relationships between leadership and teacher education, not just policy and pedagogy. Lock et al. (2009) identifies that it is important to have a principal who is interested, supportive and strategic. Less experienced school leaders experienced more demand in terms of staffing their school (Drummond & Halsey, 2013; Halsey et al., 2011; Sayce & Lavery, 2013), as did leaders in more remote schools (Drummond & Halsey, 2013). As a result, school leaders need to be better prepared for the demands they will face as both school and community leaders (Drummond & Halsey, 2013).

Anderson & White (2011) identify that one school was able to attract and retain staff because the principal had "a clear vision, a whole school approach, a positive attitude and an identified working 'culture' or environment that could best be described as innovative, resourceful and socially entrepreneurial" (p. 57). This involved developing school and community partnerships, rethinking the use of existing resources to find new opportunities for both the school and community, and as a result, developing social capital in the community. Starr (2016) identified that they built the school's capacity by working with community development agencies, local services, created university partnerships, and collaborated with other local schools.

White et al. (2011) identified investing in rural social space and using creative and social enterprise, is important because it helped make the school and community attractive as a place to live for staff, and therefore a sustainable place. As a result, they recommend focusing on leadership, working with a range of different professions, and the ability and knowledge to attract resources (White et al., 2011). These are all things that are not focused on in pre-service teacher preparation (White et al., 2011). White et al. (2009) identified that the benefits of leadership working with rural social space include increasing teachers sense of belonging, teachers feeling like they contributed in a meaningful way, the teachers felt positioned to actively contribute rather than feeling like a novice.

7: Issues with staffing leadership positions

Given the interrelationship between staffing rural schools and leadership in rural areas, it is necessary to focus on the literature around staffing school leadership positions. Leadership in this section is used to incorporate both formal and informal leadership positions in schools.

7.1: General trends

School leadership positions were no exception to the staffing trends previously outlined. This includes experiencing difficulties in attracting and retaining leaders (Cornish & Jenkins, 2015; Ewington, Mulford, Kendall, Edmunds, Kendall, & Silins, 2008; Graham, Miller & Paterson, 2009; Graham, Miller & Paterson, 2015; Lock, Budgen, Lunay, & Oakley, 2012a; McConaghy, 2008; McKenzie et al., 2014; Miller et al., 2006; Novak, Green & Gottschall, 2008), and having a high staff turnover (Lock et al., 2012; Miller et al., 2006; Novak et al., 2008; Sayce & Lavery, 2013).

Staff also experienced opportunities for leadership positions earlier in their careers compared to metropolitan based teachers (Cornish & Jenkins, 2015; Ewington et al., 2008; Graham, et al., 2009; Graham et al., 2015; Lock et al., 2012a; McConaghy, 2008; McKenzie et al., 2014; Miller et al., 2006; Novak et al., 2008). A benefit and disadvantage of this is that staff have the opportunity to observe colleagues in these positions at early stages in their career and decide if they want to take on a leadership position (Miller et al., 2006). Staff also have more roles and responsibilities in rural schools due to there being less overall staff (Miller et al., 2006; Novak et al., 2008; Starr & White, 2008; Wildy & Clarke, 2011), may have higher workloads (Ewington et al., 2008; McCurdy & McConnell, 2009; Starr, 2016; Starr & White, 2008; Wildy & Clarke, 2011), take less time off (Lock et al., 2012), and experience unrealistic demands (Miller et al., 2006).

7.2: The Opportunities of rural teaching and reasons for taking up a rural position:

Like rural teaching positions, there were positives associated with taking up rural and remote leadership roles. Halsey & Drummond (2014) identified that the most common reasons for taking up rural leadership positions were reasons related to professional, personal, and place, with staff being motivated by pragmatism, opportunism, and idealism. Money was not the only thing that motivated staff to take up leadership positions (Halsey & Drummond, 2014). Other reasons for taking up rural leadership positions include being encouraged to apply, wanting a challenge, a love

of rural teaching/communities, wanting to contribute something (Lock et al., 2012a), having a passion for rural teaching, the professional and personal opportunities it allows (Halsey et al., 2011).

