Teaching in Australian rural and remote locations: thriving in practice and place

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Abstract

This study is an investigation into non-cognitive factors associated with rural and remote teaching practice. Whilst there is a substantial workforce of committed teaching professionals thriving in both their work and personal lives beyond the classroom, preparing and retaining teachers in rural and remote contexts remains a persistent challenge. We report the findings of a study of twenty current rural and remote early in-service teachers which explored their experiences of residing and working in rural and remote settings. Thematic analysis of interview transcripts generated eight substantive themes related to the participants' work and lives: *career decision-making, dispositional traits, university learning experiences, the importance of relationships, confidence in classroom practices, appraisals about rural and remote teaching, connection to place,* and *thriving*. The findings of this study contribute additional evidence of the non-cognitive attributes in relation to Social Cognitive Career Theory required by early in-service teachers to thrive in these distinct and different contexts and reveals implications for pre-service teacher programs to ensure adequate preparation for rural and remote teaching practice.

Introduction

Recruiting and retaining teachers in rural and remote schools remains a persistent challenge in Australia (Halsey, 2018; Harris et al., 2025; Heffernan et al., 2022; Weldon, 2018), along with the United States (García et al., 2022; Holmes et al., 2019; Tran et al., 2020), Africa (Mwenda & Mgomezulu, 2018; Opoku et al., 2020), the United Kingdom (Madigan & Kim, 2021; Sims, 2020), and Canada (Gunn & McRae, 2021; Whalen et al., 2019). Retention issues are particularly prevalent

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among teachers with less experience and those working in contexts of high vulnerability such as rural and remote teaching contexts (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). Attention should be directed to the complexities of teaching in these contexts, the unique factors contributing to attrition in rural and regional schools, and approaches to the recruitment of teachers for these contexts.

National inquiries into teaching and teachers in rural areas, and teacher education, highlight a powerful and persistent relationship between location and educational outcomes, and challenges associated with the attraction and retention of teachers in rural and remote areas (Australian Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission, 2000; Halsey, 2018), and the problem appears intractable. Importantly, there is an emerging acknowledgement of the non-cognitive attributes (personal characteristics, traits and behaviours) of teachers from education researchers (Bastian et al., 2017; Klassen & Kim, 2021; Leach & Bradbury, 2024) and links found between the role of teachers' non-cognitive factors on teacher effectiveness, wellbeing, retention and interpersonal relationships.

In rural practice, teachers face distinctive challenges including isolation, the demands of teaching in out-of-subject courses, fewer professional development opportunities, reduced amenities and weaker or non-existent separation of personal and professional life (James et al., 2025). Working as a teacher in rural and remote locations in Australia carries contextual demands which are isolating (Dadvand et al., 2024; Jenkins & Cornish, 2015; Walker-Gibbs et al., 2018), stressful (Jenkins & Cornish, 2015), and demanding (Downes & Roberts, 2018; Halsey, 2018; Ledger & Downey, 2018). Teachers' burnout, occupational stress, and psychological health contribute to high attrition rates (Heffernan et al., 2022; Madigan & Kim, 2021), often exacerbated for beginning teachers who are perceived to lack the skills and experience necessary to thrive in these contexts (White, 2019). A focus on non-cognitive attributes influencing the success and retention of teachers in these contexts addresses the complexities and rural specific factors of teaching in these contexts.

Strategies to attract and retain teachers in rural and remote contexts focus on incentive programs, including specialised induction programs, financial allowances, subsidised accommodation, extended and additional leave entitlements, flight allowances, and ongoing tenure in the profession (Department of Education Queensland Government, 2021; Downes & Roberts, 2018; Ledger & Downey, 2018). Additionally, there have been numerous strategies, albeit inconsistent and often short term, to prepare pre-service teachers for rural and remote schooling (Halsey, 2011; Sharplin et al., 2011; Trinidad et al., 2011). Preparation initiatives include incentive schemes for permanency (Department of Education Queensland Government, 2021; Halsey, 2018; McCallum & Hazel, 2016), salary incentive programs (Bastian et al., 2017; NSW Government, 2021a), rural and remote professional experience programs within teacher education programs (Halsey, 2018), rural professional experience grants (Department of Education Queensland Government, 2021), and rural experience programs (NSW Government, 2021b) offering short term employment arrangements in rural schools. The long-term effectiveness of many of these initiatives remains unclear (See et al., 2020). Financial incentives can encourage people into teaching but do not necessarily retain teachers in the profession or attract quality teachers to rural and remote

schools (Elacqua et al., 2022; See et al., 2020), nor address factors which contribute to wellbeing and thriving as teachers in these communities. Despite initiatives by successive governments, the problem of attracting and retaining teachers in rural and remote areas remains significant and largely unsolved.

Emerging in the literature is a focus on teacher resilience and notions of thriving in the rural and remote context. Teacher resilience is a dynamic relationship between risk and protective factors which supports individuals' capacity to adapt and thrive despite experiencing adversity (Beltman et al., 2011). This dynamic process of adaptation is based on empirical studies which have demonstrated that thriving is positively related to individual characteristics (e.g., person inputs), relational characteristics (e.g., positive relationships), and occupational outcomes (e.g., job performance) (Kleine et al., 2019). The current study uses an eudemonic approach to psychological wellbeing and thriving which is characterised by the drive to achieve goals which may entail creating stressful states for oneself (Lent, 2004). This includes overcoming the unique and complex contextual factors faced by teachers in rural and remote teaching contexts.

Bowles et al. (2014) proposed that the methods for selection into pre-service education programs, and into the profession of teaching, do not adequately reflect the complexity of the task of studying or practicing teaching. They argued that non-cognitive factors should be considered in addition to traditional academic indicators (e.g., tertiary entrance ranks). Furthermore, Bardach et al. (2021) postulated the relevance of non-cognitive, psychological characteristics as essential for teachers' effectiveness, wellbeing, and retention. This approach is furthered by Sheridan et al. (2022) who identify key non-cognitive psychological, relational, developmental and personality attributes for teaching in specific contexts. Context specific psychological and developmental attributes include robustness, stability, and the ability to be reflective and autonomous. Context specific relational attributes include cultural sensitivity, and collaboration. Personality attributes identified include agreeableness and extroversion (Sheridan et al., 2022). These approaches acknowledge that rural and remote teachers must navigate complex relationships in schools and communities and demonstrate adaptability not typically required in metropolitan schools (Leach & Bradbury, 2024). Rural and remote specific adaptability includes managing limited resources, professional isolation, and multiple relationships (e.g., as a classroom teacher and community member) (James et al., 2025; Leach & Bradbury, 2024).

