

# Urban-Trained Teachers' Experiences in School that Serve Rural Communities in the Agona East District of Ghana: The Role of the Counsellor and their Readiness to Respond to Challenges

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## ABSTRACT

Despite curriculum modifications by the Ghana Education Service under the Ministry of Education, completion rates and academic performance indicate a large accomplishment difference. Due to a lack of awareness of rural schools, education initiatives may not be enough. Rural instructors' views on teaching are unclear. Little is known about how remote teachers cope. The article used interpretive qualitative research to understand a criterion sample of 4 teachers' actual teaching experiences at Akokoasa AEDA Basic School in rural Agona East District. Semi-structured interviews provided the data. According to study, teachers' biggest problems are illiterate parents who can't work with them. Socioeconomic issues that force parents to move and prevent them from monitoring their children's school attendance and performance can sometimes demotivate students. Survey respondents cited a lack of educational resources, poor school infrastructure, and unbalanced resource distribution. This research seeks to better understand rural school district challenges that may hinder academic progress, school performance, and teacher instruction.

**Keywords:** Teacher experience, rural communities, Basic school education, Challenges

## INTRODUCTION

Personal and societal development both benefit from an educated populace (Chang'ach & Kessio, 2012). This is the only freedom that can permanently alter entire continents (UNICEF, 2009). As a result, programs like Education for All, the Millennium Development Goals, and the more recent Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have highlighted the value of education for fostering prosperity on a national, regional, and international scale. African governments' dedication to education as a means of combating poverty and boosting economic activity has been bolstered by these measures (UNESCO, 2015). One of the Sustainable Development Goals is to ensure that everyone has access to a high-quality education and training by 2030. Because of a lack of local resources, rural Ghanaian communities rely largely on metropolitan hubs for access to educational and social opportunities (DeSimone, & Werner, 2012). Economically, rural communities are secondary to even the most rapidly expanding cities. Urban and rural populations now face vastly different levels of social, economic, and academic inequality due to these large and unfair disparities in investment and education distribution. Ghana's Ministry of Education oversees the country's unified educational system. In rural areas, where many families have low socioeconomic status and few adults have completed secondary education, students face a unique set of challenges that teachers are not adequately prepared to address (ESPR, 2015). There are significant demographic and socioeconomic differences among American students, yet the federal education system and policies do not diversify educational support to account for these differences.

According to UNESCO, the main distinguishing feature of rural schools in the Dominican Republic is the use of mixed-age classrooms. As a result of teachers' lack of tutorial preparation, it is usual for these classes to teach two or more levels across a variety of curriculum disciplines. However, the limitations of rural areas make it tough to find and hire qualified educators (UNESCO, 2003). It can be challenging to teach and learn across grade levels in multi-age classrooms in rural areas due to a lack of resources such as buildings, social

programs, and economic opportunities. Teachers are overworked trying to meet the needs of a wide range of students at different stages of development, and access to social services is sometimes limited or non-existent (UNESCO, 2003). Because of these and other factors, students in rural areas, especially those in the most out-of-the-way parts of the country, worry about educational equity. There are far-off places even in the relatively central Agona East District, where this research is conducted. When it comes to education, rural areas have special needs that aren't being met by the country's standard policies and institutions. Due to this issue, rural schools are unable to effectively achieve the intended learning results. However, rural education is often overlooked in university colleges of education and in teacher preparation programs because of a lack of awareness and specific training for dealing with the unique challenges presented by rural communities.

Teacher education programs adhere to EDUCA's recommendations by providing instruction in four domains of expertise: pedagogy, psychology, social studies, and professional education. Nothing in any of this has anything to do with schooling in rural areas. Teachers in Ghana are sent to rural schools at random by the Ghana Education Service after completing their training. Because of factors such as dealing with multi-age, multi-grade classrooms and variations in family and community characteristics, instructors in rural schools often find it difficult to stay in the profession. According to Kline and Walker-Gibbs, the most vital aspects of rural education are a thorough background in education and a good outlook (2015). Teachers should be given the tools they need to address the unique challenges of teaching in rural areas, and they should be given information on rural contexts and adaptations to pedagogical approaches. Despite the importance of addressing such concerns, they are rarely included in teacher preparation programs because of the heavy focus on urban areas. Teachers have a tough time meeting the needs of all their pupils when schools are handicapped by issues of social, demographic, economic, and cultural diversity.