Some of the things school leaders liked about their leadership position was feeling accepted in their community, Indigenous cultures, the children they worked with, the surrounding natural environment, the benefits their family received, and the accommodation they lived in (Lock et al., 2012a). They felt the position provided benefits such as having more autonomy than in a non-rural school, and there were also more opportunities for collaboration (Lock et al., 2012a). It was also beneficial as they knew and understood the local community and context, and developed relationships as a result of the small community size (Miller et al., 2006; Graham et al., 2009 2015). They also stayed for similar reasons. This includes enjoying the lifestyle, the autonomy, receiving opportunities for professional development/learning, because they felt satisfied with their job (Lock et al., 2012) and professional and personal growth (Graham et al., 2009, 2015).

McKenzie et al. (2013) identified that leaders in remote areas intended to stay in their schools longer than metropolitan school leaders. However, in contrast to this Ewington et al. (2008) identified that principals are likely to move as they see it as a way into a leadership role in a larger school. Staying for short periods of time becomes a barrier to how principals feel about their school - e.g. they have less sense of pride, less sense of being able to make a difference, are less likely to implement new projects, less likely to see improvements in staff collaboration and distributive leadership, and less likely to have high expectations. They also have negative relationships with the school community and find them hard to build (Clarke & Stevens, 2009).

7.3: Challenges of rural school leadership positions

Rural principalships have challenges specific to their context (Clarke & Stevens, 2006). Rural school leaders also felt personally responsible for issues they faced (Miller et al., 2006). Some of the challenges school leaders dislike include:

- Feeling professionally isolated (Graham, et al., 2015;Grham et al., 2006; McCurdy & McConnell, 2009; Novak et al., 2008; Starr, 2016) or feeling limited by the size of their school (Sayce & Lavery, 2013).
- Having a large number of new graduate teachers (Lock et al., 2012a).
- A lack of privacy and high level of visibility in the community (Graham et al., 2015; Graham et al., 2009; Jenkins et al., 2014; Lock et al., 2012a; Miller et al., 2006; Miller et al., 2015).

- Personal isolation (McCurdy & McConnell, 2009) including from goods and services and the high cost of living as a result (Lock et al., 2012), loneliness (Sayce & Lavery, 2013), and relationships with other staff (Sayce & Lavery, 2013).
- The administrative requirements, including finances, working with school boards (McCurdy & McConnell; Sayce & Lavery, 2013).
- The environmental conditions (Lock et al., 2012a; Wildy & Clarke, 2009).
- The job is emotionally draining (Lock et al., 2012a).
- Health issues (Graham et al., 2015; Graham et al., 2009).
- The viability of their school, including funding, and the removal of educational equity policies (McCurdy & McConnell, 2009; Starr, 2016; Starr & White, 2008).
- The dilemma of where to send their own child to school (Graham et al., 2009, Graham et al., 2015).
- Learning about the school and community (Wildy & Clarke, 2011).
- Rural specific issues in policy, equity and social justice matters (Starr, 2016).
- For a catholic school, fitting in the catholic community (Sayce & Lavery, 2013).
- Feeling like they needed to make their role more attractive for others to take up, with financial incentives seen as the most popular way to do this (Halsey et al., 2011).

Rural and remote school leaders also experience challenges in their teaching roles including teaching outside their area of expertise (Miller et al., 2006; Miller et al., 2015), teaching multiple year levels, (Starr, 2016; Wildy & Clarke, 2011), issues with teaching/assisting special needs students (Starr, 2016), and meeting the needs of Indigenous students (Sayce & Lavery, 2013).

The reasons leaders considered leaving include feeling exhausted, stress, conflict among staff members, and feeling personally isolated (Lock et al., 2012a). To reduce professional isolation, Sayce & Lavery (2013) identify a need for professional associations in rural areas for principals. On average school leaders planned to stay four years in their current school (Halsey et al., 2011). School leaders working in locations they considered to be more desirable, or on their first rural appointment, were more likely to stay for longer periods of time (Halsey et al., 2011). The more remote schools were considered to be less desirable to work in.

Short-term contracts become a problem along with high staff turnover and professional isolation as they prevent sustainable leadership. Community members don't like the quick succession of staff/principals as this makes it harder to gain trust and develop relationships. Principals on short-term contracts are less likely to want to implement changes and invest time in their school and community (Clarke & Stevens, 2009). This is problematic as long-term commitment (Wildy &

Clarke, 2005) and sustainable leadership is important in their work, and is influenced by contextual factors (Clarke & Stevens, 2009).