Extending upon the recommendations of Sheridan et al. (2022) and Leach and Bradbury (2024) we present the findings of field research into the non-cognitive factors associated with teaching in rural and remote Australia. This qualitative research focused on current early in-service teachers in rural and remote locations who self-reported that they were 'thriving' in their work and life in this context to determine the non-cognitive attributes associated with wellbeing and thriving. The findings from the interviews encapsulated key themes about the non-academic skills associated with success, and a self-perceived sense of thriving, as a rural or remote teacher. These findings contribute to knowledge about attracting and retaining teachers in rural and remote areas.

Background

The Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) *My Schools* (2024) uses the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Remoteness Structure (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023) to determine regional, rural and remote contexts. There are five mainland remoteness categories: Major Cities, Inner Regional, Outer Regional, Remote Areas, and Very Remote Areas (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023). The categories are based on distance, population density, and access to services (Downes et al., 2021). The further the distance from an urban centre the more difficult it becomes to attract and retain staff (Downes & Fuqua, 2018). This study focuses specifically on locations beyond major cities and inner regional contexts, and consistently uses the term rural and remote throughout to capture the outer regional, rural, and remote demographic.

There are distinctly different challenges for teachers in rural and remote contents. Leach and Bradbury (2024) contend that these factors, such as teaching out of areas of expertise, managing multi-level classrooms, limited specialist support, and community expectations, are rural and remote specific. Other challenges can be attributed to the (in) ability to understand rural and remote cultures and communities and adapt to rurality in both professional and personal contexts (Beswick, 2023; Roberts & Fuqua, 2021). Rural and remote schools are usually staffed by new and young graduates, transient teachers, and teachers taking on leadership roles early in their careers (Downes et al., 2021). Arguably, rural and remote communities have more challenging environments both personally and professionally (McLennan et al., 2022), access to fewer educational and personal amenities, and usually less satisfactory living environments, with limited housing options and higher costs of living (Halsey, 2018).

There are numerous reasons teachers choose to work and stay in rural and remote schools, many of which relate to personal connections to rural and remote communities and rural experiences (Guenther et al., 2023). Positive characteristics of rural and remote teaching practice can include connection to community, smaller size of schools, unique living experiences, and professional growth (Murphy et al., 2024; Walker-Gibbs et al., 2018). However, managing the unique contextual factors of thriving as a teacher in rural and remote schools requires context specific non-cognitive attributes. These attributes are needed to support student learning in communities which are geographically isolated, of varying socio-economic advantage, and include students with diverse needs and at diverse levels (Leach & Bradbury, 2024). Attributes include the confidence and skill to adapt curriculum, a belief in the capacity of their students, an openness to new experiences, individual self-efficacy, and attributes which facilitate the development of strong relationships (Beswick, 2023). A failure to adopt a rural lens, and to account for the complexity and constant work in a rural or remote school, is a likely contribution to the issues of attraction and retention of teachers in these contexts (Beswick, 2023).

Conceptual framework

The present research used the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT; Lent & Brown, 2013) to conceptualise factors which influence teachers career decisions to work in rural and remote settings. Indeed, the research generated an adaptation of the SCCT, shown in Figure 1. Bowles et al.'s (2014) model for selecting candidates entering ITE (Initial Teacher Education) programs and Klassen and Kim's (2021) model for selecting teachers identify non-cognitive factors which interact with context (e.g., self-regulation, self-efficacy). These factors can be operationalised by SCCT which has stimulated a significant body of research into career interests, making occupational choices, achieving career success and stability, experiencing satisfaction and wellbeing in the workplace, and managing work and life events. Earlier research using SCCT to explore teachers' satisfaction (Duffy & Lent, 2009; Lent et al., 2011) is suggestive of its conceptual utility for the present research; however, there is no SCCT research specifically targeting rural and remote teaching practice. In rural and remote contexts, unique environmental factors, such as geographic isolation, community interconnectedness, and challenging classroom contexts shape individuals' self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and career goals. By applying SCCT, contextual influences, person inputs, and proximal influences can be directly linked to the selection and the development of teacher traits suited for rural and remote education.

Personality traits and affective dispositions

SCCT (Lent & Brown, 2013) posits that personality traits influence career interests and choices indirectly through their effect on learning experience, self-efficacy, and
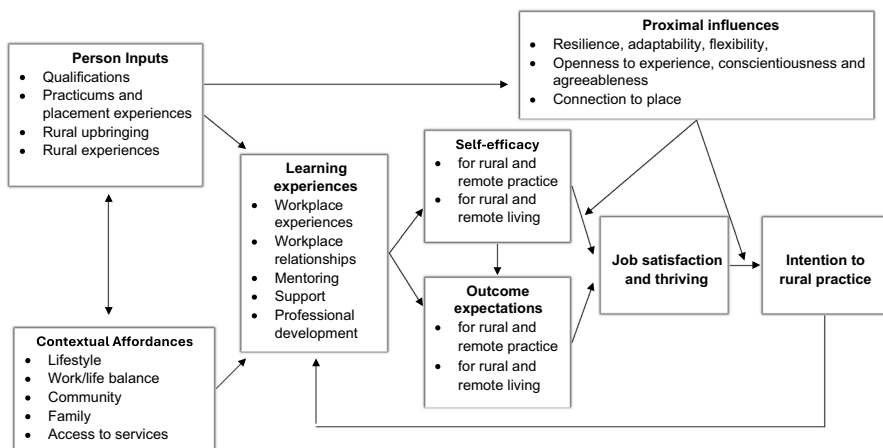

Fig. 1 A social cognitive model of intention to teach in rural and remote communities. Adapted from 'Social Cognitive Model of Career Self-management: Towards a Unifying View of Adaptive Carer Behaviour Across the Life Space'. Lent & Brown, 2013

outcome expectations (Klassen & Kim, 2021; Schaub & Tokar, 2005). For example, teachers' personality and sense of optimism positively affects their career engagement (McIlveen & Perera, 2016), self-efficacy (Marcionetti & Castelli, 2022) and, moreover, influences teacher effectiveness, teacher wellbeing, and retention (Bardach et al., 2021; Klassen & Kim, 2019, 2021). The present research aims to explore which traits and dispositions are essential for a rewarding rural or remote teaching career.

Contextual barriers and supports

Teachers are required to navigate an array of contextual barriers which can inhibit career related goals and the likelihood of these goals being enacted (Lent & Brown, 2006), such as heavy workloads, health and wellbeing concerns, and professional and personal influences (Heffernan et al., 2022). Conversely, contextual supports such as mentoring programs, professional development and high-quality school leadership have been identified as improving work engagement in rural and remote teaching contexts (Broadley, 2010). The present research extends beyond contextual influences to consider teachers' connection to place which has been found to be a predictor of workers' intention to reside in rural areas (McIlveen et al., 2022).

