Chapter 4
Teacher Preparation for Rurality: A Cohort Model of Teaching Practice in a Rural South African School

Tabitha Grace Mukeredzi

Abstract Rural schools the world over are generally beleaguered by pressures of "hard to staff, harder to stay" quality than urban schools. In South African rural schools, teacher shortage remains the biggest hindrance to meeting Millennium Development Goals, developed during United Nations Millennium Summit declaration. Together with measurable targets and deadlines, goals were intended to improve lives of poor people throughout the world. This chapter reports findings from a study which investigated experiences and interpretations of rurality, of 16 Bachelor of Education pre-service teachers from a South African university, during a four-week residential Teaching Practicum in a rural school. Data suggests that students encountered "ruralisation" of minds and developed sense of rurality which dissipated some of their fallacies, seemingly increasing their employment possibilities in rural settings which might ultimately stimulate interest for teaching in rural schools. While teacher preparation for rurality during ITE could be an avenue for investing in youth who choose teaching, this may be a starting point for supporting rural teachers, learners, and communities. Given the South African education sector diversity, teacher education should focus on quality education for varied contexts, with particular attention to rural contexts.

Keywords South africa · Rural teacher education project · Student teachers · Rural school

4.1 Introduction

A brief chronicle of my experiences as a rural school child may provide first-hand insights into challenges related to teacher shortage in rural schools.

T. G. Mukeredzi (✉)
School of Education, Durban University of Technology, Midlands/Indumiso Campus, Pietermaritzburg, Republic of South Africa
e-mail: tabitham@dut.ac.za

© Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd. 2021

S. White and J. Downey (eds.), *Rural Education Across the World*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-33-6116-4_4

> I attended a rural school more than 350 km from Harare in Zimbabwe. My school was 12 km on a rugged road off the public road. There was no transport on this rumble-strip to the school which forced teachers to walk. Piped water and electricity were non-existent. We fetched water for teachers from a pond near a small stream. Health services were only available in town 350 km away. Teachers would come and go, sometimes we had three different teachers in a year.

Rural schools globally face pressures of "*hard to staff, harder to stay*" quality teachers than urban schools (Islam, 2012; Kline, White, & Lock, 2013; Miller, 2012; Mukeredzi, 2013; Pennefather, 2011). Teacher shortage in South African rural schools remains the biggest hindrance to meeting Millennium Development Goals (Masinire, 2015). Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are part of goals developed, with their set measurable targets and deadlines for improving lives of poor people throughout the world. The goals were set up to eradicate poverty by leaders of 189 countries from different parts of the world who signed the historic millennium declaration at the United Nations Millennium Summit in 2000 (Statistics South Africa, 2017).

The low uptake of teaching posts by competent qualified and experienced teachers in rural contexts is due inter alia to: geographical, social, professional, collegial and cultural isolation; socio-economic conditions; multiple grade/multiple subject teaching assignments; lack of familiarity with rural schools and communities; and notions of disadvantage that consider rural school teaching as inferior and loathsome (Arnold, Newman, Gaddy, & Dean, 2005; Greenough and Nelson, 2015; Mahlangu and Pitsoe, 2013; Miller, 2012; Pennefather, 2011). Some of the qualified teachers who accept rural school posts do not stay, and new graduates with modern individualistic outlooks shun rural postings arguing that too much time teaching in a rural village school, causes one to become "a village man" (Monk, 2007). In addition, rural areas in South Africa are affected by social problems like disease, poverty, low literacy levels, low learner achievement, poor/inadequate facilities and services, and, low self-efficacy of those living and working there (du Plessis, 2017; Greenough & Nelson, 2015; Hlalele, 2014; Johnson & Strange, 2009; Myende & Chikoko, 2014).

This chapter draws on a study which investigated the experiences and interpretations of rurality of 16 Bachelor of Education student teachers (herein called students) in one South African university, during a four-week residential teaching practice (TP) in a rural South African school. The research was part of a bigger project, the Rural Teacher Education Project (RTEP) which examined alternative models of pre-service placement to address rural school needs. By contrast to other pre-service teacher rural school TP placement, in this model, these student teachers were placed at one school as a cohort, lived alongside the rural community nearby the school, shared residential facilities living in a community of teacher educators and their peers.

This article explores the students' experiences of their professional learning journeys and their understandings and interpretations of rurality within this collaborative cohort model. This model reinforces Coles (2012) conception that such professional learning is not isolated, nor individualistic, but a communal activity which involves a range of participants including peers, university programme facilitators, tutors and

assessors, their school-based mentors, learners and potentially their parents. The model was intended to encourage student collaboration to develop a community in which they would be empowered to resolve TP challenges, problems, and difficulties thereby professionally learning (Mukeredzi, 2015).

Without a supportive environment for professional learning, higher levels of reflective thinking and self-evaluation of TP are unlikely to happen by themselves. My argument here is that rural offers much more than a research setting or a site that provides residential differences to justify research publication, rather it should be generative for and or relevant to the research purpose (Hamm, 2014). The conception is made that there is quality inherent in rural schools and communities which should be preserved such as the desire for learning in learners and teachers and the contextual "situativity" from where student teachers could learn.

The study addresses one question: How do pre-service teachers experience and interpret their experiences as they journey towards becoming teaching professionals in rural school TP? This model is thus unique as it entailed a group of students experiencing and interpreting their TP experiences in one rural school, living alongside a rural community, and in commune with peers and teacher educators (Mukeredzi, 2016).

The chapter provides some highlights on South African rurality and Teacher Education. A discussion on the Rural Teacher Education Project follows. The research site and data production and analysis strategies employed constitute the subsequent section. The findings, discussion and conclusion conclude the chapter.

4.2 Rurality and Teacher Education in South Africa

There appears to be no consensus on the definition of "rural" in South Africa due to its elusive nature. This may emanate from the subjective nature of distinctions between rural and urban given the similar school curricular and practices which overlook idiosyncrasies of rural settings. Hlalele (2014) reports that the South African government regards "rurality" as: a life style; mind-set and cultures around land, livestock and community living; peri-urban areas; informal settlements; and small towns. Further, rurality in South Africa is also tantamount to isolation, poverty, disease, neglect, backwardness, marginalization, depopulation, traditionalism, conservatism, corruption, low adult literacy levels and low quality education in schools, entropy and exclusion (Balfour, 2012; Masinire, 2015). Such distressing notions of deficiency and disadvantage are disempowering for teachers who may want to teach in rural schools (Moletsane, 2012). In this chapter, rurality is understood as synonymous to remote. *Remote area* generally connotes underclass models that signify notions of rurality in social development where the people concerned are socially deficient, and more often than not, overlooked fully or partly from mainstream socio-political engagements.

Residing in rural South Africa has links to apartheid colonial policies of deprivation, resettlement and deliberate, systematic exclusion from opportunities,

which forced all black South Africans to live in rural areas—called "*homelands*" (Wedekind, 2005). *Homelands* are generally depicted by poor services/facilities, either jam-packed homesteads or village-style settlements. The least developed and poorest South African *homeland* areas are in Eastern Cape, Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) provinces (Gardiner, 2008). KZN is the site for this research. Under-development and poverty in these *homelands* are reflected by poor education quality available. Most South African rural schools are wanting in resources, basic services and facilities. Hugo, Jack, Wedekind, and Wilson (2010) discovered lack of on-site toilets at many rural schools, for example, with numbers exceeding 50 sharing one toilet. Electricity and piped water were non-existent and schools depended on bore-hole or rainwater harvesting. Some areas had been discounted for development for decades, compounded by the under supply of human, material and other provisions; many of these South African rural schools have depreciated to an extent that the picture portrayed is not enticing for a teaching career or for living (du Plessis, 2017; Mitchell, de Lange, Balfour & Islam, 2011).

