

HDR Researcher Profile

Name: Carl Hotko

Faculty of Education

Program: Doctor of Education

Thesis Title: Teaching while the black dogs bark: Understanding the vicarious trauma experienced by Queensland secondary teachers in a digitally saturated age



Thesis description:

This inquiry seeks to understand Queensland teachers' experiences of vicarious trauma (VT) in a digitally saturated age. The bi-relational connections formed between teachers and their students (Bronfenbrenner, 2005), and the balance of the resources available and demands as educators (Bakker et al., 2018) combine for a complex educational landscape. Teachers in Australia are required to meet learning outcomes of the National Curriculum (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], n.d.) while also supporting the positive wellbeing of their students (AITSL, 2011). However, teachers are often ill-equipped to appropriately recognise, or respond to student trauma, hence the emergence of the Trauma-Informed classroom in recent educational research (Brunzell et al., 2016). However, there has been little application of VT research in relation to the wellbeing of secondary teachers. Using a pragmatic approach, this thesis employs an explanatory, sequential mixed-methods research design with a questionnaire including the Vicarious Trauma Scale (n=380+) followed by a subset of semi-structured interviews (n=5) to identify and explore the risks, extent and experiences of VT in Queensland secondary teachers. Given the sensitivity of discussing experiences of VT, participants will be provided with contact details for various support services. This research is vital for healthy and effective educators and in turn, healthy and effective learning spaces and classrooms. This research will

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offer valuable insight into the VT experiences of secondary teachers, the application of which will inform policy recommendations, and shape both professional development and preservice training for secondary teachers.

Bio:

Carl Hotko is a High School Mathematics teacher with more than 15 years, classroom experience as well as additional roles of Head of Department, Year level Coordinator and eSafety Coordinator. He is 2 years into his Doctor of Education where his passion for teacher wellbieng and supporting his colleagues within an exhausted profession has led to his research into vicarious trauma experiences. As well as being a doctoral candidate, Carl is the husband of his high school sweetheart, a father of 3 wonderful teenaged children and a boardgame enthusiast.

Link to an existing researcher website:

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