



Enablers and inhibitors to the sustainable implementation of effective teacher delivered disaster resilience education through the Geography Syllabus

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The NSW Geography Syllabus requires that all Stage 3 students (Years 5 and 6) in New South Wales study the effect of a contemporary bush fire event on people, place and the environment – approximately 100,000 students in 4,000 classrooms across 2,500 schools doing this Unit of Work each year.

THE GEOGRAPHY SYLLABUS OPPORTUNITY

This Geography unit seeks to achieve educational outcomes aligned to the definitions of disaster, disaster risk reduction (DRR) and resilience applied by the United Nations (UN International Strategy for Disaster Resilience, 2009).

Teachers are expected to apply an inquiry learning approach where students research and investigate issues and impacts, identify problems and propose solutions.

The Unit being compulsory means that all students undertake this Unit of Work irrespective of their school or residence proximity to a bush fire hazard.

SO WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Primary School Teachers are mostly generalists with the capabilities to deliver required Curriculum and Syllabus learning outcomes.

Agencies such as the NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) want to know the extent to which this bush fire unit contributes to positive bush fire and other hazard risk reduction and resilience outcomes – beyond set educational objectives.

How do these disaster resilience education practices get taken up by schools and classroom teachers, and do these programs then get translated into effective disaster risk reduction and resilience outcomes for children and youth, for schools and for households and, if so, how so?

There are common obstacles to successful and sustainable implementation of DRE such as the busy curricula, lack of teacher training and necessary resources and tools, and lack of partnerships with emergency management agencies (Johnson et al., 2014; Johnson & Ronan, 2014; see also Amri et al., 2017).

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RESEARCH METHODS

Mixed methods will combine an experimental strategy (such as randomised control trial or alternative to evaluate outcomes, with an identified qualitative design and methods to gather more in-depth information on enablers and inhibitors from teachers, principals and children.

The study will also include both time series and benchmarking components. In terms of the time series aspect, given that the Geography DRE in Stage 3 applies across Years 5 and 6, longitudinal research can include and follow Year 5 cohorts as they move through Year 6, Year 7 and Year 8.

An International Practice Comparative Study of DRE practice in Miyagi and Iwate Prefectures, Japan will be included. Following the March 2011 Tohoku Earthquake and Tsunami, educational authorities in Japan have instituted extensive policy and practice changes (Japan Disaster Management Office, 2015) that apply the principles of the Comprehensive School Safety Framework and lessons learned from the Tohoku event.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

The findings will deliver short and intermediate term outcomes that pave the way for longer term research and scaled implementation of DRE programming. As well as for policy advocacy purposes, including related to Australia's National Strategy for Disaster Resilience (COAG, 2011), a policy that is currently more aspirational than realised (Ronan et al., 2016).