Many policy initiatives have been instituted and a Rural Education Directorate established (Mitchell et al., 2011). The South African Rural Education Directorate is a section of the Department of Basic Education (DBE) set up broadly to dress the challenges associated with rural schools and rural education (Gardiner, 2008). The Directorate was established in 2006 and disbanded in 2010 and then re-established in 2014 with a core mandate to create a forum to build intra- and inter-sectoral collaboration between the DBE, its provincial departments, and relevant stakeholders "in identifying, developing and implementing the context-specific and sustainable strategies and solutions for the provision of quality rural education and rural school education improvement". (Pasensie, 2015, p. 2). However, notwithstanding, South African rural education remains beleaguered by extensive challenges (du Plessis, 2017; Gustafsson, 2016; Moletsane, 2012). Mukeredzi and Mandrona (2013) ascribe this to implementation challenges and connections between rural realities and government responses, yet to be unresolved. This compromises the many school-age children residing in rural districts. 40% of the South African population resides in rural areas (World Bank, 2013) and of a total of 25,720 government (public) schools in South Africa, 11,252 schools (almost half) are located in rural areas (Savides, 2017). The majority of these rural schools are situated in three provinces: KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) (4,040), Limpopo (3,342) and the Eastern Cape (1,832). In KZN 54% of the population resides in rural communities with approximately 3,000 schools that accommodated about 1,097,499 learners out of the provincial total of 2,798,570 learners and 5,937 schools (Statistics South Africa, 2017). Clearly, more than half the schools in KZN are rural-based and about half the learners attend these rural schools, with severe shortages of qualified teachers. The Education Department admitted that of the 5,139 unqualified or underqualified rural school teachers nationally, 2,875 (57%) were in rural KZN (Mahlangu & Pitsoe, 2013; Rural Education Policy, 2018; Savides, 2017). Further, the schools were under-resourced which often forced teachers to "make-do" with limited resources unlike the qualified teachers in urban well-resourced schools (Mukeredzi, 2016).

This begs several questions: How can South African teacher education institutions contribute to rural school teacher provision? Many university pre-service teachers come from rural communities (Masinire, 2015). How can they be persuaded to return home to teach following graduation? Developing more and better teachers is not the panacea for rural school teacher shortage given the apparent teacher oversupply in urban schools. What is critical is expansion and reorientation of teacher education curricula towards teacher preparation for rurality, and reorientation of students' perceptions to appreciate likelihoods of rural school teaching (Masinire, 2015). Research (for example Adie & Barton, 2012; Balfour, 2012; Islam, 2012; Lingam, 2012; Moletsane, 2012) confirms that tools and strategies for rural teacher development and rural school postings are in teacher education. The assertion is corroborated by many rural education researchers (for example Lingam, 2012; Mitchell, de Lange et al. 2011; Pennefather, 2011; Sullivan, McConney, & Perry, 2018) who blame teacher education institutions for paying little or no attention to teacher development for rurality. However, while teacher education institutions may be unable to address structural challenges like toilets, they are neither empowering students with skills and knowledge for rural and remote school teaching nor proactive in addressing this problem given their essentially "metro-centric mind-set" (Masinire, 2015). Countries like Australia, which recognised the central role of teacher education institutions in rural school teacher preparation have supported research funding towards programmes like the Rural Teacher Education Project (Green, 2008), the Renewing Rural Teacher Education and others (Masinire, 2015; White & Kline, 2012) that in turn have informed teacher education.

Notwithstanding the fundamental role South African teacher education can play in turning-around the rural education terrain, students are not exposed to opportunities for rural school teaching during preparation (Islam, 2012). As well, curricula overlook components on rural education and teaching. Lack of teacher knowledge and skills for rural school teaching negatively impact education of rural children who are already at risk (Lingam, 2012). Effective teacher preparation for rurality requires appropriate professional preparation during initial teacher education (ITE) (Lingam, 2012; Mitchell et al., 2011). White and Kline (2012) add that during ITE, students need exposure to: issues pertinent to rural education; a broad representation of rural, regional and remote contexts so that they become familiar with diverse rural, and remote locations and communities. Such exposure to realities of living and teaching in rural schools for students anticipating rural school employment, may expand their job prospects in these areas and eventually boost their interest in countryside teaching (Mukeredzi, 2016).

Formation of rural school-university partnerships is a good starting point for enabling students' direct personal experiences of rural education in context, through practicum in rural schools. Globally, there is consensus that teacher development institutions should develop strong partnerships for effective student teacher preparation for promoting rural school teaching appointments (Balfour, 2012; Brady, 2002; Haugalokken & Ramberg, 2007; Islam, 2012; Mitchell et al., 2011; White & Kline, 2012). The RTEP was one example of rural school-university partnership models launched by one South African university.

4.3 The Rural Teacher Education Project (RTEP)

Each year the RTEP exposed cohorts of 15–20 students to working side by side with teachers in rural schools, promoting understanding and appreciation of rural issues and ultimately fostering interest in rural school teaching. This chapter reports on experiences of such students during 2014 rural TP and their interpretations of those experiences.

The RTEP, a rural school–university partnership project was launched in 2007 by the Faculty of Education, collaborating with rural schools 200 km north-west of Durban in South Africa's KZN province. While university teacher education programmes did not discriminate against rural school TP placements, it was not mandatory that students undertake practicum in such schools, although it was expected that they would experience TP in resourced and under-resourced settings. Thus, students sought placements in urban schools where transportation and accommodation were easily available. The RTEP was developed partly to counter this urban bias.

Contrary to traditional TP placements where single students are attached to a school during practicum, RTEP explored alternative models of placement where students were attached to one school as a cohort. The RTEP brought together an amalgam of research, intervention, and teacher education strategies (Balfour, 2012) to investigate how partnership between in-service rural school-based teachers and students' cohorts could promote students' professional development and eventually persuade them to consider postings in rural schools. Specifically, the RTEP wanted to offer trainees opportunities to: observe and experience first-hand realities of life, teaching/learning in a rural school; work with experienced rural school teachers, while living alongside the community (RTEP Recruitment Brochure, 2012). With this approach the RTEP was gently reorientating teacher education in the university's Education Faculty to rural schools as fundamental sites for cultivation of students' interest in rural school teaching and professional learning.

Student participation was voluntary. After wide project publicity within the Faculty, students formally applied and were interviewed. In their application and interviews, students had to: express interest in rural school teaching; be in second, third or fourth year of study; specializing in Senior Phase or Further Education and Training; and majoring in any two subjects: technology, management studies, English, computer studies, mathematics or science. Foundation Phase students who spoke isiZulu (local language) were also considered.

For effective on-site leadership, and management, the project team appointed two advisors/teacher educators. One had to have a Ph.D. in Teacher Education. This is how I got drawn into the RTEP in 2011. At the time, I was a resident post-doctorate with Ph.D. in Teacher Education. Teacher educators shared residential facilities with students about three kilometres away from the school. The RTEP researchers created this residential arrangement to build a professional community among students and teacher educators while professionalizing the experience through individual and collaborative reflections, and academic mentorship (Mukeredzi &

Mandrona, 2013). Thus, the communal dwelling structure and in-built opportunities for reflections would foster students' reflection on their experiences, interpretations and perceptions of the rural context practicum.

