GUEST EDITORS' INTRODUCTION TO SPECIAL THEME ISSUE: EDUCATION AS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Beverley Moriarty, Patrick Alan Danaher & Geoff Danaher

For Jean Moriarty (*née* Studman)
and Phyllida Nina Coombes (*née* Radcliffe-Brown)

So for the mother's sake the child was dear,
And dearer was the mother for the child.
Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Sonnet to a Friend Who Asked How
I Felt When the Nurse First Presented My Infant to Me"

Many…have done excellently, but you exceed them all.
Proverbs, 31:29

The impetus for this and the other articles in this special theme issue of the *Queensland Journal of Educational Research* grew out of the editors' and the authors' respective and shared interests in rural education provision and research. In *Bush lessons down under: Educational experiences in regional, rural, and remote Australia* (Danaher, Moriarty & Danaher, 2003), a theme issue of the *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, the editors combined with several other authors to map many of the ways in which Australian rural education disrupts the binary that constructs 'rural' as other and inferior to 'urban'. In this theme issue, different authors have joined the editors to continue this crucial conversation about the current and likely future forms of education in regional and rural areas.

In particular, this issue of the *Queensland Journal of Educational Research* takes up the question of whether and how education can be understood as contributing to, and as constituting, community development in such regional and rural areas. This question is crucial: as the findings of postcolonialism, postmodernism and poststructuralism have so starkly demonstrated, the institutions of education are as likely

to be complicit with disabling and disempowering strategies of marginalisation as they are to be vehicles for empowerment and social transformation. It is therefore vital to interrogate formal education about its roles in collaborating with and/or resisting and subverting the seemingly irresistible flights and flows of multiple forms of capital away from rural areas into metropolitan cities and suburbs.

The authors of the articles that follow have deployed two specific concepts to facilitate this interrogation: social entrepreneurship and capacity building. Like many such concepts, these two have a number of alternative meanings, and the contributors to this theme issue assign to the concepts the meanings most appropriate to their respective research questions and agendas. At the same time, the concepts have in common a derivation from the discourses of business and late capitalism that some commentators argue lie at the heart of the flights and flows of capital referred to above. There are clearly potential risks here. At the same time, the authors are cognisant of these risks and indeed are united by a conviction that it is only by grasping such discourses and turning them inside out so that they are as attentive to questions of common good as they are to private profit that the forces of economic rationalism and corporate managerialism can be combated.

The first article in this theme issue considers the impact of social entrepreneurship and capacity building on Australian show people, focusing on the links between this mobile group and the different communities with which they engage: the local communities through which they move, the school community and the research community of the authors' university. The article considers in a particular context a key idea that links the other articles in the issue: the positive impact of forms of social entrepreneurship and capacity building upon a range of different communities.

The next two articles engage with school–community links from different international perspectives: Wakio Oyanagi uses the concept of social entrepreneurship to investigate reforms to the Japanese education system that have a positive impact on rural areas, while Eva Leffler and Gudrun Svedberg explore the challenges facing moves to introduce enterprise (as a form of capacity building) into northern Swedish schools. In both

cases, it is noteworthy that the circumstances leading to both sets of educational changes are replicated in many regional and rural areas in Australia, and that we may therefore take some guidance from both articles for our own practices and policy development.

The next pair of articles takes up the challenges of university–community links: Jeanne McConachie and Jenny Simpson argue that social entrepreneurship has generated an innovative and holistic pre-university preparatory program for the Central Queensland community, while Joy Penman and Bronwyn Ellis consider how health-related programs can build the academic and social capacity of elderly people in the Whyalla community of South Australia. The final text is the response to the preceding articles by Sue Kilpatrick of the Faculty of Education at the University of Tasmania and until recently Director of the Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia at that institution.

Overall, we contend that these articles offer a rich and varied account of the opportunities for and challenges facing the activation of social entrepreneurship and the building of capacity within a range of regional and rural areas, both in Australia and overseas. In the process, the articles highlight many of the problems and possibilities of education as community development.

REFERENCE

Danaher, G. R., Moriarty, B. J., & Danaher, P. A. (Eds.) (2003, Winter). *Bush lessons down under: Educational experiences in regional, rural, and remote Australia.* Special theme issue of the *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 18*(3), 129-172.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

them; and to Dr Simon Clarke for so encouragingly and hospitably creating a home for this theme issue in the *Queensland Journal of Educational Research*.