

SUMMARY

The implementation of the Australian Curriculum in rural and remote schools in Australia: Focusing on the position of 'place' in the 'standardised curriculum'

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The aim of this paper is to consider, through document analysis and interviews with school principals, the position of 'place' in the first national curriculum in Australia, the Australian Curriculum (hereafter, 'AC'), and the impact of such a 'standardised curriculum' on rural and remote schools.

Rural and remote schools have been challenged by poor educational outcomes for many years. One of the causal factors has been pointed out to be the employment and retention of experienced teachers. Schools in rural and remote areas in general are the only educational institutions in that area, and students with diverse backgrounds come to study there. So, the maintenance of students' motivation for learning and behaviour managements is also an important role for teachers. Reports on rural and remote schools always emphasize the significance of 'place' when referring to student support.

However, in the AC and the documents which were published during the process of its development, there is no mention specifically of rural and remote schools. The aim of these documents is simply to improve 'every' student's educational outcome regardless of their background. Hence, they insist on the importance of the approach to 'individual' learning needs and levels, and as a result schools and teachers are required to adapt the curriculum according to the schools' particular situation and each student's needs and levels.

In fact, the interviews with principals also revealed that each school adjusts the content and level of the curriculum to match their local circumstances and their students, and that reaction is regarded as a matter of course. However, despite its being an essential learning area, there are difficulties for implementation of the 'Languages' subject. One such difficulty, for example, may mainly be due to students' motivation and systems of teacher employment. In fact, the impact of the NAPLAN (National Assessment Program: Literacy and Numeracy) is quite large in rural and remote schools, with schools with low average scores receiving a bad reputation.

Although the relevance of local 'places' to the curriculum is more essential in rural and remote schools than in urban schools, the National Curriculum does not necessarily mandate a particular reference to 'places' but rather leaves room for local schools to 'translate' the curriculum according to their situation. Therefore, the employment of experienced teachers who are able to accomplish this and their training should be given more importance.