4.4 Methodology

4.4.1 The Research Site

The RTEP was taken to Mziwaxolo (Pseudonym) combined school in Malute (Pseudonym), a harsh, and rather isolated geographical area in 2014. Malute, approximately 139 kilometres from the nearest town Pietermaritzburg, could be viewed as no rural idyll, with many of its inhabitants' in surrounding villages experiencing socio-economic disadvantage, as well as limited access to services as some of the particular problems. Mziwaxolo was a combined school, a school with primary and secondary sectors under one principal, and classes from Grade R to 12. Mziwaxolo had a big enrolment; approximately 1,500 on the roll in 2014, 850 in the primary and 650 in the secondary and 39 staff. Given its central location, amid densely populated multiple, compact village settlements, without another school nearby, Mziwaxolo inevitably serviced a heavily populated catchment area with an entirely Black isiZulu speaking population. It was larger than an average combined school in most South African rural areas at the time.

Its combined structure enticed RTEP as all students would be under one "roof". This was ideal for on-site support as teacher educators remained in one place without splitting time across sites. All the 16 students undertook TP at MziwaXolo. The school displayed a clean and orderly outlook, well-disciplined, respectful, and neatly dressed learners. A calm and business-like atmosphere, where no learners loitered outside during learning time, prevailed. The principal lamented gross under-resourcing and large classes between 70 and 80 learners. Office space was limited consequently, the RTEP team used a school library as their office. While this arrangement was broadly beneficial for enabling interaction among RTEP students, and educators, it created "borders" between students and schoolteachers. This tended to portray doing research "on" which marginalizes rural spaces and undermines their vitality and uniqueness, contrary to the ideal, doing research "for" which is of critical importance (Corbett & White, 2014).

4.4.2 Method

As the sole researcher, I adopted a qualitative research design within an interpretive paradigm for investigating how a cohort of 16 purposively selected B.Ed. students experienced and interpreted those experiences of rural school TP. I also chose research

methods that were consistent with reflective approaches to research and used both student's daily individual reflective journals and collaborative reflections dialogues as sources of data. Practicum was from middle of July to first week of August 2014. In the 2014 RTEP, I was the only advisor and I worked closely with the 16 students while the project leaders/researchers would be in and out of the research site to oversee the processes. Six students were in academic year two, five in year three and five in fourth, final year. Their ages were between 19 and 40 years. There were six men and ten women, with diverse backgrounds.

To kick-start the four-week rural school TP, I conducted one-day workshop for students and mentors to: demystify some misconceptions about rural schools, learners and communities; expose students to common challenges confronting rural schools; develop a supportive relationship with the host school; and expose both students and mentors to university mentoring expectations of mentoring.

Each student had one school-appointed mentor for each specialisation for the duration of TP. School management and other staff would support students' TP and integration into school life. I introduced the workshop by requesting students to document their conceptions of rurality. To conclude, after taking the students through reflective questions below, explaining and clarifying each question, I asked them to document their reflections on the workshop answering the questions:

1. What are your understandings/views about TP in a rural school?
2. How did it go? What happened?
3. What did I experience?
4. Why did things happen in that manner? My contributions? Contributions of others?
5. What does all this mean to me personally? Professionally?
6. What could have been done differently to improve? Could be done differently to uphold?

These questions provided the Framework for students' reflections in their daily reflective journals and for collaborative debriefing reflections sessions throughout TP. Each TP day was concluded by individual reflections in daily journals followed by collaborative reflection sessions which lasted approximately two hours from 16hr30 and 19hr00. In these two-and-half hour sessions, students reflected on their teaching, cross-examined and examined, questioned and detailed the day's actions. This promoted self-evaluation of lessons and pedagogies, what worked and did not work and why, what could have been or could be done differently to improve or uphold the performance (Mukeredzi & Mandrona, 2013). Discussions were characterized by lively dialogue which stimulated collaborative reflection, sharing and feedback. Although I had some insights into rural school learning life, from childhood experiences, I now live in an urban setting. Like Hamm (2014) I found myself drawing on my experiences and my background as a rural school child, to connect with student teacher experiences and interpretations. These commonalities probably contributed to building a good relationship, trust and rapport with these student teachers which facilitated intimate discussions. Dialogues with supervisors, peers

and colleagues enable identification of appropriate mediational artefacts and clarification of beliefs and dispositions (Kline et al., 2013). This process made for rigorous collaborative reflective learning and self-interrogation of perceptions. Again, similar to what Hamm (2014) experienced, I also kept on asking myself a number of questions: Whether as a qualitative researcher I needed to be presently living in a rural area, or whether I needed a rural background? What would the implications on my research if I did not have any rural background/experiences at all? How would this research compare with one conducted in my own rural home school? These thoughts and insights made me examine my positionality regarding insider/outsider dynamics as they relate to rural education research or research in rural contexts and communities more broadly.

As advisor, I saw my role as both "insider" and "outsider" in terms of the rural context and relationships with the various groups involved in the RTEP. The concept of researcher as insider, outsider or somewhere in between according to Hamm (2014) has been discussed across disciplines. In my case, my identities were flexible and the extent to which I was part of or apart from the groups was fluid and altered dependent on the day or activity. In a way I was "in between" my membership roles as insider and outsider. Current scholarship confirms that a researcher can be in between the roles (Hamm, 2014). Notwithstanding that I was born and bred in a rural context, I was from outside South Africa and had not been part of the original team that conceptualized the RTEP. I arrived as a new addition to the research activities albeit I had previous professional relationships with the RTEP researchers. As advisor, I was accommodated together with students in a guesthouse nearby the school and drove them to and from the school, remaining typically on site with them supporting and attending to their professional issues.

I facilitated collaborative debriefing and reflection sessions daily and offered the students on-going emotional and professional support throughout the TP period. As much as I was an authority in this context, I had some vulnerabilities. This was a new group regarding working together and understanding the complexities of the rural school context where I was supposed to help student teachers navigate. Compounded by this was the fact that I did not speak isiZulu the local language. Although my liminal situation did bring feelings of alienation at times, this was also helpful in revealing contradictions within the research site, not only the potential of TP to reproduce any disjunctures, but also to empower participants.

This position as Hamm (2014) points out enables identification and reflection on biases, and offers insights through observation and experience. Hamm further argues that "the insider/outsider dichotomy is simplistic, and the distinction is unlikely to adequately capture the role of all researchers. Instead, the role of the researcher is better conceptualized on a continuum, rather than as an either/or dichotomy" (p. 6). Consequently, a role as neither an insider-researcher nor outsider-researcher is thus beneficial to the researcher from the advantages which minimize potential barriers of any of the statuses.

Research foregrounds rural communities, rural contexts as well as promoting and sustaining rural education (Hamm, 2014). Before settling on the methodology for this study, I surveyed literature on rural education research, collaborative TP

models where trainees live in or alongside rural communities, and examined issues of enhancing rural education. I was interested in methods of facilitating engagements with and among student teachers from diverse backgrounds through individual and collaborative reflection dialogues to understand how they experienced and interpreted their experiences as they journeyed towards becoming teaching professionals in rural school TP while residing alongside a community and in commune with peers and teacher educators.