If educators are equipped with the skills necessary to address the varied characteristics and cultural norms of their students' environments, this might not be a problem. One such skill is the ability to tailor instructional methods and goals to the needs of a given community (Saigal, 2012). Teachers in Ghana are all required to complete the same training program before being sent to schools across the country, with some beginning in more difficult settings like rural schools. Due to the remote locations of these schools and the lack of basic amenities, teachers in rural schools in Ghana are more likely to face a lack of resources such as computers and the internet, as well as high rates of grade repetition, mixed-age classes, and low student attendance (GNAT, 2018; Acheampong & Gyasi, 2019). A teacher's lack of training and flexibility in meeting the needs of students in rural areas may become apparent in such an environment.

Teachers, according to Marwan, Sumintono, and Mislán (2012), should be equipped with a balanced view of the agricultural setting so that they can respond appropriately to the unexpected challenges that are common in this field. New teachers may be caught off guard and unprepared by many of the features of rural schools. A comparable case may be made for preservice teachers from rural areas who relocate to urban areas to pursue higher education. Due to a lack of preservice training options, teachers in rural areas are not only ill-equipped to teach in urban classrooms, but also inadequately prepared to teach in rural areas. Therefore, it is unnecessary to have two separate programs for training teachers. Rather, studies demonstrate that teacher education programs need to offer electives that address the unique challenges of teaching in both rural and urban settings, and that preservice teachers need to have both in-class and out-of-class field experiences (Masinire et al., 2014).

### **The State of Research on Rural Teacher Preparation**

Arnold, Dean, and Gaddy claim that there is an absence of high-quality studies focusing on rural educational institutions (2005). Only 21% of studies on rural education used a comparative study approach, they found. "There is no topic with sufficient research," the researchers concluded. There is no reliable way for policymakers and practitioners to assess the likelihood of an intervention's success (p. 16). There is also less evidence from rural education studies of deliberate efforts to train teachers to work in outlying locations (Arnold, Dean, Gaddy, & Newman, 2005). Teachers in rural schools sometimes have fewer resources available to them due to poverty, remoteness, and poor living conditions. Students in low-income rural communities have a harder time making academic progress because of these circumstances and the difficulty in recruiting and retaining highly trained teachers (Saigal, 2012). Heeralal (2014) states that it is unusual for a bachelor's

degree program to provide topics specific to teaching in rural schools. Due to the lack of training, instructors are hard to find, hire, and keep in rural schools.

As evidenced by numerous studies, common misconceptions about life and education in rural areas are being dispelled (Hudson & Hudson, 2008). Additionally, it was found by the researchers that urban preservice teachers' perceptions of working and living in rural locations were shaped by their experiences teaching in rural settings (Ajayi, 2014; Azano & Stewart, 2016; Masinire et al., 2014). Researchers have found that to have teachers who are both enthusiastic about working in rural schools and professionally competent to do so, they must first experience what it is like to teach in and live in a rural community (Adie & Barton, 2012). These results suggest that providing new teachers with exposure to teaching in both rural and urban contexts through coursework and practicum opportunities could improve their ability to comprehend, accept, and prepare for teaching roles.

### **Ghana's Experience**

Although teacher deployment in Ghana has improved greatly over the years, fair distribution remains challenging due to administrators' overly cautious approach. Most Ghanaian educators would rather not teach in the countryside. Some newly graduated teachers in Ghana are reluctant to teach in rural areas, despite state-sponsored programs that encourage them to do so.

Five districts in the Central Region of Ghana were surveyed in May 2006, and the results portrayed a bleak picture of the distribution of teachers in elementary and middle schools. Only 2,711 (60.4%) of the 4,488 teachers in these districts have received formal training, while 1,777 (39.6%) have not. The ratio of teachers to students was 1 to 59. (one teacher per 59 pupils in class).

Many teachers, especially in rural areas, quit their positions annually to pursue other careers, according to research by the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) and the Teachers and Education Workers Union (TEWU) (2010). The survey found that roughly 10,000 educators left their posts annually (Cobbold, 2015; Acheampong & Gyasi, 2019). Teachers' inherent reluctance to post to rural areas had the greatest impact. When it comes to educational planning, poor educational standards in terms of student success and discipline, as well as administrative expenditures, can be a major hindrance (Konadu, 2014; Evans, & Yuan, 2018). Low teacher retention rates are associated with worse student achievement, an indicator of deeper problems, and a warning sign of school dissatisfaction (Bempah et al., 2014; Alolo, 2016). (Ingersoll, 2001). Although some degree of teacher turnover is to be expected and even welcomed, excessive rates can be detrimental to both the institution's standing and its students' education (Mereku, 2000).