Self-efficacy expectations

Self-efficacy is a core construct within SCCT (Bandura, 1999; Lent & Brown, 2013) and has been identified as a cornerstone to effective teaching (Bardach et al., 2021; Klassen & Tze, 2014). Teachers' self-efficacy is positively correlated with job satisfaction and commitment (Marcionetti & Castelli, 2022; McLennan et al., 2017), career adaptability and a positive sense of career future (McLennan et al., 2017), teacher effectiveness, and intentions and decision-making to leave the teaching profession (Granziera & Perera, 2019). Self-efficacy positively affects pre-service teachers' career adaptability and their sense of a positive career future. Self-efficacy is also linked to teacher wellbeing indicators, such as burnout and job satisfaction (Bardach et al., 2021; Huang et al., 2019; Marcionetti & Castelli, 2022). Given self-efficacy and teacher burnout is related to teachers' perceptions of the school context and to teacher job satisfaction, it is prudent to investigate self-efficacy in the context of recruitment and the retention of teachers thriving in rural and remote contexts.

Outcome expectations

Outcome expectations refer to one's beliefs about the consequences or outcomes of performing particular behaviours (Lent & Brown, 2013). Thus, outcome expectations refer to a teacher's beliefs about the consequences of engaging in domain specific work-related tasks and imagined consequences of work-related tasks. Like self-efficacy, outcome expectations are a core construct within SCCT (Lent & Brown, 2013); however, the volume of research into teachers' outcome expectations

is marginal compared to research into their self-efficacy, which is comparatively voluminous (Klassen & Kim, 2019; Klassen & Tze, 2014). Accordingly, we sought to explore teachers' expectations about rural and remote practice to go some way toward closing that gap in the literature.

Satisfaction

SCCT is concerned with the factors which influence people's experience of work satisfaction and wellbeing (Lent & Brown, 2008) and posits that work satisfaction is related to possession of strong self-efficacy within the domain of work-related tasks and goals. Significantly, teachers' job satisfaction (Duffy & Lent, 2009; Lent et al., 2011) is one of the most important factors influencing their engagement and retention in the profession (Bardach et al., 2021; Madigan & Kim, 2021; Marcionetti & Castelli, 2022).

Research design

This qualitative research was designed to capture the perceptions of early in-service teachers working in rural teaching contexts who self-reported their career interests and occupational choice making, satisfaction and wellbeing in the workplace, and experiences in managing work and life events. SCCT (Lent & Brown, 2013) was used as a theoretical lens to investigate teachers' thriving in rural and remote practice. Although SCCT has been applied to multiple occupations and contexts, there has not been application of SCCT specific to teachers working in rural and remote locations, thus, the present research sought to close that gap somewhat by exploring the antecedents of satisfaction in rural and remote practice (i.e., traits and dispositions, contextual barriers and affordances, self-efficacy, and outcome expectations). The research questions reflect the theoretical precepts of SCCT, and include:

- What non-cognitive factors influence early career in-service teachers' intentions to teach in rural and remote teaching contexts?
- What non-cognitive factors influence early in-service teachers' perceptions of thriving in a rural and remote teaching context?
- What contextual factors influence the relations among dispositional traits, self-efficacy, and outcome expectation in rural and remote teaching contexts?

The research was approved by the University of Southern Queensland Human Research Ethics Committee (ETH2022-0011).

Participants

The participants recruited were 20 early in-service teachers who had each been teaching for less than five years, and self-reported to be thriving in the rural and remote teaching context. The researchers drew on extensive rural and remote teacher networks to disseminate the invitation to participate in the research. Online

semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants who were recruited through these professional networks and social media groups for teachers in these contexts. Online semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants who were recruited through these professional networks and social media groups for teachers in these contexts.

Seventeen participants were teaching in very remote areas of Western Australia, Northern Territory, South Australia, and Queensland. One was not working in a rural or remote schooling context but had recent very remote teaching experience. One participant was working located in Inner Regional Victoria and two participants were in Outer Regional Northern Territory. Eleven of the 20 participants identified their hometown, or place of origin, as a major city with the remaining nine participants identifying their hometown as inner regional, outer regional or a very remote location. Participant experience ranged from less than four months teaching in a rural or remote context to almost five years teaching in this context. One participant was completing the Teach for Australia program, an employment-based pathway into education. In this program, participants complete a Master of Education degree while teaching in a rural, remote, or low socio-economically classified school. Another participant had completed the Teach for Australia program and remained employed in the remote school. Two participants were teaching on Limited Authority to Teach indicating they had a not graduated from their ITE program, and two other participants commenced their employment in rural and remote schools on Limited Authority to Teach and had since graduated. This demographic information, and more, is depicted in Table 1.

A sample size of 20 participants was deemed appropriate to reach theoretical sufficiency (Braun & Clarke, 2021b). In line with Tight (2024), criteria for ceasing data collection were determined when concepts were coalescing (e.g., the importance of relationships) and when codes were repeating (e.g., the code conscientiousness was derived by references from 19 of the 20 participants), and 20 interviews was determined as a convenient stopping point.

Sources of data: interviews

The semi-structured interviews were guided by topics rather than pre-determined questions. An interview protocol guided the discussion with in-built flexibility to adapt to individual participants and to elicit further depth when opportunities presented (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Participants were advised that the intent of the interview was to explore and understand the non-cognitive attributes and dispositional traits supporting them to thrive in a rural and remote teaching context. Predetermined definitions of thriving were not utilised, rather the interviewer sought to elicit concepts of thriving from participants and non-cognitive attribute used to support their self-reported occupational satisfaction, wellbeing and sense of thriving in the context. During the interview, all participants were asked if they were living in the rural or remote context with family, to elicit factors influencing intention to remain in a rural or remote location. Topics were developed from the SCCT and included questions in relation to career exploration and decision-making, learning