Designing reflective questions, and facilitating collaborative reflection dialogues served to unpack and explore students' (Hamm, 2014) interpretations of rurality. My objective was to facilitate exploration of student teacher understandings of rurality, their rural school TP experiences and how they understood those experiences. In this study, I had explored the potential for reflective questions as basis for individual reflections as well as for collaborative reflections by testing this process with a group of Post Graduate Certificate students in the educational psychology module that I taught at university and considered how reflections could be applied to understand experiences and interpretations of rurality during TP.

Some of the rural researchers apparently use the rural just as a setting or a convenient context, which consequently does not add to an understanding of the rural or how issues play out in the rural (Hamm, 2014). My view in this study was that this would enhance student teachers' understanding of the rural and/or how issues uniquely play out. Citing Roberts and Green (2013), Hamm further points out that if research does not promote understanding of the rural, this may be enacting symbolic violence against the place it purports to represent. My role was to facilitate students' individual reflections and also lead collaborative reflections to show how these could be applied to promote students reflections, enhance and deepen their understanding of rurality thereby enhance their professional growth during rural school TP. This would probably ultimately generate some interest in rural school teaching.

4.4.3 Data Generation

Throughout TP, pre-service teachers recorded their thoughts, observations and experiences, in daily journals and would share them during collaborative reflection sessions. The collaborative conversations were audio-recorded. Students reflected on teaching/learning in a rural classroom and ruralness itself, and shared views and experiences about rurality and teaching, describing, cross-examining, and interrogating them (Mukeredzi, 2016). These conversations advanced students' verbalizing abilities and corroborated their experiences. Students evaluated their lessons, approaches and language, successes and failures, their learning therefrom, and what they would do differently (Mukeredzi & Mandrona, 2013). The experiences exposed them to challenge-filled actualities of South African rural education context, and from ongoing reflection on classroom and contextual activities, attitudes, and experiences, students developed profound understandings of what being a teacher in a rural school entailed (Mitchell et al., 2011). In retrospect, as students were required to articulate

and reflect on their teaching, this could be construed as tugging them into conformity to RTEP requirements. Such strategies are viewed as producing some form of *contrived collegiality* (Hughes, 2013) to fulfil expectations of project participation requirements.

This chapter draws data from students' reflective journals and transcripts of audio-recorded collaborative reflection conversations. The extended fieldwork, research procedures adopted to ensure authentic generation, interpretation and representation of perspectives of these students and inclusion of verbatim quotations to give students a voice, enhanced rigour. Participants were aware that collaborative reflection sessions were being audio-recorded, however, recording was employed discretely with their awareness. The thick descriptions, and data triangulation further enhanced rigour. The concept of thick description originates from interpretive ethnography, and involves deep, profound, exhaustive accounts of a phenomenon of inquiry particularly the context(s) where it occurs. Thick descriptions also establish verisimilitude statements that construct for the reader, feelings of experiencing the events under discussion in a study. Thus, credibility is established through the lens of readers who, in reading the narrative, and are transported into a setting or situation (Lietz & Zayas, 2010).

4.4.4 Data Analysis

The senior researchers were neither directly involved with students' professional learning issues apart from over-seeing, nor participated in the data generation, it was my sole responsibility. Content analysis which involved carefully and systematically examining and interpreting texts to identify patterns, themes, biases and meanings (Plunkett & Dyson, 2011) was followed in analysing data. The approach entailed eight steps. First, I transcribed students' individual reflections and the audio recorded collaborative reflection dialogues. After this, I read through the transcripts over and over, listening to audio tapes several times comparing and contrasting them and making brief notes in the margin when interesting or relevant information was found. Third, going through the notes that I made in the margins and listing the different types of information that I found. This was followed by reading through the list and categorising each item in a way that offered a description of what it was about (an "in vivo" term). I then determined whether or not the categories could be linked in any way and listed them as major categories (or themes) and / or minor categories (or themes) (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017). Fifth, I compared and contrasted the various major and minor categories and then repeated these stages for all the transcripts. After going through each of the transcripts, I collected all of the categories or themes and examined each one in detail and considered if it fitted in, and also its relevance. Sixth, I then categorised all the transcript data into minor and major categories/themes and reviewed in order to ensure that the information was categorised as it should be. All the categories were then reviewed to ascertain whether some categories could be merged or if some needed to be sub-categorised.

Finally, I returned to the original transcripts checking to ensure that all the information that needed to be categorised had been so. Following this I examined each transcript, scrutinizing data and selecting appropriate quotes that depicted themes, and ensured that all specializations, gender and race were represented. The quotes substantiated participants' stories of their experiences and understandings of TP and learning in a rural school. Given the close relationship that always developed with each student cohort, drawing on Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2012) who emphasize use of independent judges to minimise bias, and verify themes, I thus requested one of the researchers, my Post Doc mentor, to go through the data set to identify errors or omissions and confirm my themes. I was also informed by Mauthner and Doucet (2003) who foreground an "interplay between our multiple social locations and how these intersect with the particularities of our own personal biographies need to be considered at analysis stage" (p. 419). While students discussed deep-rooted and deep-seated self-critical experiences, the personal reflections and audio records were mediated and mandatory items. Consequently, they may not be sincere students' experiences and interpretations because these activities were incorporated into the RTEP model mandates. Further, that teacher educators and peers attended, probably mediated the content of reflections. However, the methodical, immersive and investigative strategy that I adopted to comprehend students' written stories, synthesizing the usually inherent TP context tensions, strengthened the analysis and enhanced rigour.

4.5 Findings

From the data, students' experiences and interpretations emerged around: their perceptions of rurality, linkages with rural school setting; the classroom; mentors; and with peers. In discussing findings, participants are identified by Codes (e.g. ST1).

4.5.1 Conceptions About Rural Schools

At the pre-TP workshop, students' views about rural school TP portrayed ambiguous predictions and understandings of teaching and working in a rural school. Three students confirmed lack of understanding of rurality displaying blurred views from the press and word of mouth. Others displayed fantasised dreams of rural school TP making comments like: "welcoming teachers", "helpful staff and students", "university peers empathetic, friendly and caring", "friendly residence", "I don't think I will be lonely". Most of the expectations were generally accurate, they were fulfilled as most teachers and learners were welcoming. Others expressed fears like, "demanding mentors", "overworked by mentors, few teachers there" "unsupportive, cruel mentors", "teaching practice in rural schools scary", "will have difficulties

away from home", "dirty environment, broken windows, paper and clatter". These fears were inaccurate, mentors were supportive and the environment was very tidy.

Some were concerned about resource availability far from town: "I am worried about resources, rural schools are under-resourced—you can't teach without resources", "it will be hard without resources, teaching is poor". City dwellers lamented lack of understanding by learners from diverse economic, social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. They anticipated "learner difficulties communicating in English, who do not understand English", "unfriendly learners", "poorly disciplined and hard to manage", "difficulties motivating and controlling learners", "where you teach multi-grades", "where anything goes, and nobody cares". The negative understandings and fears held by city dwellers before experiencing rurality were obliterated following interactions with and experiences in the rural context. What the students experienced was the opposite of what they had expected. School learners were disciplined and motivated, they understood and spoke English, there was no multi-grade teaching. Further, Mziwaxolo school had effective leadership and the atmosphere was calm and business-like.