Evidence from Ghana suggests a significant education gap between the country's rural and urban populations. Research suggests that the educational strategy should be tailored to each place to best meet those locations' unique demands (Azano & Stewart, 2015). We looked at the challenges rural schoolteachers confront in this piece. The researchers were especially interested in teachers' confidence in their ability to teach in rural settings. Teachers at rural public schools in the Agona East District of Ghana's Central Region were interviewed to learn about their experiences teaching in these settings and how their urban academic and professional training prepared them to overcome the unique obstacles of rural education.

### **METHODOLOGY**

To that end, we set out to conduct some qualitative, interpretive groundwork with the present investigation. The purpose of this qualitative study was to profile the professional needs of rural schoolteachers considering their experiences in the classroom. In addition, this method of qualitative research was appropriate for our study since it allowed us to compile data from a variety of sources to paint a more accurate picture of what it's like to be a teacher in a rural public school in Agona East. To ensure sufficient data saturation (redundancy), we used purposive sampling to enrol 4 teachers with a minimum of 3 years' experience in rural schools.

The benefits and expected level of participation were also outlined for anyone considering taking part. Before any interviews took place, participants were given a consent form to fill out and return to the researchers. The

goal and methods of the study, as well as the benefits to participants and the means through which their privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality will be protected, were all laid out in detail in the informed consent form.

In this interpretive qualitative study, information was gathered mostly through in-depth interviews with study participants. The interviews were only half organized to allow for natural discourse between the researcher and the participants. Transcripts of interviews were recorded and transcribed. The interviews were transcribed and reviewed multiple times to get a feel for teachers' perspectives. The most important quotes relating to the investigated topic were selected. Implications were drawn from the major comments given by the participants.

The results of the study were presented as a series of topics for further reflection on the significance of the teachers' experiences. In the end, participants' input was sought to verify the findings by contrasting the researchers' descriptions with their own experiences.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The themes of meaning that emerged were as follows:

### **Theme No. 1: Internal and external factors of the school motivate teachers to teach in schools located in rural communities.**

When asked what keeps them going to work in rural schools, all four (4) teachers interviewed said that the strong sense of community they've built among their students is the single most important factor.

*We've been successful as a group because of the ways in which we've integrated and collaborated with one another. When one of us is struggling, the others step up to assist.* Educator 1

As they talked more about why they labour in rural areas, two distinct types of motivation—intrinsic and external—emerged. Teachers' passion for teaching and their fondness for their pupils were cited as examples of intrinsic motivation, while others mentioned a want to see their students succeed.

*Seeing children succeed academically is what drives me to do my best in my work with them. Learning relies on us; it's our job to figure out how to make them learn. Also, so that we can grow as individuals and contribute our full potential. In any case, while I'm here, I intend to perform to the best of my abilities, regardless of whether or not I'm being monitored.* (The Second Teacher).

However, most educators reported that the collaborative culture at their schools was the single most important factor in keeping them inspired. To be successful, educators in rural settings must figure out how to work around the obstacles that exist in the classrooms they inhabit. So, it makes sense that educators would band together to support one another as they face these obstacles. Teachers have reported that collaboration teams include not only their peers but also the school's administrative staff. One teacher, number four, said, "*Working together and becoming friends is a big assistance.*" *Working together strengthens everyone involved; what you perceive as a challenge, your co-worker may not, and vice versa; working together makes everything simpler.*

### **Theme No. 2: Teacher's acclimation to the rural community can be positive or negative depending on the culture and characteristics of the rural zone.**

Three unique views on how the four instructors have adjusted to their new rural environments have emerged. It has been argued that teachers' relocation to rural areas is generally beneficial.

*In spite of the fact that I currently call this place home, I am not a native. When we undertake an activity at school, what we desire is the well-being of the community, therefore we include the community and we also become involved in community concerns; this contributes to the beauty of our culture. People like it when their opinions are considered and they are treated with respect, and that is exactly what we strive to provide* (Teacher 3).



The second point of view that may be gleaned from the interviews is that of a passive integration into the rural society.

