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Why an event of this kind at this time? The three day event is open to people committed to progressing a greater role, significance and place for relational leadership and learning in vocations of all kinds, in communities, in personal and professional contexts, with nature and the built environment.

Why an event of this kind at this time?
The short answer is that relationships are fundamental and foundational to how and what we learn- to our humanity, connections and place in and with the natural world.

The relentless rise and rise of managerialism, the striving for ever increasing measurable outcomes across all fields of human endeavour, the faith placed in competition to deliver virtually no matter what the cost, have displaced and devalued the primacy of relationships for learning, leadership, creating and for nurturing hope about the future. Put another way, the organisers of the International Dialogue take as problematic, the power and capacity of neo-liberal, market-driven models of leadership and management rather than a given, 'natural' response, to raising the performance of students and systems.

A relational approach to leader formation is underscored by a social constructionist philosophy. This highlights the ongoing formation of human beings as a dynamic and social process of becoming. It is a dialogic process within our everyday experiences that is essential to our formation as individuals, as leaders and as educational organisations.

Engagement with space, both physically and socially constructed, also forms part of relational leadership and learning. Until relatively recent times, space in terms of education and school leadership and departments was mainly thought of as facilities-classrooms, playing fields, and specialist learning areas.

However, there is more to be explored about space and in particular, how the kinds of spaces that individuals and communities evolve over time might be used to enhance learning for sustainable futures. Space is rich for enquiring into how leaders form their work and build partnerships with communities, particularly in rural locations where typically a school is the largest and most diverse space(s) in a community.

Rural communities have in the main seen tectonic type shifts in their capacities to continue through such things as population decline, the migration of youth, fly in- fly out employment for mining, rationalisation of basic human services and the impacts of large seasonal variations. Vibrant productive rural communities are essential to meeting all the challenges, demands and opportunities of a world of 9 to 10 billion people by 2050.

Why sustainability? Fundamentally because sustainability brings together critical matters of choice with regard to purpose, and principally moral purpose, and taking action to 'do what is right, to do what is required' in the light of overwhelming evidence about the impact of massive population on demands for 'the basics' of food, energy, minerals and water. As well, sustainability is a powerful vehicle for engaging with other very complex issues such as relationships with natural environments and exploitative political and economic approaches to them. Sometimes the scale and the complexity of the challenges which individuals, communities, nations and indeed the globe, feel like they are overwhelming and can create a sense of powerlessness to do anything about them.

Hope-full Futures In recent years I have become very interested in hope as a resource, as a stance to take, when trying to engage with 'and do my bit' in light of my read of 'big issues'.

Hope is more than just adopting an optimistic take on things. A description of hope which especially resonates is from Jonathan Sacks: Hope is the faith that, together, we can make things better. Optimism is a passive virtue, hope an active one. It takes no courage to be an optimist, but it takes a great deal of courage to have hope...

(Continued on page 4)

The International Dialogue is an initiative of the Sidney Myer Chair, the School of Education at Flinders, and the Center for Relational Learning based in Santa Fe and founded by Dr George Otero.

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In the News

Communities urged to band together to ensure positive futures for students
by Sandra Morello

An international education consultant from New Mexico has told education professionals from across the region that positive futures for young people could only be shaped through a partnership with families, communities and effective classrooms. Speaking at the Main Corner in Mount Gambier [...] [4 and 5th September] to university representatives, teachers and school principals, Dr George Otero said he was pleased with the response from the Blue Lake city. Around [250] people - from across the Limestone Coast and other regions in the state - attended [...] [the Sidney Myer Rural Lecture and a Seminar] on rural education into the 21st century and strengthening learning relationships with “school, family and community”. The public sessions also attracted professionals from Families SA and both private and public school sectors. It was his only stopover in South Australia as part of the Sidney Myer Rural Lecture Series, facilitated by Flinders University. Dr Otero pioneered the concept of interdependencies between schools, learners and community to achieve relationships resulting in higher achievement, increased well-being and better life chances for all children. “There was a sense of energy in the room,” Dr Otero told The Border Watch after yesterday’s free public seminar. He said it was his second visit to Mount Gambier after working with local schools 12 years ago. Dr Otero - who has worked extensively in South Australia - said he shared his views that positive outcomes were a partnership of “effective families, effective communities and effective classrooms”. “International research shows those three things are tied together,” he said. The highly-respected speaker said achieving effective outcomes could not just come from the classroom. “We need to focus on the learner, not what we are teaching - we need to work smarter, not harder,” Dr Otero said. Describing the support he had received from Mount Gambier as “unbelievable”, he said he loved South Australia given there were many similarities with New Mexico. He said both places had diverse economies with strong rural communities.

Making it Happen!

Rural Schools in the Spotlight

Mypolonga Primary School won the inaugural Flinders University sponsored ‘Advantage SA Regional Award for Education’, for the State, at a gala dinner in November 2012. This may not come as a surprise, as previously the Mypolonga PS received awards such as the Community Initiative of the Year; Excellence in Education; Innovative Engagement with Business and the Community; and SA Great Award. The reason for such accolades is the continuing success story of the school shop, established in 1996. Under the guidance of the Principal, Mrs Rita O’Brien, the shop has grown into a retail business which has become integrated into the school curriculum and has an annual turnover of $18,000.

The shop opens for 45 minutes each Friday coinciding with a tour by passengers of the local paddle steamer, and sells products made by students such as luggage-tags, bookmarks, chocolate-dipped apricots, as well as local arts, crafts and produce suppliers. Students serve customers, calculate sales and handle cash without the use of calculators or computers. They are also involved in quality control and assess each stage of the production and sales process. Students receive certificates in financial management, retail, and business leadership when they have demonstrated the required skills. All this has led to a marked increase of numeracy and literacy skills. In 2010 the Year 7 students’ numeracy skills were higher than the national average for Year 9 students. This initiative benefits the school and the community, as partnerships are formed with local producers and suppliers.