Table 1 Participant demographics

ID	Age	Gender	Background	Current status (years)	Years of teaching experience
1	27	F	Hometown in inner regional Queensland.	Very remote Australia (2)	4
2	31	F	Home location inner regional Victoria.	Inner regional Victoria (1.5)	2
3	29	F	Hometown in inner regional Queensland. Taught in very remote Queensland <1 year. 2.5-year break from teaching.	Very remote Queensland (<1)	4
4	25	F	Hometown in inner regional Northern Territory.	Outer regional Northern Territory (4)	4
5	31	F	Hometown inner regional New South Wales.	Very remote Northern Territory (4.5)	4.5
6	31	M	Hometown in major city in Queensland. currently with teach for Australia program.	Very remote Northern Territory (1)	1 (permission to teach)
7	24	M	Hometown in very remote Western Australia, commenced teaching on limited authority to teach.	Very remote Western Australian (2)	2
8	26	F	Hometown in major city Queensland. Commenced teaching on limited authority to teach. Lived in very remote Northern Territory from childhood.	Very remote Northern Territory (4)	4
9	27	F	Hometown in outer regional Northern Territory. was a student and completed practicums in current school.	Outer regional Northern Territory (4)	4
10	32	F	Hometown in major city in Victoria and has had 2 years' experience teaching in major city Victoria before moving to very remote area.	Teaching very remote Western Australia (2)	4
11	27	F	Hometown in major city Western Australia.	Very remote Western Australia (<1)	<1
12	32	M	Hometown in major city New South Wales. Commenced teaching through Teach for Australia program.	Very remote Northern Territory (4.5)	4.5
13		M	Hometown in inner regional South Australia. Commenced teaching on limited authority to teach in very remote South Australian school for six months.	Very remote South Australia – (< 1)	1
14	47	F	Hometown in major city Queensland. Previously spent two years teaching very remote Queensland. Planning to return to major city Queensland at end of year.	Very remote Queensland (3)	5

Table 1 (continued)

ID	Age	Gender	Background	Current status (years)	Years of teaching experience
15	28	F	Hometown in major city New South Wales. Previously taught in very remote Northern Territory.	Very remote Northern Territory (<1).	2 (Limited authority to teach)
16	2	F	Studied in outer regional area then moved to very remote Northern Territory.	Very remote Northern Territory (3)	3 (not currently teaching)
17	25	F	Studied in major city Western Australia. Originally from same town as now teaching in very remote Western Australia.	Very remote Western Australia (2.5)	2.5
18		F	Studied in major city Western Australia.	Very remote Western Australia (4)	4
19		F	Hometown in inner regional Northern Territory.	Very remote Northern Territory (<1)	< 1
20	5	F	Hometown in major city Australia. Previously taught in major city Victoria before moving remote.	Very remote Western Australia (1)	4

experiences, intention to teach and/or remain in teaching, self-efficacy, outcome expectation, satisfaction, belonging, and thriving.

Data analysis

Reflective thematic analysis (RTA; Clarke & Braun, 2017) can be used to theorise the socio-cultural contexts and structural conditions of individual's experiences. RTA requires researchers to examine how their perspectives, assumptions, and interactions with the data influence the themes that emerge (Braun & Clarke, 2021a). The research team comprised the three authors. The first author is a qualified teacher and career development practitioner, with experience teaching in regional and remote contexts. The second author is a qualified teacher and academic teaching coursework in pre-service Bachelor and Master degrees in teacher education, living and working in a regional community. The third author is a qualified psychologist and academic teaching coursework in postgraduate Master of Education, living and working in a regional community. The research team met on a weekly basis to discuss data analysis, employing reflective practices to critique, appraise, and evaluate how researcher subjectivity and context influenced the research process. The first author was the principal analyst. The second and third authors engaged with the first in critical discussions to elucidate how codes and themes were generated, and how the analyst's past experiences as a rural teacher informed the analysis and abduction of meaningful excepts from the transcripts.

The data were analysed following the six-phase method outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) for collecting, engaging with, coding, generating code categories, and conceptualising the themes.

Initial coding was an inductive process to attach meaning to the data extracts rather than a priori template of codes constructed to form expected answers to the research question. The list of codes generated within this study expanded throughout the reflexive thematic analysis process as the data were reviewed and re-reviewed. This stage of the analysis was iterative until it included the entire data set, and through deep and prolonged engagement with the data. This deep engagement and interpretation of the transcripts enabled identification and comparison of patterns, commonalities, and differences within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Code categories were generated from the initial codes, and themes were identified from the code categories (Peel, 2020). The researchers sought to align the interconnecting themes, and code categories to SCCT constructs (Lent & Brown, 2013) where conceptually supported. Forty codes were finalised at the conclusion of thematic analysis and eight themes identified.

Findings

This research identified eight themes: *career decision-making, dispositional traits, university learning experiences, the importance of relationships, confidence in classroom practice, appraisals about rural and remote teaching, connection to place*, and *thriving*. These themes are visually conceptualised in Figure 1.

Career decision-making

Career decision-making into rural and remote practice varied amongst participants. They identified perceived support, place of upbringing, and familiarity with rural and remote locations, as influencing their decision to move to a rural or remote teaching context. Pre-service teachers from rural and remote backgrounds are more likely than their metropolitan counterparts to teach in rural and remote contexts (Barnes et al., 2024; Cuervo & Acquaro, 2018) and a rural upbringing was evident in several (*n*=9) participants' decision-making to teach in the rural or remote context post-graduation. Other participants (#11, #18) were encouraged by University staff during their ITE program to consider a rural or remote placement and were provided with detail about placement programs in rural and remote locations.

Participants also reported experiencing rural locations through travel, motivation to learn about different teaching contexts, social persuasion, altruism, and experience living in rural locations as motivating decision-making to rural teaching practice. Participant #7 volunteered in the community to 'test the waters' and felt confident accepting the position because of mastery experiences in this remote context and Participant #6 stated, 'I was set on coming to a town that was like the hometown I grew up in'. Participants were guided by personal and occupational satisfaction, motivation for developing strong relationships with students and rural communities and giving back to rural communities as influencing career decision-making and their experience of thriving as an early in-service teacher in the remote context. In discussing their career decision-making for rural or remote practice, participants expressed the need for a job and growth, 'to get my foot in the door' (#13), 'to get more experiences in different schools' (#1), and 'for personal growth' (#7).

Participants with health concerns noted the challenge of accessing medical care and the impact of this on their decision-making to select and remain in a rural or remote teaching destination. Participants with families and dependents reported the likelihood of moving to urban locations or closer to family in the nearer future e.g., 'the pull of family does get to you at some stage' (#7), other participants reported they were planning to take accumulated leave the following year to support their wellbeing. Many participants reported goals for further study, leadership positions, and ongoing tenure in the rural context.

University learning experiences

Participants reflected on their university learning experiences as supporting their general development as an early in-service teacher. They predominantly felt

prepared for the teaching content and knowledge of teaching. However, participants felt underprepared for the practical reality of the rural or remote teaching context. Participant #5 stated, 'I had no idea of what I was walking into. When you're talking about remote teaching, it's a completely different ball game' and 'I knew how to write a good lesson plan, but you can't just take that and make it work in this context'(#8). Participant #5 elaborated, contending that

> I didn't realise culture shock was a thing…and in terms of differentiation out here in the bush, it is so big but it's not only taking into account the academic side of things, it's like what the family is going through at the moment. Literally, day to day, hour to hour, what that kid's going through.