*For me, everything has been much the same as anywhere else; I've had no problems, and everyone here seemed genuinely pleased to see me when I first came. For instance, we have been singled out for special recognition at church events and given responsibility for a specific section of the Mass. (Teacher 2)*

According to a third point of view, teachers' adaptation to rural settings is largely bad. One educator, for instance, admitted that she was hesitant to voice her disagreement for fear of upsetting students and colleagues.

*This is an extremely challenging neighborhood. This is a reflection of households in which children are not taught to respect their parents. It is common for children to have to live with a stepfather, a brother, or a brother-in-law after the death of both biological parents. As a result, these youngsters often lack the respect due to teachers and the care shown by parents (Teacher 4).*

Teachers' accounts of settling into life in rural areas varied, with the vast majority recalling positive experiences.

### **Theme No. 3: Teacher preparation programs in the Ghanaian College of Education do not prepare teachers for rural communities**

Teachers who were able to participate in internships as part of their degree programs reported feeling more equipped to handle the rigors of the classroom. In contrast, some rural school instructors reported feeling unprepared to deal with the unique issues they faced. The teachers in both groups shared a common sentiment that they had not received adequate training in multigrade classes, hence they were ill-equipped to serve their students with high-quality instruction. Teachers' responses to the difficulties of working in a rural school were also shown to be heavily influenced by the programs through which they were certified. These results highlight the need for pre-service teachers to have experience in schools similar to those found in rural areas, such as those with multi-grade classes and a focus on interdisciplinary learning.

*If you major in something other than education and end yourself teaching in a rural area that serves multiple grade levels, you may be caught off guard. ... though you adjust, learn to live with it, and ultimately triumph. (Teaching 2)* A second educator chimed in, saying that she had never heard of a multigrade classroom in her own pre-service teacher education.

*I never had two grades in the same class for any of the classes I took, and neither my teachers nor I expected it to happen. In fact, I was completely oblivious to the concept of multigrade (Teacher 3).* Some colleagues have voiced agreement that themes tailored to the unique challenges faced by schools in rural areas should be incorporated into pre-service training for future educators.

*We teachers go to college to learn how to teach, but we never know where we'll end up working, so it's important that we're able to adapt to any setting, whether it's a multigrade school in the middle of nowhere or a prestigious urban institution. (Teacher 4).*

### **Theme No 4: Many teachers have developed self-strategies to address schools located in rural communities.**

Recent reports from rural school teachers have detailed a number of difficulties unique to their work environment. Most of these problems are really unintended consequences of rural life. The unequal allocation of government resources also creates its own set of difficulties. Despite all of these obstacles, instructors have demonstrated a willingness to address them, even if it means drawing on their own resources and free time to meet the needs of their pupils and thereby achieving the goals of the national curriculum to the greatest extent feasible. As mentioned by the educators, the following difficulties are being worked on: Issues include (a) low academic performance, (b) difficulties across grade levels, (c) a dearth of necessary resources, and (d) a disconnect between home and school.

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## Underachievement Challenges

Teachers have reportedly developed multiple methods for addressing students' low performance. One educator provided the example of student rotation in order to have all educators take part in the process of helping students who are both low-literate and older-than-their-grade-level catch up.

*Our company provides areas for teamwork. We put our overage, illiterate kids through a rigorous schedule of classroom rotations in the hopes that they would eventually pick up the skills they need to read. We all know that it takes more than one teacher to have an impact.* (Teacher 4) According to what other educators have said, rewards and incentives can be a powerful tool for getting students to focus on and complete grade-level goals.

*Motivation! As a department, we are continually on the lookout for new ways to inspire our students. Our company organizes reading competitions and awards the winners. We also stress the importance of reading in their day-to-day lives and the reasons for this. We need to keep kids interested in learning. Without their continued enthusiasm, we will be unable to move forward with our goals.* According to another educator, (Teacher 2) some educators use their free time or other opportunities during the school day to work with children individually who are struggling.

I use my downtime (lunchtime, between classes, etc.) to meet with students who are struggling and provide them individualized attention to help them catch up. Teachers have clearly established a broad variety of methods, as shown by these examples. However, (Teacher 3) they have never claimed that these methods are effective enough to handle problems associated with low student performance.