4.5.2 Relating with the Rural School

Students were amazed and encouraged by the extent to which learners at Mziwaxolo School comprehended and communicated in English. ST2 exclaimed: "I didn't think they would understand and speak English". This comment portrays discourses of deficit which denote mistaken beliefs that rural learners are lacking or deficient in numerous ways in this context in speaking English. This kind of snobbish discourse of insufficiency views rural school teaching as second-grade and objectionable (Pennefather, 2011). The realization of learners' linguistic capabilities possibly influenced their understandings and attitudes towards rurality, rural learners and rural teaching. Some were impressed by the school context: "This school is clean, there are no broken windows, children respectful, clean uniforms, wearing shoes" (ST16) and "You can only know about teaching/learning in a rural school, by doing TP in a rural school" (ST1). The primarily urban and township dwellers got exposure to concrete introduction to rurality, and first-hand direct observation and interaction with rural-based teachers, learners and the environment about rural life, rural learning and rural teaching practices. There is appreciation of the rural experience.

There was satisfaction with the school organization and the reception students received. "I am happy with how the principal welcomed us, made us feel important. Mentors introduced us to all classes" (ST2). "Yes met with mentors, I am happy here" (ST8). "All of them warmly welcomed us" (ST11). Students in 3rd and 4th academic year of study reported that the warm school welcome gave them the confidence they missed in their previous residential TP.

However, two students reported unfruitful mentor–mentee meetings as exemplified by ST3: "I met with my mentors, but there was confusion. They had not prepared for me". Another three expressed frustrations from not meeting with the allocated

mentors that day. ST7 during collaborative reflections lamented: “I didn’t meet them. It’s annoying, when you don’t know your mentors. You feel lost and fearful. No-one knew where they were even management”.

It is essential to make students feel welcome particularly on their first day to position them in good stead more in unfamiliar rural contexts (Sharplin 2009). Comments portrayed inadequate preparation by the school. Subsequent to our initial visit to Mziwaxolo, we communicated dates in advance and sent a reminder, days before our arrival. Like on any school day, we expected all staff to attend. The unknown absences may confirm “where anything goes, and nobody cares” made during pre-TP workshop. On reflection, what would subsequently be done differently to improve, would be to arrive on the TP venue after the first day of term.

Students appreciated being viewed as colleagues. ST6 recorded: “I feel confident, you feel like one of them, a professional, member of staff, you get confidence to share your knowledge and also learn from them”. ST3 implies that students were valued. When students have some sense of being devalued and lowly regarded, negative emotional feelings may develop. Further, students’ situated identities (Putnam & Borko, 2000) were also heightened by taking up out-of-class responsibilities. ST9 commented: “Being assigned netball trainer for a big district match was huge…. You gain confidence, feel good that teachers trust you. In my previous TP no-one ever talked to you or thought you were capable of anything”. And ST6 said: “Having a chance to lead assembly was good, you feel like a real teacher, taking control of everything”.

Students’ involvement in school activities had considerable influence on students and the school. “Fitting in” and a sense of belonging is indispensable as both students and schools often use professional placements as spaces for assessing “fitness” for future employment. Murphy and Angelski (1997) add that the “ideal” rural teacher is able to teach many subjects and/or grade levels, facilitate learning of various skills including, coaching extra-mural activities.

Students also acknowledged the importance of thorough preparation for and commitment to teaching including learner discipline and learning motivation. As stated by ST13, “Discipline is good, they want to learn. There are some smart kids we have to prepare thoroughly for lessons. Very different from what I thought of rural schools. I would teach here”.

These experiences helped to clear myths and fallacies about rural education, rural learners and rural schools as the learners were smart and eager to learn. One delusion related to declining moral values, discipline and learning motivation in rural schools (Kiggundu & Nayimuli, 2009). At the pre-TP workshop many students expressed misconceptions about learner discipline and management, learners who did not speak/understand English, were unfriendly, uncontrollable and difficult to motivate, including school cultures with poor teaching/learning, and where anything was possible and nobody cared. These unfounded beliefs were probably due to lack of knowledge/experience in rurality. Interactions with learners and teachers, classroom and co-curricular participation made these students start challenging those misconceptions.

Another generally accepted fallacy that students challenged was around ineffective teaching in under-resourced rural schools. While they understood performance resources (like overhead projector) vital for enhancing/changing how teachers accomplish teaching activities, and pedagogical resources (focusing primarily on transforming the teacher's competencies e.g., reading materials) (Putnam & Borko, 2000) as important for effective curriculum delivery, students realized that under-resourcing was not an excuse for poor teaching. ST12 recorded: "If you are creative, you make good lessons. You improvise, you must stretch your brain and prepare for your lessons. TP here is good preparation for future work in rural schools". Two students who experienced learner indiscipline, understood those experiences as learning opportunities: "A few are naughty, which is expected in a normal classroom. A teacher must be able to control stubborn kids. Yeah!! this is giving me learning" (ST7). Ideal teacher practice calls for skills for in resolving classroom conflicts, evoking strategic knowledge while sustaining conducive classroom environment, focus, and harmony, and displaying readiness to exercise both personal and professional knowledge.

Three second year students however, complained that TP duration was too short for comprehensive understanding of rural setting complexities. ST8 wrote: "four weeks is not long enough to understand rural issues". Such sentiments may have been because this was their first TP.

4.5.3 Relating with the Classroom

Students (11) expressed amazement at the seriousness with which teachers and learners regarded their work, notwithstanding under-resourcing. Some of these students during the pre-TP workshop had envisaged, unmotivated, uncommitted learners and teachers. What they found at Mziwaxolo was contrary to their imaginations as the teachers had a professional and committed approach to their work. ST13 reported: "You get into their staff room, its dead silent they are preparing". The increasing contextual understanding and awareness of learner learning barriers probably prompted students to challenge those assumptions. Seemingly, students now understood that interactions with rural teachers and learners, and rural classroom practice were indispensable opportunities to experience and conceive rurality, rural teaching and rural life. For example, ST8 wrote: "This is the best teacher, experiencing rural teaching, rural learners, working in a rural classroom, with rural teachers. You see their efforts and seriousness. I would not refuse a job here".

Classroom practice was hailed as valuable exposure to the teaching profession and nuances of rural school practice. Other students described rural school TP as good preparation for future work: "The classes are big 9A-72, 9B-80. It's challenging, but that's what is in many schools. I must experience big classes for the future. What if I get such classes after training?" (ST12).

4.5.4 Relating with Mentors

Many students (10) benefitted from mentor support and collaboration. They applauded the mentors' professional knowledge and experience from how they carried out their work, explained and justified issues. ST16, reflected: "these experiences make you question and reflect on your thoughts and attitudes". Some had anticipated demanding, cruel mentors. These concerns were now questioned. Many students considered themselves lucky given the tremendous support they received. ST1 reported: "I am very fortunate; my mentor is supportive. We share, and consult each other. … feedback is constructive, developmental will help me throughout…", and ST15 stated, "Both mentors are good colleagues, we learn from each other. Mrs X asked me to teach one topic that she wasn't familiar … after each lesson they say reflect, before giving their feedback. I reflect on their lessons too. There is better mentoring in this rural school than I got at an urban school". Finally, ST3 shared, "We discuss lessons before, mine or hers, what to teach, methods, everything. Then after observation we sit again, they say think about your lesson, how it went, the good, bad and why, what to do next time, before they give comments".