While common to the profession of teaching more broadly, participants (#5, #7, #8, #9) reflected that on-the-job learning, time, and 'trial and error' (#1) supported their context specific teacher practice in a rural and remote context more than university learning. Participant #10 in a very remote location noted,

> things like eye contact…it's really rude here…whereas we're trained if the kid is not making eye contact, they need a referral. Have they got autism….it's really easy to get in this sort of diagnosis mind frame, when it's just culturally different.

Participant #20 felt a disconnect between university learning and cultural awareness, cultural experiences and the need to realign the curriculum to suit the rural and remote context. Participants felt they would have been better prepared for the rural and remote content with more context specific knowledge during their university studies (#8, #10, #16, #17, #20).

The two participants working in very remote locations who had participated in the Teach for Australia program felt very well supported. One Teach for Australia participant (#6) stated, 'I had support at the school… I did a regional intensive…I went in there [the classroom on day one] with wheels on...and there was plenty of support'. Other participants relied on prior work experiences in rural, remote and metropolitan contexts, observation of other teachers in rural and remote contexts, placement experiences in rural or remote contexts, and studying units within ITE programs as supporting their transition to a rural or remote context and influencing their level of confidence to manage the new environment. Participant #18 commented on two units studied within the ITE program on explicit and direct instruction that were 'nearly related directly to what the schools are learning here and what the teachers are teaching'. Participant #8 stated, 'in doing all of those placements [in remote locations], I've seen so many different ways to talking to the kids and planning, and it's been a really good learning opportunity for me', and 'you've got to get people out experiencing the context in which they're teaching [going to teach]' (#10).

Dispositional traits

Participants described *dispositional traits* which assist them to cope and thrive in the context of rural and remote teaching practice. While many traits are common across the teaching profession, the unique context compounds challenges, such as doing multiple jobs (#5), high staff turnover (#5), and high levels of stress and burnout (#5, #10), one person departments (#10), tension in community (#10), and high proportions of challenging student behaviours (#10). Participant #10 who had previously worked in an urban setting stated, 'we're hotbeds of really challenging behaviour [in this remote location].

Conscientiousness featured throughout the interviews and included being self-reflective, persistent, having a high expectation of oneself, being able to ask for help and being purposeful and diligent. Participant #8 emphasised that it was important to 'not give up when it's tough', and Participant #13 stated, 'I have these moments where I've had that initial frustration, I just constantly change the angle and think of new ways to take on the challenge'. There were frequent references to not giving up, working through hard situations, and pushing through frustrations and discomfort. Participant #5 summarised their first-year experience as a teacher in a remote context, stating 'I look back now and there is no way that I should have made it through that first year. Absolutely no way. But I think that's a testament to me pushing through'. This was contextualised through with references to having to step into early childhood, primary and secondary classes spaces and make lessons up on the fly when staff were away (#5), not having specialist support in this context (#14), providing a lot more pastoral care (#18), and being flexible to change things planned because of the needs of community (#12).

In relation to living and working in a rural or remote location, participants referred to their openness to experience in both the occupational and personal domains. Participants were generally open to experiences and expressed a sense of excitement about the experiences they were having. Participant #10 stated, 'Some of the experiences you have here you are never going to get anywhere else'. Participant #20 reinforced this and stated, 'I think a lot of people are like…no, we can't do that, and I'm like…but you can do that. You just need to think more broadly and be adaptable'. Participants (#1) contended that putting yourself out there and being willing to make new connections helps when living in a small town The personality variables, conscientiousness and openness to experience, may have facilitated pre-service teachers' use of adaptive behaviours and contributed to self-reported thriving for early in-service teachers in this context.

Adaptability and resilience featured throughout the interviews as necessary for thriving in a rural and remote teaching context. Early in-service teachers referred to the need to back oneself and have good coping strategies. Participant #3 shared, 'I wouldn't change the experiences I've had even though they were tough'. Participants expressed a clear view of resilience, often acknowledging that they would face challenges, often 'freak out a bit' (#5), but emphasised their determination to overcome the challenge and not give up as an important quality for teaching in a rural or remote context. References were made to the unpredictability of life and work in the rural and remote context, such as 'nothing ever goes the way I think it's going to go'

(#4), 'nothing is normal [here]' (#10) and 'you've [sometimes] got to pivot entirely [in a rural teaching context] and you've got to be really adaptable' (#6). These comments were made in relation to impacts from managing challenging student matters, community need, or changed school environments (e.g., supporting students and community through multiple deaths, transient students, helping students apply for government documentation without identification documents). Repeatedly, participants made references to the need to have help seeking behaviours (#10, #11, #13) and a sense of willingness to fail (#4, #14), dispositions which assisted them to tackle challenges and new experiences in the rural and remote context (#1, #5, #7, #10, #13, #14).

The importance of relationships

The importance of relationships with students, families, the broader community and with colleagues featured in all interviews. Participant #7 emphasised that 'everything is relationship based out here' and 'if you don't have a relationship with them [students], then it's [teaching] an impossible goal' (#6). Participants commented that in the rural and remote context teachers had to move away from traditional approaches to forming relationships, 'when you're walking your dog on the beach and see some kids, go and have a yarn to their parents' (#14), 'show up at the local footy' (#9), 'put yourself out there' (#8). Participant #7 stated, 'everything comes back down to community. Whatever decision you're making, if it's going to be a detriment to a relationship with someone in the community, then don't make it'. Participants referred to their relationships as enduring, 'if something has made me stick, it would be those communities' (#10) and 'I have a lot of care for this community' (#5). Deliberately and purposefully building relationships with students, families and community was seen as non-negotiable in the rural and remote context, but at times challenging as the community 'don't know if you're going to stick around' (#8).

Relationships with colleagues supported early in-service teaching practice and helped in overcoming personal and professional challenges in the context. Participant #6 explained, 'if I don't [sic] have good relationships with staff from the get-go, I imagine that my first days would have been very different'. Participants referred to having both strong and poor relationships with colleges, noting that in the rural and remote context it often took time for staff who had been teaching in the school for many years to develop trust with new staff. The importance of good collegial relationships was emphasised by participants in very remote contexts, as 'it's your social setting…that's who you see every day…you can't live in a remote community and expect to stay home 24/7' (#8).