This year, the Sidney Myer Chair of Rural Education and Communities will be producing a series of flyers highlighting stories of rural and remote schools from around Australia who are ‘Making it Happen’, making a difference. Mypolonga Primary School will be the first rural school to be featured in the February edition.

Marja van Breda
Up to 50% of produced food wasted

One global issue in which rural communities play a critical role is in food production. By 2075, the mid-range population projections indicate that there will be 9.5 billion humans on the face of the planet — in order to meet the needs of such a population, food production clearly must increase and/or become more efficient.

A new report by the UK Institution of Mechanical Engineers suggests two major sources for improvement. In developing countries, the report suggests that more efficient farming practices are required, while in developed countries, retailer and consumer behaviour is a major source of waste.

The report estimates that major supermarkets reject up to 30% of the UK’s harvestable vegetable crop because they do not meet standards for size and appearance. These crops, despite being perfectly edible, are never even harvested due to aesthetic shortcomings. Globally, the report estimates that 1.6 million tonnes of food waste is generated by retailers through these practices. Further, the report estimates that somewhere between 30 and 50% of food is thrown away due to consumers purchasing excessive quantities of fresh foodstuffs and then discarding what is unused.

The report makes the point that this wastage not only means the loss of nutrition but also land, water and energy, which are hidden costs in the food production cycle. With so much food being discarded, there are huge areas of land and vast water resources that could be conserved or repurposed for more productive uses.

The authors recommend:

“Governments in developed nations devise and implement policy that changes consumer expectations. These should discourage retailers from wasteful practices that lead to the rejection of food on the basis of cosmetic characteristics, and losses in the home due to excessive purchasing by consumers.” (p.5)

Clearly, consumer behaviour at the checkout impacts upon rural areas. The areas of land that are used for producing the food consumers discard could be used for product that would not be wasted. Perhaps more importantly for the driest state of the driest continent, throwing food away is akin to throwing water away. If you, like I, did not previously realise just how much, some examples follow:

- 1 kg of apples takes 822 litres of water to produce
- 1 kg of bananas = 790 litres
- 1 glass of beer (250 mls) = 74 litres
- 1kg cheese = 3,178 litres
- 1 pizza = 1,239 litres
- 1kg chicken = 4,325 litres

The full table of estimates are available on page 12 of the report.

So next time you are at the supermarket, stop to think about how your purchasing behaviour impacts upon our rural communities and global sustainability.

If you are interested in the report, called “Global Food: Waste Not, Want Not”, it is available at http://www.imeche.org/knowledge/policy/reports

Dr Aaron Drummond

Vision and Mission

- Vibrant, productive rural communities are integral to the long-term sustainability of Australia.
- It is critical that people who live and work in rural and remote Australia have access to high quality, relevant and affordable education, training and care at all ages and stages of life.
- It is essential that the people who live and work in urban contexts and provide policy advice to governments and others, and who design and manage a myriad of programs intended to benefit country people and communities, deeply understand rural.

Upcoming Events

- CRC-Remote Economic Participation: Research Discovery Points of Connection meeting March 2013. Details to be confirmed.
- Sidney Myer Rural Lecture: Alice Springs, July 2013. Details to be confirmed.
- Social Capital & Community-based Education and Learning: 2 Day Seminar with Dr George Otero and Professor John Halsey. 3-4 September 2013, Mt Gambier.
- Relational Leadership & Learning for Hope-full and Sustainable Futures: An International Dialogue. 3-5 October 2013, Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA.
Quantitative Research – Beer, baseball and t-tests

The history of statistical analyses is not necessarily something that everyone would consider enthralling, but would opinions change if it was known that it involved one of the most famous beers on the planet? One of the most basic statistical procedures for comparing the mean of a sample against some hypothetical target mean has a rather unusual history.

In the early 1900’s, brewing company Guinness hired a statistician named William S. Gosset to determine the best method for brewing their beer. The company was keen to move toward a strong evidence-based system in an attempt to maximise the quality of their beer. Gosset, knowing that his samples were too small for previously used statistical tests (for economic reasons), developed a new statistical test to determine whether various properties of the beer met hypothesised targets and therefore whether brewing methods were consistently resulting in the highest quality beer. Gosset published the method for the tests under a pseudonym – student – because Guinness considered it a trade secret that they were using statistics to improve the quality of their beer. Student’s t-tests subsequently were extrapolated to allow for comparison between two different groups (independent samples t-tests) and linked groups (paired samples t-tests) amongst others, becoming one of the most commonly used statistical procedures.

And the beer? By 1914 foreign sales had grown to 100,000, and by 2003 there were more than 1 billion pints of Guinness sold across the world.

A similar success story lives in the annals of baseball history. In the U.S. the Boston Red Sox were infamous for being unable to win a World Series from 1918. Following the success of the Oakland Athletics in the late 1990’s from employing an economic-statistical theory known as sabermetrics, the Red Sox hired Bill James, a famed sabermetrician to consult on the hiring policies of the team. In 2004, the Red Sox’s first World Series victory since 1918 was recorded, breaking a legendary 86 year losing streak.

Statistics has a surprisingly rich and interesting history, and when implemented properly can make the difference one is looking for. Understanding the rich and vast potential for statistical analysis can unlock the door to success in ways others may not even dream of.

Until next time,
Strength in Numbers

Dr A.

Dr Aaron Drummond