In terms of age and experience, years of experience in rural schools and schools generally did not influence how long leaders intended to stay (Halsey et al., 2011). However, leaders with higher qualification, leaders with more years of experience, and more years of experience in a rural school, experienced less demands in their role. More experience in rural schools also reduced the difficulty leaders experienced attracting and retaining staff (Drummond & Halsey, 2013; Halsey et al., 2011; Sayce & Lavery, 2013), their difficulty with school-community leadership (Drummond & Halsey, 2014), and correlated with an increase in enrolments (Halsey et al., 2011). Leaders in more remote schools also experienced more demands on their time (Drummond & Halsey, 2013). As a result, school leaders need to be better prepares for the demands they will face (Drummond & Halsey, 2013) and qualifications and location need to be considered when preparing staff for leadership positions (Halsey et al., 2011). Less experienced staff were able to observe others in leadership positions and decide if they felt a leadership position was appropriate for them due to the way staff work closely together. Some felt it was appropriate while others felt the responsibilities and stress were too large (Miller et al., 2006).

Women in leadership roles also experienced more challenges than men (Wildy & Clarke, 2005). They felt their positions were more difficult compared to males, and struggled in what seemed to be a male dominated culture and the gendered expectations of the community (Clarke & Stevens, 2006; Clarke, et al., 2006). They also struggled with their ability to fit in a new community and school, their personal wellbeing, and with the young age of teachers (Nye, 2014). However, the qualities they recognise to be necessary, and those expected of them by the community, include having good relationships with the community and communicating with them, being a good teacher and leader, having administrative skills such as time management, and being able to manage their work and personal lives (Gilbert, Skinner & Dempster, 2008).

Although opportunities for rural school leadership usually occur earlier in a career than in metropolitan schools (Ewington, et al., 2008; Graham, et al., 2006; Graham, et al., 2015; Lock et al., 2012a; McConaghy, 2008; McKenzie et al., 2014; Miller, et al., 2006; Novak, et al., 2008) women felt they received less opportunities for early leadership opportunities compared to men. They felt that their leadership opportunities resulted from experience and qualifications (Miller et al., 2014; Nye, 2014). However, these women mentored new, younger staff informally, particularly focusing on issues with being a young female teacher (Nye, 2014). These women had a more collaborative approach to leadership (Miller, Graham, & Al-Awiwe, 2014; Miller, Graham, & Al-

Awiwe, 2015; Nye 2014). Women were also more likely to follow their parents in a career in rural teaching and stay in rural areas (Nye, 2014).

7.4 Successful School Leadership:

There are three main areas identified to assist with successful school leadership. These are, the importance of context, the role of school community relations, and leadership preparation and support. These are outlined below, with the importance of rural context and school community relations combined as they relate.

7.4.1: Rural context and community in leadership

An important factor in rural school leadership is that context is important (Clarke & Wildy, 2004; Clarke & Stevens, 2006; Clarke, et al., 2006; Halsey, 2009a; Halsey, 2015; Lester, 2011; Starr & White, 2008; Wildy & Clarke, 2009; Wildy & Clarke, 2012; Wildy, Siguroudottir, Faulkner, 2014; Wildy & Stevens, 2006). This also includes the community and school culture (Wildy & Clarke, 2005). In policy and practice, the one-size fits all approach doesn't work (Halsey et al., 2011) and disadvantages rural schools (Starr and White, 2008). Principals in rural areas experience challenges unique to their context, and macro and meso influences (Starr & White, 2011). Acknowledging these influences, the potential of rural community sustainability, and the importance of context in preparing leaders for rural areas is important (Halsey, 2015). Clarke et al. (2014) suggests viewing rural principalships from an insider's perspective. Clarke & Stevens (2005) suggests looking at student learning as a way of understanding the context of a school and being responsive to it. Looking at both the challenges and opportunities specific to the local place is also important, and understanding what is achievable there in both the short and long term and therefore being more informed and able to work with them (Wildy & Clarke, 2009). Starr (2016) suggests that the challenges that leaders encounter should be seen as opportunities instead.