Confidence in classroom practices

While early in-service teachers experienced challenges and growth associated with classroom practice, participants perceived classroom practice in the rural and remote context as more challenging than the urban school context. Participant #10 who had

previous teaching experience in a metropolitan context and who was teaching in a very remote location stated, 'I actually don't think that these are the spaces for first year grads…because it's real tough, it's real tough'. The type and frequency of challenging students in rural and remote contexts was mentioned by all participants, 'These behaviours often 'require lock ins or lock outs [locking students into the classroom or individuals out of the classroom due to violent behaviours]. It's exhausting' (#4) and 'lots of intergenerational trauma' (#10), 'you just have to be the safe adult (#20). Participants emphasised the importance of understanding rural and remote students and community needs, using trauma informed teaching strategies, and having a sense of belonging to the community supported teachers to manage the challenges.

Structure, consistency, following through, flexibility, connection, communication, care and concern, and understanding the context of student need in a rural or remote context were highlighted as important strategies for classroom practice. Participant #5 stated 'students deserve to learn, but many other things need to be catered for before they [students] can step into the space of learning in the rural and remote context'. While common classroom strategies across the profession, these strategies were noted by all participants as crucial for the rural and remote context to manage the complex and unique classroom context. Teaching in a very remote location, Participant #14 stated, 'they don't need another person yelling at them…. I've got to reflect on what I'm doing because I'm actually just causing them more trauma'.

Participants reported fluctuating confidence in their classroom practice, participant self-efficacy was linked to particular performance domains and activities. For example, one participant possessed strong conviction (e.g., high self-efficacy beliefs) that they could perform well as a classroom teacher in their current rural context but had lower efficacy for teaching within the context of their previous rural teaching position, 'It really knocked my confidence and made me second guess my ability to teach' (#20). Participant #3 demonstrated that self-efficacy can vary depending on the specific task or domain, stating,

> there are probably certain things that I am confident in my ability to do. Other things I'm not as confident, but I have put supports in place or strategies, or I'll go and talk to people if I'm not feeling confident.

Successful and persistent performance often calls for self-efficacy not only in an individual's basic task skills but also in the ability to use them in the face of arduous conditions. Those self reportedly thriving early in-service teachers were undoubtedly displaying both task-specific self-efficacy and coping self-efficacy, the belief about one's ability to negotiate specific obstacles to guide and motivate their performance as a teacher and develop their sense of belonging in the rural and remote contexts.

Participants demonstrated the origins of efficacy beliefs across the four sources of self-efficacy; mastery experiences, vicarious learning, social persuasion, and physiological and affective states (Bandura, 1999; Lent & Brown, 2013). Personal accomplishments were reported by participants as impacting their confidence in classroom practices. For example, when discussing their confidence now as a classroom teacher, Participant #1 stated, 'I feel like I've had enough experiences to kind

of have the confidence to back myself and have that knowledge of what to do in lots of situations in this context' and

> I thought I had confidence in my first year, but I think I was just excited. In my second-year things started to make sense because I could go, oh I did that that way last year and that didn't really work, so I'll do it this way instead (#4).

Common across the profession of teaching, confidence in classroom practice was enhanced by positive workplace cultures and collegial support. However, participants referred to the need to adopt multiple roles and responsibilities in the rural and remote context and having the confidence to adapt to this. Participant #7 stated 'my confidence is fine, and when the Principal goes away you get given a lot more responsibility and get a lot of insight into the running of the school [but] there's a team'. Participant #12 (very remote) referred to flexibility as supporting confidence in classroom practice, stating 'I've learnt to not place as much pressure on things happening in a certain way or by a certain time, because things here just come and go and they always change'. This was viewed as a coping mechanism, with Participant #12 reflecting that 'understanding more broadly the intricacies of the place that we live in means that you understand why certain things might happen a certain way'. Participants who had undertaken rural or remote practicum experiences were efficacious in living and working in the rural or remote context. 'I had the confidence only because all of my placement had been remote' (#3) and 'I felt extremely confident on my first day. I had visited [the school] when [they] offered, and I had the chance to watch how they deliver the curriculum, the team dynamics, and I got to meet some of the families, I wasn't coming in blind' (#20). Participant who had engaged in a remote teaching placement had done so voluntarily, rather than as a requirement of an ITE program. Social persuasion influenced all participants in their decision to undertake teaching as a profession and teaching in a rural or remote context from family, friends and partners. Participant #1 asserted, 'my mum was a big inspiration, she's a Principal and a big advocate for rural service'.

Appraisals about rural and remote teaching

Participants reflected on their initial appraisal of teaching in the rural or remote context, stating, 'it was like I had moved to another planet' (#10) and 'it was so different to anything I'd seen before' (#11). Participants referred to the additional responsibilities required for rural and remote teaching practice, including a heavy workload, the need to 'always be on the clock in this context' (#7), 'do everything' (#5) and 'deal with challenging scenarios that are not even to do with the school, but affect the school' (#7). While all participants acknowledged there were unique challenging living and working in a rural and remote context, they reported enjoying their experiences.

Participants discussed being matched with mentors within their school with varying positive and negative experiences. Participants (#2, #3, #5, #7, #9, #18, #19) who reported a positive relationship with their mentor commented on the value this relationship in feeling supported and viewed the relationship as a protective factor in

their transition into the context. Conversely, participants with a negative relationship with their mentor (#4, #20) commented on the additional challenges this created for them and the negative impact on self-efficacy of practice. Participants #4 and #5 had both positive and negative mentor relationships with different mentors and highlighted the significant negative impact from negative mentor relationships. Participants in the Teach for Australia program reported strong and positive mentor relationships within the school and the program (#6, #12). Participant #10 commented that they were grateful they had not relocated to a remote school in their first year of teaching due to the lack of mentorship, and explained they were reliant on mentors from previous metropolitan teaching experiences. Most participants in this study referred to the need for ongoing professional development relevant to the rural and remote context, and often initiating their own professional development experiences.

Connection to place

Participants referred to the rural and remote context as tough, 'a whole level of hard on top of everything' (#5), with all early in-service teachers emphasising the importance of individual resilience as required in this context. Participant #7 stated,

> you see everything because it's a small community. It's not sheltered like in the umbrella of a bigger school. We have to deal with challenging scenarios that aren't even to do with the school but affect the school.

Reference to a lack of amenities was made by some participants, 'I nearly quit because of the stuff that comes with remote, I can't even go to the shops and get ice-cream…. stupid stuff like that' (#5). Participants noted the geographic distance away from family and services as compounding the challenges faced in this context.