## Multigrade Classrooms

Teachers have cited multi-grade classrooms as one of their greatest difficulties. Nonetheless, it is not the multigrade structure per se, but rather the hard features of the multigrade combinations they currently serve, that have prompted teachers to seek out strategies. Some educators have mentioned, for instance, that they use universally applicable subjects with their students yet implement grade-specific lesson plans.

*Since many topics are covered in both first and second grade, I tailor my lessons to the appropriate grade level. As a result, I try to find means by which all pupils might feel as though they are in the same academic level. I make sure that there are activities for both grades that are appropriate for their level of development. As a bonus, I had them divide up into groups to do their tasks.* This is Instructor 4, and I'm about to tell you something.

Since Teacher 2 is responsible for teaching grades that don't often get along, she split the class in half.

*First and second graders are in the same classroom with me, but they are physically segregated from one another. If I'm going to read a narrative, though, I read it to the whole class, and then we adjust the challenges of the exercises as we go. For instance, in the story I read, the youngsters were instructed to draw, while the older students were given writing assignments.* (Teacher 2)

In order to manage their multi-age classes, some educators have opted to focus on delivering simpler lessons. Teacher 3 explained that she was always on the lookout for "helpful," "not very challenging," and "connected for both grades" classroom activities.

## Lack of Resources

There are a wide variety of methods utilized in the classroom, but they can be grouped into three broad types. To begin, some educators have mentioned spending their own money to supply classrooms with educational resources that they then have to share with other educators. For instance, Teacher 2 mentioned that *a lack of resources was a significant issue in their classroom. Even though we don't always have enough resources to*

*get the job done, we always manage to pull together and pitch in. We take turns buying supplies and then pooling them when they're needed.*

Second, some educators have said they have gone outside to gather materials to utilize in the classroom. Teachers have reported, for instance, creating their own educational tools from outdoor items. Teacher-brought technology is the third indicator of teacher-student collaboration. This final option, however, has its limitations due to the unreliable internet connection and short periods of access to electricity during school hours. Specifically, teacher 2 said, *"I have a TV here, and I have my laptop, I bring my resources because sometimes we have no electricity and the internet connection is weak."*

### **Integrates Families in School Affairs.**

Numerous methods have been created by educators to involve parents and guardians in their children's educational experiences because of the good effect this has on students' academic performance. A number of educators have mentioned, for instance, that they arrange events specifically for the purpose of luring parents into the classroom.

*To start, I show them love, because sometimes their parents aren't there because they had to leave to find job in Duakwa, Agona Swedru, Nsaba, Kasoa, etc..., to provide for their family. This is, of course, completely understandable; we must consider both sides of any situation. For the sake of family cohesion, we also plan activities for everyone. We also provide the option for parents to have their child spend the week with a teacher in Akokoasa in an effort to inspire them. (Teacher #3)*

Some teachers reported visiting students' homes to help bridge the communication gap between the school and the families of their students.

*I enjoy conversing with people, as it allows me to better understand their perspectives and circumstances. ... I do what I can to stay in touch with the parents of the children I'm working with so that I can assist them with effective follow-up measures. On occasion I go to their houses or send them invites to school. To be successful, school administration requires both openness to and involvement from the surrounding community. (Teacher 2)*

Additionally, other educators have recommended capitalizing on opportunities to speak with parents in natural settings, such as community events, weddings, etc.

*If I see a parent out in the community, I will approach them, but I am careful to pick the right time and place to do so, so it's not like I'm constantly bothering them. However, I do my best to initiate the conversations I've been wanting to have with them about our kids whenever I get the chance. A classroom would be nice, but if they can't make it I make use of any other opportunities that arise when they're out and about in the neighborhood. (Educator #4).*

Teacher 2 even went so far as to plan an entire activity around teaching illiterate parents to read and write as a means of bringing the family closer to the school.

*Once, as part of a collaborative classroom project, I led a community-wide count of adults over the age of 18 who could not read or write. Together with two more mature local students, we devised a system to facilitate their education. (Teacher 2).*

While instructors in this study confront unique difficulties due to the nature of their rural locale, they are inspired to find ways to innovate in the face of adversity in order to provide their pupils with optimal learning environments.

For instance, educators have reported making use of any and all resources at their disposal, including those they come across in the wild, in the local community, and those they pay for out of their own pockets. They also reported acquiring the supplies their classes needed either by bringing them from home, developing artisanal teaching aids, or making use of opportunities to buy supplies while in town. They make up for the paucity of classroom supplies in this way. Similarly, Del Rosario et al. (2014) stressed the need for innovative

approaches to rural education development in order to satisfy the current educational needs of rural populations.