In their local contexts, principals are empowered, even though they feel systematically marginalised (Starr & White, 2008). Leaders respond in creative, and distinctive ways, that are beyond the traditional responses to overcome these challenges. These include involving the community, collaborating with other schools, and using ICT (Starr & White, 2008). Nye (2014) describes female principals to "enact a located pedagogy entrenched in an affirmation, reciprocity, resilience, innovation, nurture and support" (p. 78). The R[T]EP project (Green, 2008) uses the term situated leadership (Novak et al., 2008; McConaghy, 2008) to describe the importance of place conscious leadership in rural areas. It recognises that leadership is not just positional but needs to be seen as

"leadership as pedagogy, with a focus on assisting students to achieve high academic and social outcomes though productive pedagogies and productive assessment" (Lingard et al., 2003 as cited in Novak et al., 2008 p. 261). Leaders need to be focused on being student centred, have place specific leadership, an awareness of social issues, the community, and staffing support (Novak et al., 2008).

Concepts of spatiality are important in engaging with issues faced by rural schools as they influence the principal's implementation of change (Halsey, 2009a; Halsey, 2013). Principals need to challenge traditional ways of thinking and doing things to implement change for their school (Halsey, 2009a). Halsey (2013) theorises space and spatiality in rural leadership by drawing on Soja's thirdspace to argue that space and spatiality are a means of engaging with issues faced by rural schools. These are strategies that have the potential challenge current approaches to doing things, with school leaders and communities working together in innovative ways for students learning and sustainability. Halsey (2013) found that using social spaces in and around the school influenced principal's management of expectations and change.

The importance of relationships between principals and the community (including parents, and the wider community) and understanding the community is often highlighted (Jenkins et al., 2014, Sayce, & Lavery, 2013). Gilbert et al. (2008) examined what stakeholders expected of their (female) principals and found that relationships with the community, including communication skills, and positive personal attributes were important, as well as factors relating to being a good teacher and administrator. The community also had a higher expectation of involvement in community events such as sport than principals had of their staff.

The importance of community relationships is supported by Lester (2011) who identifies a need to collaborate and learn from community members. While relationships with community are crucial, Wildy & Clarke (2005) identify that the high workload of principals means they experience difficulties developing relationships with the community and struggle to become a leader as a result. Clarke & Stevens (2006) identified that principals need to fit in with their community. This was easier for principals who had previously lived in rural communities, however it also presented challenges resulting from the knowledge gained in these communities. Having a rural background means you understand how your decisions will impact and community and your identity changes from just being a local to being a leader in the community, and therefore, power relations and social relations and how you see the community. Here, Clarke & Stevens (2006, p.24) cite Agnew & Duncan (1989, p.2) and claim spatiality is a useful way to understand the principals role, and suggest that by living in a place a sense of it can be gained.

There have been a number of recommendations about leadership and school community relations. In particular, focusing on engaging the community, using distributed leadership practices (Starr & White, 2008; Wildy et al., 2014), focusing on resource allocation and new governance (Starr & White, 2008), having a positive view of the school and community, understanding the demands on teachers, and developing a 'culture of inquiry' (Wildy et al., 2014). Leaders also need training and support to make these things happen in their schools (Wildy et al., 2014).

Relationships between principals and the community, and understanding the community, are important (Clarke & Stevens, 2006; Clarke, et al., 2006; Halsey, 2015; Jenkins & Reitano, 2015; Sayce, & Lavery, 2013; Wildy & Clarke, 2005). Communication with community members is needed (Jenkins & Reitano, 2015; Sayce, & Lavery, 2013) as well as collaboration and learning from community members (Lester, 2011). However, high workloads mean this is difficult to achieve and leadership suffers as a result (Wildy & Clarke, 2012). Leaders also need to find a balance between their professional and personal role in the community and manage conflicts appropriately (Cornish & Jenkins, 2015).

Lester (2011) developed a model explaining factors that identify the success of a leader. These include school and community factors as outlined below:

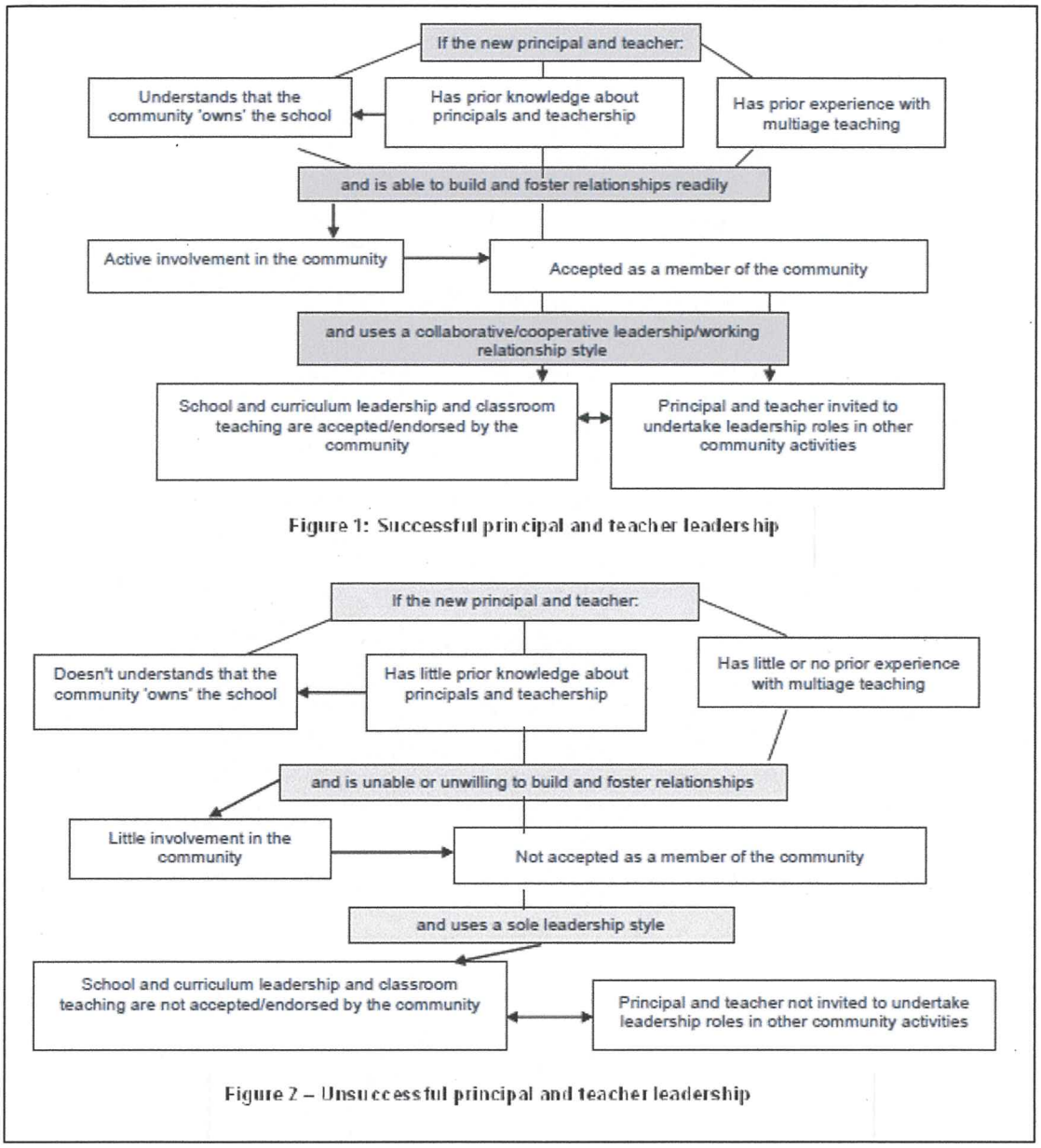


Figure 2: Model of successful & unsuccessful leadership (from Lester, 2011 p.87)

7.4.2: Leadership Selection, Preparation, and Support

In the literature, leadership preparation and support during leadership positions are considered an important aspect in rural school leadership. Principal preparation programs are linked to higher job satisfaction (Drummond & Halsey, 2014). It is important to focus on ensuring principal's are appropriately chosen and prepared for their roles (Jenkins & Reitano, 2015).

As a result of the responsibilities placed on teaching principals, Jenkins et al. (2014) argue that more attention needs to be given to the selection and preparation of teaching principals, as they can't just learn once they are in the position. This includes issues such as their emotional

intelligence, empathy, resilience, and their interpersonal skills. Furthermore, Halsey et al. (2011) recommends that a compatibility index is developed that focuses on identifying if potential leaders are ready to deal with their role emotionally and psychologically, particularly for how highly visible they will be in their community. The demands of focusing on attracting and retaining staff need to be considered and reduced (Halsey et al., 2011). Consideration also needs to be given to contextual factors and the likely suitability of the potential leader when making appointments (Clarke, et al., 2006). Halsey et al. (2011) supports these views, recommending that qualifications and location need to be considered when preparing staff for leadership positions.