Overwhelmingly, participants in this study associated connection to place with strong relationships, with students, families, colleagues, and the community. Participant #10 contended, 'I came here expecting to be bored and survive, and I think that if something has made me stick, it would be those communities wholeheartedly'. *Connection to Place* was referred to by early in-service teachers as the sense of feeling settled and at home, feeling a part of the community, having strong bonds, knowing your place in the community, making fast friends, not feeling alone or isolated, and being in a place where everyone feels like family. One participant (very remote) stated that being involved in community life was an 'unwritten rule' (#11) and that community noticed if teachers were not making this effort. Although participants reported the challenges associated with working in a rural and remote context, they emphasised the motivations for their work which led to personal and professional satisfaction. Participants referred to loving what they did as a teacher, 'I love it. I haven't looked back, it's very rewarding, it's challenging and a lot of fun' (#9) and 'I'm here for the right reasons, I'm here to make connections and show that education is such an important aspect of a child's life, I'm here for the children' (#15). Making connections to place and the community was seen as enjoyable and important for coping with the challenges of working in the rural or remote context.

Thriving

The theme thriving has been incorporated to reflect the individual characteristics, relational characteristics, and occupation outcomes reported by participants to adapt to and overcome the complex factors faced by their context. The resulting outcome for participants was gratitude and satisfaction for living and working in a rural or remote teaching context. Thriving was linked to all other themes within this study and was associated with work satisfaction and growth, relatedness, lifestyle, and self-care. In the rural and remote classroom context, for early in-service teachers in this study, thriving was having a good work life balance (#3, #4), feeling confident and capable with classroom management (#4, #13, #20), feeling like one has support to manage diverse needs in the classroom (#4), supporting the emotional and social needs of the students (#18) and seeing students' progress as learners (#8, #13, #20). Participant #20 stated, 'it's an amazing job, completely different to anything that I've done before, this is me', and surmised thriving as 'everyone wants more money, but no money will ever be enough and that's not thriving to me. It's all about my intrinsic motivation and what gets me out of bed every day loving what I do'. However, thriving was different for each participant, in different contexts and was often fluctuating. Participant #12 (very remote) stated,

> in community it is really hard to be thriving. We live in a place where you forgo a lot, and…that will never, ever be your forever home. But on balance we're doing really well at the moment.

Participants referred to a range of financial incentives available whilst teaching in the rural and remote context, and while many acknowledged the benefits of these incentives (e.g., additional income, rapid increment, and payment of university course fees), they strenuously contended that working in this context for financial reasons was not sufficient, and often teachers who did, did not remain in the rural and remote context. Rather, participants referred to work satisfaction, enjoyment, support, and confidence as factors influencing their ability to thrive in the context.

The strength of relationships with students and the community for early in-service teachers enhanced their sense of thriving in this context. Participant #1 stated,

> I think your community helps you to thrive. If you've got a good community behind you and you're involved with that community, then you know everyone around you wants to see you thrive. …community helps you thrive. They want to see you become the best person for that community because small town communities are very passionate about making sure they've got the best person for the job.

Other participants reinforced this by stating 'relationships are where I start everything' (#4), 'kids deserve to learn but there are so many things that need to be catered for before [teachers] can even step into that space out here' (#10)

and 'everything is relationship based here' (#7). The importance of relationships with students, families, the boarder community and colleagues were emphasised throughout the interviews as imperative to achieving work related goals and satisfaction with living and working in rural and remote contexts with participants making it their priority every day to create and maintain relationships. Early in-service teachers emphasised the importance of having the confidence to build and maintain positive relationships with families, 'community connections would be one of the most important professional things you could do [here]' (#6). Participant #7 expanded on this, stating,

> The decisions we make are not for us, they're for the kids and the community. So, every decision is – what am I doing right now? How is it going to affect the community? Have I thought about community?

Participants reflected upon the importance of adaptability and resilience in building community connections, and the need to 'put yourself out there' (#8) and 'I've seen teachers stay at home the whole time. They don't last. It's isolating' (#8). Participants who did not have a strong sense of connection to community still expressed a sense of thriving, however this notion was related to personal relationships with individuals, and confidence and satisfaction in their rural or remote teaching practice.

Throughout the interviews, participants linked their job satisfaction and wellbeing. Participant #12 reference thriving as 'being brave enough to say I am feeling really low, and I need a break' Participant #20 stated, 'there are definitely people who leave early because remote living is not for them and dealing with the demographic up here can be very challenging'. Participant #20 continued, stating,

> I don't want to do anything unless I feel satisfied in it. The moment I lose that here I'll move on and find it somewhere else. I am never going to put myself in a position where I am not satisfied [at work], whereas some people do.

Participants volunteered a range of strategies to manage wellbeing and were cognisant of burnout. Strategies included taking breaks from community where possible, spending time alone or with partners/families, spending time camping, fishing, and in the bush, and participating in other replenishing activities. These participants valued the outdoor lifestyle available in the remote context, which they noted contributed to their wellbeing, sense of belonging and ability to thrive in this context.

They expressed notions of gratitude throughout their interviews in reference to both personal and professional experiences. This finding is consistent with the notion of eudemonic wellbeing, as per SCCT (Lent & Brown, 2013), that a sense of meaningfulness is an essential part of work satisfaction. There was a sense from participants that they were very 'lucky' (#12, #13, #14, #17, #18, #20) to be living and working in their current context which was unique and provided a range of personal and professional experiences. In a personal context, gratitude extended to having met a partner in their current context (#14), opportunities to experience rural and remote environments (#12, #20) and the opportunity to explore more areas [of the country] (#17). Participants reflected they were lucky to be living and working in the rural or remote community, citing numerous lifestyle benefits.

Discussion

The present research aimed to qualitatively explore non-cognitive factors which may influence early in-service teachers' experience of teaching in rural and remote contexts. Specifically, the research aimed to understand the relations among non-cognitive factors, contextual factors, and early in-service teachers' intentions to work in rural and remote settings, and their perceptions of thriving in their contexts. Furthermore, the research used the social cognitive career theory to conceptualise relations among these factors, as per Figure 1. The research drew upon data from interviews with early in-service teachers who reported themselves as thriving in their context. Thriving as a teacher in the rural and remote context was subsequently associated with work satisfaction, self-efficacy, and their connection to place. They demonstrated unique characteristics, behaviours, and attributes to adapt to professional practice in the rural and remote context, to forge close relationship with students and communities, and to manage their own wellbeing in the rural and remote context. The present findings are consistent with emerging literature (Beswick, 2023; Leach & Bradbury, 2024) focused on the challenges associated with staffing rural and remote schools. When considered in conjunction with person inputs and learning experiences, this study provides new insights into key factors associated with thriving teachers in rural and remote contexts.

