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Presentation Title: Remote Coastal Schools: Providing Teachers to Seaside Communities

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Contribution:

Remoteness impacts upon the education delivered within communities. Terrain and accessibility are challenges in some countries in the global north (e.g. Newfoundland and Mid-west USA), while distance is the main concern in others (e.g. Australia) (White and Corbett, 2014). In Europe, teacher supply shortages are associated with spatiality. For, whilst some countries have an overall teacher shortage, others suffer in relation to certain hard to staff regions (European Union, 2013). In this paper, the research focus is on a pre-service teacher education programme initiated in a remote coastal community. A case study is presented comprising an evaluation of an on-going government funded initiative in a coastal community in south west England (DfE., 2017a). Many of these communities are attracting education policy interventions because of the poor rates of social mobility associated with them.

The British seaside is woven deep in many nostalgic family tales as a summertime playground. Its fortunes since the end of the era of the traditional 'bucket and spade' holiday feature regularly in media. Some reporters highlight examples of regeneration, but many others have documented jaded left behind coastal towns, where people experience gruelling lives in economically depressed communities that are now in long-term decline. Regarding this, a complex mosaic of social and economic exclusion results in some coastal schools supporting families with multiple disadvantages (Smyth et al., 2018) and few chances of little social mobility (DfE., 2017b). Many such marginal communities face severe obstacles in terms of their schools achieving excellence, according to the performance metrics set by policymakers in distant metropolitan centres. This negative discourse further contributes to these coastal towns being particularly challenging sites in terms of recruiting and retaining teachers. This is of concern, in particular, because failure to employ teachers with appropriate qualifications in the subjects that they teach is associated with the continued attainment gap for poor pupils (Allen et al., 2016). The policy intervention that we evaluate was aimed at improving the teaching and learning provided and hence, the outcomes for the pupils by bringing the coastal schools into line with other areas of the country, regardless of local, specific circumstances. The following research questions are investigated:

RQ 1. How effective are the strategies put in place under the initiative to promote the engagement of pre-service teachers in remote school settings in coastal regions?

RQ 2. How and to what extent does the initial teacher education for the pre-service teachers accommodate place conscious practices as part of their programme?

Method:

The complexity and variety of routes towards becoming a teacher in England have increased over recent decades as wide-ranging reforms have taken place. This means that, depending on the format of the pre-service teacher education programme, the pace of the journey, the duration of each step and the practices of those delivering the ITE programmes, can vary (Whiting et al., 2018). Each year, approximately half of all candidates are following school-led programmes, commonly termed 'grow your own teacher' provision. This paper comprises an evaluation of how a cluster of schools applied for and spent central government funding to establish provision where previously none had been available. A qualitative approach to the project evaluation is adopted with thematic analysis applied to the data from captured from the in-depth interviews carried out with school leaders, mentors and pre-service teachers across the case study. Given the distinctive economic and social circumstances of the focal remote communities in which the case study programme operates, the likelihood is that the pre-service teachers' risk of dropping out of the programme is high. Previous scholarship has reported that remote areas can be challenging environments in which to establish pre-service programmes (Roberts and Green, 2013). Initial analyses of the evidence pertaining to the remote school-led programme is revealing some key influences regarding the pre-service teachers' steps towards starting their careers (National College for Teaching and Leadership, 2016). For instance, the 'recruitment and enrolment steps' are impacted upon by such matters as finding potential recruits in the remote coastal area who are qualified to Bachelor degree level and their needing financial support as well as practical help regarding travel and accommodation in the communities. For each of these 'steps' evidence is emerging that advice and guidance is required by the schools to ensure that there is sufficient capacity for hosting appropriate practicum experiences along with high quality mentoring and assessment. Currently, the pre-service teachers are experiencing the 'on programme step' of the journey and hence, they have yet to reach the final step, namely, the 'transition step' when they progress to full employment status. At that point, the ongoing evaluation and our analysis will be concluded.

Expected Outcomes:

Recent evidence indicates that teachers remain reluctant to consider employment in remote places and that poorly served coastal communities are considered to be particularly unattractive places to train in before starting a career (House of Lords, 2019). We discuss these contextual factors that are frequently associated with rural schools but have yet to be fully considered in relation to coastal sites. We explore the ways in which the teacher educators, mentors and the pre-service teachers are paying close attention to the 'thisness' (Thomson, 2000) of the focal coastal schools. The particularities of the settings, such as an all-through school structure, multi-age/stage classes and weekly boarding for secondary pupils due to the sparse population, shape pedagogies. Likewise, strategies such as a heavy reliance on digital platforms for staff participation in online professional development rather than traveling to the city to attend in person, have reconfigured the pre-service teachers' practicum. Differences and diversity within and between schools are acknowledged to a limited extent in national policy, with many schools working with pre-service teachers having developed bespoke institutional cultures. However, teacher education has predominantly been devised for application within urban/semi-urban schools (Schnellert, 2020) and may

well not be transferrable to other contexts. We deploy the relevant international literature to identify what aspects of metro-centric teacher education are potentially problematic in small coastal communities in order to unpack the salient lessons from our evaluation. By so doing, we reveal the affordances of adopting place-conscious approaches to schooling and teacher education in remote coastal locations (Gruenewald, 2003).

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