To make these positions more attractive for teachers, there needs to be better mental health services (Cornish & Jenkins, 2015; Ewington et al., 2008; Halsey et al., 2011), increased salary (Halsey et al., 2011) and compensation to assist with the personal costs of their leadership position (Drummond & Halsey, 2013). Novak et al. (2008) recommend that early career leaders are viewed in a positive manner, rather than seen as a challenge.

To manage the challenges faced by leaders, Lock et al. (2012a) recommend that leaders receive formal handovers when they start their position, that a principal consultant is appointed specific to the community they will be working in (Lock et al., 2012a), that a principals network/professional association is developed (Lock et al., 2012a; Sayce & Lavery, 2013) to reduce professional isolation (Sayce & Lavery, 2013), and housing standards need to be monitored (Lock et al., 2012a). Principals also need to receive professional development to assist with the issues identified (Lock et al., 2012a; Miller & Graham, 2015; Starr, 2016) such as working with multi age groups, special education, school community relationships, rural specific issues (Starr, 2016) and financial issues (Miller & Graham, 2015). Starr (2016) also recommends more resources that are appropriate to the rural context, and more research and action at a policy level for rural specific issues.

Mentoring and collegiality is important for principalships and teachers (Gregory & Crossley, 2009; Nye 2014; Starr, 2009). However, barriers to networking include long distances between schools, but ICT is useful here (Gregory & Crossley, 2009). Benefits of networking across schools include; more power to schools in terms of resource availability, funding, ideas, and support (Gregory & Crossley, 2009), peer feedback (Moore & Watty, 2009), increased involvement in students learning, achieving bigger goals, and, marketing their school (Holleran & Newman, 2009). Mentoring was also more effective when the mentor and mentee already had a relationship prior to the mentoring program (Starr, 2009). As a result of evaluating the mentoring program White (2009) identified factors that made them a success. These are working collaboratively across schools and within schools, build on strengths within group, string communication skills, use of technology to overcome barriers of access, and seeing each other as learners throughout the programs.

Focusing on rural specific issues in policy and principal preparation programs is crucial (Halsey, 2015; Sayce & Lavery, 2013; Wildy & Clarke, 2005). Clarke & Stevens (2008) suggest that looking at rural principalships through a 'rural lens' (citing Wallace & Boylan, 2007) is important in preparing and supporting them in their work. For leaders to successfully implement change, they need programs specifically designed to assist them with leading in a rural and remote context, focusing on aspects such as school and community and relationships and interactions in these contexts (Wildy & Clarke, 2005). They are unlikely to implement change without support, and therefore, are unlikely to have a culture of enquiry, instead, a culture of acceptance (Wildy & Clarke, 2005). They also argue that "principal preparation needs to incorporate knowledge about social, economic, political and geographic features of school settings, how communities operate, and how principals can work effectively with community partners" (Wildy & Clarke, 2009, p 29). The rural lens idea is also supported by Sayce & Lavery, (2013) who suggest this as a way to look at developing policy for rural school principalships, as well as preparation programs for principals that focus specifically on rural issues. A rural specific preparation should include knowledge and skills of working in a school and community, the importance of community and interaction and communication skills in rural communities (Clarke & Stevens, 2006).

8: Conclusion

We have approached this review with the intention of providing a comprehensive account of the Australian research related to the staffing of rural schools post 2004. We have done this to provide our subsequent work, and that of other researchers in the field, a comprehensive survey upon which to build. However, in undertaking this review it became apparent that the themes that emerged are very closely aligned with those identified by the benchmark works of Roberts (2004) and Sharplin (2002). While leadership did emerge here as a distinct focus of much research, the overarching issues and challenges are similar to staffing rural schools more generally. This continuity upon a theme, we suggest, presents the rural education field with an interesting challenge: if we have such a well develop understanding of the issues, challenges and successful approaches why are rural schools still hard to staff and why are the approaches proven to work not universally adopted by education jurisdictions? While we would argue that the answers to these questions exist in the public policy environment, and are not meant to imply here any failing on the part of the research community, we do feel it suggests a need to develop new ways to address the intractable dilemma of rural school staffing on a broader scale. This does not, of course, negate the need for ongoing detailed work on each element of the staffing jigsaw as reported in the papers cited in this review.