Comments above signal current conceptualization of mentoring as a journey, underpinned by equality and collegiality in the relationship (Shank, 2005). Asking students to reflect on their practice aids self-evaluation and identification of strengths and weaknesses, which promotes learning from own errors and practice by answering what would have done differently. Thus, mentoring does not only guide students in classroom learning management, but helps them explore, interpret and explain the "how" and "why" of what happened leading into the next stage of the teaching cycle, (re)planning of next lesson (du Plessis, 2017). ST3 suggests clinical mentoring and supervision with pre-observation, observation and post lesson observation conference which increases instructional learning quality.

However, five students reported minimal learning from mentoring. Some mentors probably lacked knowledge of "good" mentoring, lacked effective mentoring skills, or were not aware of students' TP learning needs. ST14 commented: "She wants to be our mother, but no beneficial feedback. She always says you are a good teacher but not saying what makes me good".

The evidence suggests ignorance on mentoring roles, portraying a semblance of perceiving mentoring as fundamentality for offering emotional support. Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish between being a mother and a mentor who stimulates a mentee's growth into a teacher they envision. Other mentors did not model lessons for students. For example, ST16 shared, "We agree that I will observe, then before that lesson he gives excuses… and tells me what to teach, content, methods. I want to learn how he teaches those things he asks me to teach".

Students always expect mentors to model lessons as good teachers who they can emulate. Observations are professionally growthful for students, which give them immediate space to familiarize themselves with classroom practice while they prepare for own teaching particularly in unfamiliar rural classrooms. Students often regard mentors' expert knowledge and personal experience as critical components for

their practice. However, comments above imply “apprenticeship” mentoring model, where students “act as told”, and “as acted by the mentor”, contrary to current mentoring conceptualization as collegial partnerships. Mentors should not impose, or dictate content and/or strategies for students’ classroom activities (Gershenfeld, 2014).

Some mentors doubted students’ abilities, and were reluctant to hand over their classes. ST6 wrote: “She doesn’t allow me to teach full lessons alone. She teaches with me every time”. (ST13). It is typical for some mentors to be apprehensive about how their learners are taught. Instead of viewing students as knowledgeable partners, with something to offer, they regard them as trespassers without teaching knowledge.

4.5.5 Relating with Peers

TP experiences with built-in collaborative reflections opened students for structured, integrated interactions where they discussed challenges from the rural context. Linking with peers professionally occurred during the debriefing collaborative reflection conversations. These meetings were vital for collective reflections and reflexions on their teaching and, the rural context broadly. ST11 recorded: “They give me ideas about strategies. Even my own suggestions they question me and this gives me confidence knowing that peers approve”.

Through cooperative conversations, students shifted from individualistic to collaborative thinking and behaviour, “looking” up to peers to confirm their propositions and provisional solutions to rural classroom challenges. Further, collaborative engagements were particularly valuable for promoting students’ re-imaginations of the “self”, where they viewed themselves from the broad picture, regarding what that meant to them as individuals and professionals. ST10 wrote: “Encouragement and comments from peers developed me. I am now comfortable discussing teaching issues in the group, confident in the classroom. Have become very open. …Yeah! I wouldn’t mind working here”.

Rural school TP offered genuine spaces where students directly experienced realities of rural school teaching which prompted consideration of career prospects in rural contexts. Others saw cohort participation as suitable preparation for future classroom challenges in similar contexts. ST16 commented: “They critically question you, want you to think about what you should have done differently. They don’t just offer ideas or suggestions, but stretch you. This gives you learning, and confidence to tackle future challenges”.

For these students, collaboration fostered confidence development from the comments and teaching ideas. Conversations also seemingly enhanced their teacher dispositions, inclusive of self-consciousness and responsiveness to different viewpoints. Students became able to extract the best in themselves and their peers through sincere interactions (Mukeredzi & Mandrona, 2013). Genuine dialogue calls for compassionate listening while searching for common ground, empathetically probing ideas, being open to new learning, isolating challenges and working as critical

friends notwithstanding gender, race, cultural background or social class. Impartiality becomes a key feature (Prince, Snowden, & Mathews, 2010) as discussions occur regardless of the human elements.

4.6 Discussion

Students' experiences and interpretations were around views and how they related with the rural context, the rural classroom, the mentors, and their peers. On commencing TP, most students displayed blurred and pessimistic beliefs, comprehensions and expectations of teaching, working and living in rural settings. These anxieties were however dispelled after experiencing rurality. Eight students had anticipated learner language problems but these anxieties were dissipated as learners spoke and understood English. Sherwood (2000) laments the many stereotypes that exist about rurality and rural education, with descriptions related to unsophisticated, low-level intellectual capability and conservative nature of rural learners. Such stereotypes view rurality and rural learners as synonymous with educational and social deficiencies, and needs (Moletsane, 2012; Pennefather, 2011).

The well-maintained school environment, teaching/learning culture and the welcome students received amazed them. This contradicted their previous misconceptions around lost moral values, indiscipline and demotivation to teaching/learning in rural schools. The mythologies and misconceptions were disrupted after interacting with learners, teachers, the environment and participating in both in- and out-of-class activities. Adie and Barton (2012) advise that ITE and the novice years are critical for unsettling engrained myths and misconceptions of rurality.

All participants confirmed valuable experiences from, and enjoyed classroom practice. Such hands-on learning is what Mukeredzi and Mandrona (2013) defined as teaching/learning for understanding, which is an effective way of learning how to teach specific learners, in specific contexts. The all-encompassing context at MziwaXolo school with an enabling RTEP team on-spot support seemingly fostered students' confidence in classroom practice and rurality. Many students commended learners and teachers for their enthusiasm and commitment to work notwithstanding severe under-resourcing, erasing fallacies about demotivation in rural teachers and learners (Kiggundu & Nayimuli, 2009). Participants developed better understanding of under-resourcing challenges in rural schools but argued that this should not be an alibi for poor teaching.

Mentoring makes an effective vehicle for professional learning through reflection as students learn about the "self" in context. Many students commended their mentors for modelling lessons, guiding and giving them developmental critique and feedback on their teaching, and for promoting reflection, contrary to their previous misconceptions about demanding, unsupportive mentors who overworked students. Students who experienced ineffective mentoring had expected to benefit from mentoring through guidance, constructive feedback and specifically what needed doing to promote professional learning. While these students appreciated emotional support,

that alone often brings frustration because students need developmental critique to build their own teacher identities (Hyland & Lo, 2006). Mentors are expected to appreciate students as individuals who require own teacher identity and teaching style. Two students apparently could not "find themselves" as teachers because mentors flooded them with their teaching styles and ideas. Such mentoring strategies often confuse students making them wonder whether to enact mentor suggestions or proceed with own ideas.

Some mentors are ineffective due to ignorance, lack of understanding/clarity on mentoring roles and responsibilities, and absence of active school-university liaison/coherence/partnerships (Nyaumwe & Mtetwa, 2011). Such issues often affect mentors' approaches to developing students' professional learning as generally, mentors do not experience effective training or receive clear guidance on the content of mentoring (Gershenfeld, 2014). Other mentors may just be experienced classroom practitioners who lack capacity for collegial training. Mentoring is not an instinctive process, but needs making teaching elements visible, and breaking the strategies into step-by-step components for the student (Mukeredzi & Mandrona, 2013). Again, rural school teachers often lack active participation or access to staff development courses and activities unlike their urban counterparts (Islam, 2012). Other mentors may not have experienced good mentoring themselves, given that what teachers do or do not do is often in response to their prior experiences. These mentors attended a once-off university mentor training workshop. Seemingly, the workshop was inadequate for effective learning of mentoring knowledge and skills.

