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The articulations and impacts of globalisation in a selection of schools in the Southwest Victorian Region

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The project

Globalisation - the transnational mobility of people, technology, media, financial resources and ideas - has led to a growing trend of schools preparing their students for an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world.

Traditionally the purview of national governments, education policies are increasingly being shaped within networks of global discourses. Global measures, global standards and global norms are shaping (and in some cases displacing) national education policies and discussions. Universal policies are obscuring country and regional differences.

However, studies have shown that globalisation manifests differently in different places, including urban, regional, and rural spaces. There needs to be a better understanding of the various factors that afford or constrain globalisation in these spaces and the outcomes of these processes of globalisation. Understanding how globalisation might impact teaching and learning in rural and regional spaces can lead to more effective policy support and meet the imperatives of an increasingly interconnected world.

This study aimed to explore the impacts and articulations of globalisation in a selection of schools in the Southwest Victorian Region, focusing on the city of Warrnambool.

The research sought to shed light on the various educational approaches and strategies towards globalisation in different spaces and enhance understanding of relationships across local, national and international levels allowing for more equitable learning opportunities for schools and students.

This study asked the following questions:

- How do principals in Warrnambool see their role in articulating, managing and enacting globalisation in their school and their wider school community?
- How can globalisation be purposeful or meaningful in rural schools?

Key findings

Articulating globalisation

The principals in the study used the term globalisation interchangeably with internationalisation and intercultural understanding. Additionally, they emphasised that the intercultural element included both international and Indigenous cultures and, although coming from different angles, they posed similar challenges in the practical sense.

Managing globalisation

While schools had autonomy to start initiatives, principals found that these were challenging to sustain. Internationalisation is 'not on the regional school radar' and schools were left to internationalise without guidance.

One principal stated the intercultural learning was carried out on an 'ad-hoc' basis with no in-depth understanding of how they were part of the community. For example, in a school where Japanese had always been part of the Language Other Than English (LOTE) program, changing demographics meant students were interested in learning other languages but schools 'had to gain permission to teach the language'.

Enacting meaningful globalisation

To engage with globalisation meaningfully, principals stressed the importance of engaging with the community 'from the ground up'.

Principals stated that successful and sustainable implementation of initiatives required backing from the community. They explained how multicultural communities can influence international strategy — generating ideas from differences and acknowledging differences. They highlighted the importance of starting small, exemplifying pedagogical models, and forming interest groups that help establish community engagement.

Principals stated the importance of being attuned to the particular needs of the community to create meaningful intercultural understanding. One principal stated, '... we had 10 Indigenous children at our school. So, we felt that there was a need to empower our current students, as well as our Indigenous children, to understand the land on which we are, and the culture'.

Recommendations

The findings of this project show that we need more discussions about how globalisation is articulated and enacted in regional schools. For example, even though globalisation is referenced as an element of the curriculum, we need to look more closely at how 'global' thought is developed because it doesn't always fit with the usual way of teaching.

Further interweaving foci include (but are not limited to):

- The further exploration of Indigenous relationality and 'community, agency and heritage'.
- Further exemplars of perspectives on globalisation as determined in other regional areas of Australia.

Participant comment

"From an educational point of view and as a parent, knowing who we are and where we fit in the world's context is why we need to cover it in our curriculum."

"So, we had 800+ kids, we weren't recognising or celebrating cultures, it was kind of ad hoc. We do two weeks here, two weeks there, that sort of thing. But there wasn't any in-depth learning, and as a community, we didn't understand who a part of our community was."

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