Overcrowding, mixed-age classrooms, and a lack of qualified educators have forced teachers to use their own time outside of school to plan lessons, conduct one-on-one tutorials, and help students who are falling behind. Teachers also have a lot of appreciation for the non-profits that work to raise the bar of education by intervening in schools. Schools, they claimed, gain from these intervention programs because they include parents and the wider community in education and supply both kids and teachers with resources for growth. Teachers have also noted that the Ministry of Education has pushed for more frequent meetings so educators may share their struggles and the solutions they've developed. Teachers who have transitioned to teaching multi-grade classrooms lead these courses for the benefit of other local educators. Collaborative teams made up of teachers and school administrators have proven to be the most effective method for improving education in remote areas and retaining existing staff. Teachers have said that these groups have been invaluable to them in terms of providing inspiration and advice whenever they've been stumped by problems in the classroom. Similarly, the members of these collaborative groups might serve as mentors to less seasoned educators. Saigal (2012) argues that for students to meet the specified learning outcomes for each grade level, teachers need to be able to apply instructional approaches and objectives that are consistent with the setting in which they are applied.

The results show that the Ghana Education Service, which reports to the Ministry of Education, does not tell teachers where they would be working until they are allocated. Some teachers say they were overwhelmed by their school visits because they are not prepared to teach in schools with multiple grade levels. Over time, educators working in Agona East District schools become accustomed to the unique challenges of serving the district's student body. The two main draws of teaching in the country are discussed. The first has to do with their calling, or why they got into their line of work. They have a burning passion to help their students achieve their potential, and it motivates them to work hard every day. The second form is known as "extrinsic incentive." The latter is what people were most willing to talk about during the interviews. Teachers working in collaborative teams report feeling more encouraged and supported in their multi-age classes. Teachers, principals, and even some extra parties, such directors, have a strong sense of camaraderie that they say is a major factor in keeping them committed to their work in these schools.

## CONCLUSION

Educators from metropolitan areas often find that working at a rural school presents a unique set of challenges and rewards. As a result of reading this paper, I now have a better understanding of the challenges faced by rural school districts and of the perspectives and preparedness of urban-educated teachers who are currently working in rural schools. The findings of this study can be used to inform the development of evidence-based policies and programs aimed at improving educational opportunities for students in rural areas. According to UNESCO (2003), the most common characteristics of schools in rural contexts are their multigrade classes, and this study shed light on how teacher preparation programs should contain specialized knowledge of elements connected to the rural community. Therefore, educators must have the professional and academic credentials to address the school's peculiarities and consciously tailor their teaching approach to the population they serve.

In conclusion, this paper has influenced the researchers to modify their attitude and approach toward teachers and schools in rural situations. The school will never cease to be a school because of its location, nor will its nature change because of the problems it must overcome. When we label the school solely on the basis of its location, without considering the context, we form an inaccurate and negative impression of it, which in turn limits the strategies we can employ. This implies as counsellors, it is important to continuously encourage educators to do their best irrespective of the school location.

Teachers do not feel prepared when assigned to a school in a rural town, according to the data. This is because of the unique qualities of both the community and the school. They have to deal with problems on multiple levels without the benefit of professional training that could give them confidence that the methods they're employing would lead to the desired improvement in student achievement. Accordingly, it might be crucial for



the counsellors in consultation with the school to provide teachers with the required support from seasoned teachers who already have experience in multigrade classrooms.

Based on the results of this study, teacher education programs need to be rethought in order to better equip future educators to deal with the unique challenges presented by rural settings. Some examples of topics that could fall under this rubric are the identification and utilization of natural resources present in rural areas, as well as the identification, creation, and adaptation of educational resources and instructional materials that are tailored to the specific needs of students in rural areas. Preparing teachers to work in multigrade classes and with students from a wide range of socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds requires a set of skills that go beyond simply knowing how to use the materials provided by the curriculum.

This certainly does not call for multiple parallel teacher education tracks. Recent research suggests that in-service training for teachers should combine classroom instruction with fieldwork to be most effective. Because of this, educators receive training in both urban and rural communities (Masinire et al., 2014). A place-conscious pedagogy perspective is needed to shift educational approaches and systems away from standardizing teaching practices and toward more location-based education.

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