Practicum is acknowledged as generally stressful, particularly in rural schools where many complexities come into play. Structured collaborative conversations were intended to offer students an additional supportive layer to their discussions and individual reflections on their rural TP experiences. Prince et al. (2010) contend that other vital characteristics of teacher professional learning include collaboration and entrenchment in classroom practice. Students also saw these collective engagements as fundamental for learning, confidence development and celebrating their achievements (Prince et al., 2010). Given the often numerous TP challenges, it becomes vital to acknowledge when processes work out smoothly. Confidence is generally related to an individual's level of self-esteem, and to optimism, which promotes one's self-awareness and self-belief in their positive achievements. It therefore makes a fundamental teacher attribute which affects their classroom communication and instructions.

4.7 Conclusion and Implications

This chapter explored students' TP experiences and interpretations of those experiences within the context of a rural school-university partnership model addressing rural school teacher development. It may appear unconvincing that a deep understanding of rurality developed during a four-week practicum, but data suggests that

students developed a sense of rurality which dissipated some of their fallacies, seemingly increasing their employment possibilities in rural settings. This may ultimately stimulate their interest for teaching in rural schools. When rural school TP is organized for students to encounter and create their own understandings, this creates prospects for re-examining and disrupting existing illusions about rurality. Adie and Barton (2012) suggest that such encounters stimulate "ruralisation" of the mind which can clear individualistic young teacher beliefs that rural village schools turn individuals into "village men" (Monk, 2007). Students need immersion in rural settings, with hands-on experiences, and reflection to stimulate their dreams about job opportunities in these contexts.

Islam (2012) argues for teacher preparation oriented to students' understanding of rurality and how quality education could be delivered to rural areas. While teacher preparation for rurality during ITE could be a development avenue which invests in youth who choose a teaching pathway, this may be a starting point for supporting rural teachers, learners, and communities (Islam, 2012). Given the diversity in the South African education sector, teacher education should focus on quality education for varied contexts, with particular attention being paid to rural contexts. While the responsibility may be upon university education faculties to prepare enthusiastic and able teachers for rurality, this is a complex issue which demands more than short-term approaches and quick-fixes, but collaborative and holistic efforts of the tripartite: teacher education institutions, education departments, and interested parties to seriously rethink and invest in teacher preparation for rural education development.

This model of student teacher professional development on TP which uniquely involved a relatively large team of students from diverse backgrounds, ages and experiences to live in community specifically to learn from the context and from each other promoted collaborative reflective engagements. Students teachers experienced learning with and from one another as a community for professional learning through collaborative reflection. The on-going support and discussion with peers and supervisors, promotes collaborative capability as students sit beside, share and feed off each other thus, professionally learning with and from one another (Mukeredzi, 2015). In addition, the in-built opportunities for systematic reflection following reflective questions in this unique model would foster students' reflection on their experiences, interpretations and perceptions of the rural context practicum.

Regrettably, this is a small research project based on a structured model with hypothetical underpinnings for planning rural teacher preparation. However, given the resources involved, a TP model of this nature may be pragmatically unsustainable for replication to scale. Consideration of TP models that attach student cohorts to rural schools, with structures for collaboration and reflection could offer possible starting point.

Acknowledgements I am grateful to the RTEP leaders for giving me this invaluable opportunity. I am particularly thankful to Professor Relebohile Moletsane, the JL Dube Chair for Rural Education and my Post Doc mentor, for her unfailing support and encouragement throughout my research activities.

References

Adie, L., & Barton, G. (2012). Urban pre-service teachers' conceptions of teaching in rural communities. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 37*(6), 111–123. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2012v37n6.7.

Arnold, M. L., Newman, J. H., Gaddy, B. B., & Dean, C. B. (2005). A look at the condition of rural education research: Setting a difference for future research. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 20*(6). Retrieved from http://jrre.psu.edu/articles/20-6.pdf.

Balfour, R. (2012). Rurality research and rural education: Exploratory and explanatory power. *Perspectives in Education, 30*(10), 9–18.

Brady, L. (2002). School university partnerships: What do the schools want? *Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 27*(1). http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2002v27n1.1.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2012). Research methods in education. *Professional Development in Education, 38*(3), 507–509.

Cole, P. (2012). *Linking effective professional learning with effective teaching practice, PTR Consulting from.* http://www.aitsl.edu.au/verve/_resources/Linking_effective_professional_learning_with_effective_teaching_practice_-_Cole.pdf.

Corbett, M., & White, S. (2014). Why put the rural in research? In S. White & M. Corbett (Eds.), Doing educational research in rural settings: Methodological issues, international perspectives and practical solutions (pp. 1–5). New York, NY: Routledge.

du Plessis, P. (2017). Challenges for rural school leaders in a developing context: A case study on leadership practices of effective rural principals. *Bulletin for Christian Scholarship, 82*(3). Available at: https://doi.org/10.19108/koers.82.3.2337.

Erlingsson, C., & Brysiewicz, P. (2017). Hands-on guide to doing content analysis. *African Journal of Emergency Medicine, 7,* 93–99.

Gardiner, M. (2008). *Issues in Education Policy: A report on education in rural areas*. Centre for Education Policy Development: Pretoria.

Gershenfeld, S. (2014). A review of undergraduate mentoring programs. *Review of Educational Research September, 84*(3), 365–391. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654313520512.

Green, B. (2008). *NSW rural teacher education project*. Wagga Wagga: Australia, Centre for Information Studies, Charles Sturt University.

Greenough, R., & Nelson, S. R. (2015). Recognizing the variety of rural schools. *Peabody Journal of Education, 90*(2), 322–332. https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956X.2015.1022393.

Gustafsson, M. (2016). *Teacher supply and the quality of schooling in South Africa: Patterns over space and time* (Working Paper No. 3). Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University, Department of Economics.

Hamm, Z. (2014). Rural community research process as outcome: Approaching the community. In M. Corbett & S. White (Eds.), *Doing educational research in rural settings: Methodological issues, international perspectives and practical solutions* (pp. 88–103). New York, NY: Routledge.

Haugalokken, O. K., & Ramberg, P. (2007). Autonomy or control: Discussion of a central dilemma in developing a realistic teacher education. *Norway Journal of Education in Teaching, 33*(1), 55–69.

Hlalele, D. (2014). Rural education in South Africa: Concepts and practices. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences, 5*(4), 462–469.

Hugo, W., Jack, M., Wedekind, V., & Wilson, D. (2010). *The state of education in Kwazulu-Natal: A report to the Provincial Treasury*. Pietermaritzburg: KZN Provincial Treasury.

Hughes, J. (2013). Cameos, supporting roles and stars: Citation and reflection in the context of initial teacher education. *Educational Research, 55*(1), 16–30.

Hyland, F., & Lo, M. M. (2006). Examining interaction in the teaching practicum: Issues of language, power and control. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning, 14*(2), 163–186.