In the current research, a rural or remote upbringing, experience, or practicum experience was a key person input into career decision-making for intention to enter or remain in practice in a rural or remote area. Furthermore, the findings indicate that practicum experiences in rural and remote areas provide a distinct experience and assists with the development of familiarity and self-efficacy as a teacher in this context. Evidence of this rural and remote identity or familiarity was also an important factor for being attracted to work and intention to stay in this context. Corresponding to previous research on personality (McCrae & Costa, 1987), additional key person inputs identified for the development of thriving teachers within a rural and remote context include conscientiousness, openness to experience, and agreeableness. Conscientiousness has been found to be a major predictor of a teacher's capacity to strive for success (Sheridan et al., 2022), and the findings in the current research align to Sheridan et al. (2022) demonstrating that openness and agreeableness are important contextual dispositions within a rural and remote context to enable teachers in the rural and remote context to operate in complex social environments, be flexible, and solve problems within their environment.

The present findings, taken together with those of Leach and Bradbury (2024), Walker-Gibbs et al. (2018) and White (2019) support a conclusion that person inputs, learning experiences, and connection to place should be an integral feature of pre-service teacher development, and of any strategy to attract and retain teachers in rural and remote areas. These findings highlight the relational influences within workplaces and communities. Teachers were thriving when they felt efficacious in their teaching practice, had strong connections to colleagues, students, and community, and were able to practice self-care strategies to manage their wellbeing.

Drawing on key constructs from SCCT and the findings from this research, we theorise a Social Cognitive Model of Thriving and Career Decision-Making for Rural and Remote Teachers depicted in Figure 1. The model proposes a hypothetical relationship among contextual affordances (e.g., community, family, access to services), person inputs (e.g., dispositional traits, rural upbringing and rural experiences), learning experiences (e.g., workplace experiences, workplace relationships, mentoring, support), and self-efficacy for rural and remote teaching practice, as influencing early in-service teachers' job satisfaction and sense of thriving. We hypothesise proximal influences such as conscientiousness and connection to place, resilience, adaptability and flexibility moderate direct and indirect effects of self-efficacy on outcome expectations, job satisfaction, and intention towards rural practice. For example, the strength of the relationship between self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and intention, are stronger in the presence of heightened sense of connection to place. If so, enhancing sense of connection may be a useful workforce strategy (McIlveen et al., 2022).

These research findings demonstrate that thriving teachers in rural and remote contexts require capabilities beyond the generic standards outlined in the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Australian Institute for Teaching & School Leadership, 2011). The current research has implications which can significantly inform the preparation of teachers in ITE programs and offers valuable insights into the diverse contextual factors when teaching in rural and remote areas. The present research findings are consistent with The *Rural and Regional Education Project: Final Report* (Beswick, 2023) which recommends that the recruitment and selection of teachers for rural and remote teaching practice, ITE programs, and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Australian Institute for Teaching & School Leadership, 2011) should refer to and require development of pre-service teachers' non-cognitive skills suitable for rural and remote teaching practice. This approach is reinforced by Sheridan et al. (2022) and Leach and Bradbury (2024) who argue for a need to build and nurture preservice teachers' social and relationship growth and recognise that non-cognitive factors are interconnected and foundational to teaching in a rural and remote context. Given the increased recognition of the importance of non-cognitive factors in teacher performance (Bowles et al., 2014; Klassen & Kim, 2021; Sheridan et al., 2022), greater emphasis should be placed on assessing non-cognitive factors in selection methods of teachers in different contexts to ensure teaches are best suited to the context of their professional practice (Sheridan et al., 2022).

Limitations and recommendations

The present research used a diverse group of early in-service teachers who self-reported as thriving in different regions of regional, rural and remote Australia. Although the diversity and heterogeneity of their locations capture the breadth of aspects of rural and remote teaching milieu, it is likely that a homogeneous sample would provide greater depth of understanding of specific aspects of interest. For example, a sample constrained to one geographical region might provide sharper

insights into teaching in that rural or remote place. Moreover, a self-selection bias is present in the current research given a criterion of this study was participants who self-reported as thriving. Nonetheless, the findings provide the foundation for research to use Lent and Brown's (2013) SCCT to explore the working lives of teachers in rural and remote Australia.

Further understandings of the notion of thriving and connection to place, conceptualised through SCCT (Lent & Brown, 2013), could provide a fresh focus for ITE training and the identification of variables which contribute to teacher satisfaction and thriving in a rural or remote teaching context. SCCT is a model for establishing hypotheses about directional effects pertaining to teachers' learning experiences, self-efficacy, outcome expectations, job satisfaction, and intention to rural practice. These hypothetical directional effects can be empirically operationalised to test the predictive relations among the factors to determine which proximal influences moderate the strength of effect of the factors on one another, and to test whether there are certain combinations of person inputs to display types of rural/remote practitioners amenable to rural and remote practice. Such research could be operationalised via surveys which quantitatively measure the variables and statistically analyse relations among them. Moreover, rather than cross-sectional surveys at one point in time, research would be better placed to explore how these variables change over time (e.g., development of self-efficacy throughout years of practice) or whether they are different according to geographical variables (e.g., size of community, size of schools in community). That type of research would require longitudinal and multi-level designs. For example, whilst connection to place may influence intention to teach in rural areas, its influence on decision-making may vary according to an interaction of a teachers' growth in self-efficacy, years of residence in communities, and different sizes of schools at which they teach.

Conclusion

Given the challenges that exist in recruiting and retaining teachers in rural and remote communities, building a pipeline of graduates into the profession and into rural and remote teaching contexts is vital. This pipeline needs to address the distinct and different context for rural and remote teacher practice and living, one that moves away from metrocentric norms and acknowledges the cognitive and non-cognitive factors related to rural and remote teacher success and which creates a thriving rural and remote teacher workforce. ITE programs have limited focus on preparing teachers for rural and remote schools, and rural and remote practicum experiences remain voluntary. Yet, rural and remote experiences and programs preparing teachers for schools in this context afford an opportunity to build pre-service teachers with skills and competencies to make the transition to a rural or remote community a positive and long term one. Given the qualitative findings here, this SCCT model depicted in Figure 1, affords a re-conceptualisation of context specific non-cognitive factors essential for a thriving teacher workforce in rural and remote teaching positions. These findings provide a strategic way forward for pre-service teacher development with a focus on context specific psychological inputs, such as

self-efficacy, resilience, adaptability and flexibility, and their influence on notions of thriving and intention to remain in rural and remote practice.

Declarations

Conflict of interest The research team declares that there are no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

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