Islam, F. (2011). School-University partnerships in preparing new teachers: Possibilities and limitations. In F. Islam, C. Mitchell, N. de Lange, R. Balfour, & M. Combrinck (Eds.), *School–university*

partnerships for educational change in rural South Africa (pp. 41–58). New York, NY: Edwin & Mellen.

Islam, F. (2012). Understanding pre-service teacher education discourses in Communities of Practice: A reflection from an intervention in rural South Africa. *Perspectives in Education, 30*(1), 19–29.

Johnson, J., & Strange, M. (2009). *Why rural matters 2009: State and regional challenges and opportunities*. Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED516650.pdf.

Kiggundu, E., & Nayimuli, S. (2009). Teaching practice: A make or break phase for student teachers. *South African Journal of Education, 29,* 345–358.

Kline, J., White, S., & Lock, G. (2013). The rural practicum: Preparing a quality teacher workforce for rural and regional Australia. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 28*(3), 1–13. Retrieved from http://jrre.psu.edu/articles/28-3.pdf.

Lietz, C. A., & Zayas, L. E. (2010). Evaluating qualitative research for social work practitioners. *Advances in Social Work, 11*(2), 188–202.

Lingam, G. I. (2012). Preparing teachers for rural schools: An empirical evidence from a Fiji case. *Greener Journal of Educational Research, 2*(2), 001–012. www.gjournals.org.

Mahlangu, V. P., & Pitsoe, V. J. (2013). The changing landscape in the conditions of service for teachers in South Africa. *Journal of Social Science, 36*(1), 69–75.

Mauthner, N. S., & Doucet, A. (2003). Reflexive accounts and accounts of reflexivity in qualitative data analysis. *Sociology, 37*, 413–431. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/00380385030373002.

Masinire, A. (2015). Recruiting and retaining teachers in rural schools in South Africa: Insights from a rural teaching experience programme. *Australian & International Journal of Rural Education, 25*(1), 2–14.

Miller, L. C. (2012). *Understanding rural teacher recruitment and the role of community amenities* (CEPWC Working Paper No. 1). Retrieved from http://curry.virginia.edu/resource-library/MillerRuralTeacherRetention.

Mitchell, C., de Lange, N., Balfour, R., & Islam, F. (2011). Transforming teacher education? A rural teacher education project experience. In F. Islam, C. Mitchell, N. de Lange, R. Balfour, & M. Combrinck (Eds.), *School–university partnerships for educational change in rural South Africa* (pp. 59–82). New York, NY: Edwin & Mellen.

Moletsane, R. (2012). Repositioning educational research on rurality and rural education in South Africa: Beyond deficit paradigms. *Perspectives in Education, 30*(1), 1–8.

Monk, D. H. (2007). Recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers in rural areas. *The Future of Children, 17*(1), 155–174. https://doi.org/10.1353/foc.2007.0009. Retrieved from http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/foc/summary/v017/17.1monk.html.

Mukeredzi, T. G. (2013). Professional development through teacher roles: Conceptions of professionally unqualified teachers in rural South Africa and Zimbabwe. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 28*(11), 1–16. Retrieved from http://jrre.psu.edu/articles/28-11.pdf.

Mukeredzi, T. G. (2015). Creating space for Pre-service teacher professional learning during practicum: A teacher educator's self-study. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 40*(2), 126–145.

Mukeredzi, T. G. (2016). The "Journey to Becoming": Pre-service teachers' experiences and understandings of rural school practicum in a South African context. *Global Education Review, 3*(1), 88–107.

Mukeredzi, T. G., & Mandrona, A. R. (2013). The journey to becoming professionals: Student teachers' experiences of teaching practice in a rural South African context. *International Journal of Educational Research, 62,* 141–151.

Murphy, P. J., & Angelski, K. (1997). Rural teacher mobility: A report from British Columbia. *Rural Educator, 18*(2), 5–11.

Myende, P., & Chikoko, V. (2014). School-university partnership in a South African rural context: Possibilities for an asset-based approach. *Journal of Human Ecology, 46*(3), 249–259.

Nyaumwe, L. J., & Mtetwa, D. K. (2011). Developing a cognitive theory from student teachers' post-lesson reflective dialogues on secondary school mathematics. *South African Journal of Education, 31,* 145–159.

Pasensie, K. 2015. *Bringing rural education into the fold* (Catholic Institution of Education Briefing paper No. 401). Cape Town: SACBC Parliamentary Liaison Office. Available online: http://www.cplo.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/BP-401-Bringing-Rural-Education-intothe-Fold-Dec-2015.pdf.

Pennefather, J. (2011). Landscape shapes mindscape: Partnerships as agency in a community of learning. In F. Islam, C. Mitchell, N. de Lange, R. Balfour, & M. Combrinck (Eds.), *School–university partnerships for educational change in rural South Africa* (pp. 211–230). New York, England: Edwin & Mellen.

Plunkett, M., & Dyson, M. (2011). Becoming a teacher and staying one: Examining the complex ecologies associated with educating and retaining new teachers in rural Australia. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 36,* 32–47.

Putnam, R., & Borko, H. (2000). What do new views of knowledge and thinking have to say about research on teacher learning? *Educational Researcher, 29*(1), 4–15.

Prince, T., Snowden, E., & Mathews, B. (2010). Utilising peer coaching as a tool to improve student teacher confidence and support the development of classroom practice. *Literacy Information in Computer Education Journal, 1,* 45–51.

Roberts, P., & Green, B. (2013). Researching rural places: On Social Justice and Rural Education. *Qualitative Inquiry, 19*, 765–774.

Rural Education Policy. (2018). *South Africa Rural Education Policy*. Pretoria: Department of Basic Education.

Rural Teacher Education Project. (2012). *Recruitment Brochure*. Durban: University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Savides, M. (2017). *SA teachers not qualified or teaching the wrong subjects*. https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/national/education/2017-06-06-sa-teachers-not-qualified-or-teaching-the-wrong-subjects/.

Shank, M. (2005). Mentoring among high school teachers: A dynamic and reciprocal group process. *Mentoring and Tutoring, 13*(1), 73–82.

Sharplin, E. D. (2009). *Getting them out there: A rural education field trip*. International Symposium for Innovation in Rural Education, Improving Equity in Rural Education, Armidale, NSW.

Sherwood, T. (2000). Where has all the "rural" gone? Rural education research and current federal reform. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 16,* 159–167.

Statistic South Africa. (2017). *General Householld Survey*. Pretoria, South Africa.

Sullivan, K., McConney, A., Perry, L. B. (2018). A comparison of rural educational disadvantage in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. *SAGE Open, 8*(4), 1–12. DOI:http://doi.org/10.1177/2158244018805791.

Wedekind, V. (2005). *Report for UNESCO on conditions affecting rural teachers in South Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal.

White, S., & Kline, J. (2012). *Renewing rural and regional teacher education curriculum: Final Report*. Australian Teaching and Learning Council. Retrieved from www.rrrtec.net.au.

World Bank. (2013). Urban population (% of total). Retrieved from http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.TOTL.IN.ZS.

Tabitha Grace Mukeredzi originally from Zimbabwe, but now a resident of South Africa, is an Associate Professor at the Durban University of Technology Faculty of Arts and Design, in the Adult Education Unit of the School of Education, based at the Education Campus in Pietermaritzburg 80 km west of Durban. Her research and publication interests are around teacher education, teacher learning, teacher professional development, teacher knowledge, rural education, mentoring and adult and community education including prison education.