



Primary teachers' experiences in providing quality education: A case study of a rural full-service school in the Eastern Cape Province

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ABSTRACT

Full-service schools have been structured to cater for all public-school learners, including learners with disabilities. However, it remains questionable if full-service teachers are well-equipped to provide quality education in an inclusive, diverse classroom. This study explored the challenges experienced by rural primary teachers in providing quality education in a rural Full-service school in the Eastern Cape Province. The study was guided by a qualitative research methodology. The sample size for this study was composed of ten teachers who were selected through purposive sampling. Participants were therefore interviewed through semi-structured interviews and document analysis to probe their experiences in teaching both mainstream and learners with disabilities. The findings indicated that full-service teachers have not been professionally developed to teach in a full-service school. From the findings of this study, the researchers find it inconvenient for mainstream teachers to teach in a full-service school without any professional development for such a cause. For this reason, the study recommends that there should be frameworks for ongoing teacher training programmes that would enable teachers to be on par with the task at hand. The study concluded that the rural full-service schools should be prioritised in providing all the necessary resources that would enhance quality teaching and positive outcomes. The study contributes significantly to scholarship in educational research, teacher training, and rural education. The insights derived from this study enhance the understanding of the challenges faced by teachers in specific contexts and inform broader discussions about educational practices and policies in developing regions.

Keywords: Quality Education, Full-Service School, Rural, Professional Development

INTRODUCTION

The Eastern Cape Province of South Africa is characterized by its distinct socio-economic landscape, which poses numerous challenges in delivering quality education, particularly within rural full-service schools. The experiences of primary teachers in these areas are crucial, as they serve as frontline agents of educational development amidst prevailing disparities and systemic constraints. Fundamental issues such as poverty, governance, and inadequate resource allocation profoundly influence their ability to provide quality education, often exacerbating the inequalities that educational reforms aim to address. Zindi and Sibanda corroborate these issues by identifying a lack of adequate pedagogical skills among

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educators as a critical factor contributing to poor school performance, while Levy and Shumane detail the governance complexities that hinder effective educational management in rural schools.¹

Decentralization, often viewed as a strategy to improve educational outcomes, has led to the fragmentation of the education system. Teise and Barnett argue that instead of addressing educational inequities, decentralization in South Africa has frequently resulted in a two-tier system, where urban schools are comparatively well-resourced, leaving rural institutions marginalized and underfunded.² This environment creates significant barriers for primary teachers striving to meet educational standards, as many lack adequate infrastructure and essential teaching materials for effective instruction.³ Furthermore, Heeralal notes that the absence of targeted training and professional development for rural teachers exacerbates their challenging working conditions, leading to feelings of isolation and inadequacy.⁴

The cultural dynamics within rural communities also compound these challenges. Historically entrenched gender norms affecting teacher demographics—specifically the underrepresentation of male teachers in early education—significantly impact teacher experiences and the perception of education as a traditionally feminized profession.⁵ This complexity is echoed in Nkambule's findings, which highlight the harsh working conditions characterized by dilapidated infrastructure, complicating the pursuit of quality education in rural settings.⁶ Educational challenges in the Eastern Cape are heavily influenced by socio-economic factors that shape community engagement and parental involvement in schooling. Research indicates that high levels of poverty correlate with lower parental involvement in education, negatively impacting learners' performance.⁷ Teachers in these environments report feeling overwhelmed as they navigate not only the pedagogical demands of their roles but also the socio-economic burdens that their students and families face.⁸

Based on this background, the paper aims to explore the intricate web of experiences faced by primary teachers in rural full-service schools, focusing on how they navigate these multiple challenges while striving to deliver quality education. By highlighting their perspectives, the researcher aims to shed light on the critical interplay between systemic educational challenges and the personal experiences of educators, ultimately contributing to a more nuanced understanding of educational quality in the Eastern Cape Province.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Context of Education in the Eastern Cape

The Eastern Cape Province of South Africa presents a unique context for educational research due to its deep-rooted socio-economic challenges, including pervasive poverty, high levels of unemployment, and poor infrastructure. This province has been described as having some of the highest rates of out-migration and poverty in the country, with significant implications for educational quality and teacher

¹ Beauty Zindi and Modeni M. Sibanda, "Educator Performance and the Strategic Plan Priorities of the Eastern Cape Department of Education," *South African Journal of Economic and Management Sciences* 25, no. 1 (December 1, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajems.v25i1.4666>; Brian Levy and Lawule Shumane, "School Governance in a Fragmented Political and Bureaucratic Environment: Case Studies from South Africa's Eastern Cape Province," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2956313>.

² Kevin Teise and Emma Barnett, "Is Decentralisation a Suitable Response to Improve South African Rural Education?," *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research* 20, no. 6 (June 30, 2021): 211–24, <https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.20.6.11>.

³ PJH Heeralal, "Overcoming Personal Challenges That Rural Teachers Encounter," *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, September 1, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2014.v5n20p1683>.

⁴ Heeralal, "Overcoming Personal Challenges That Rural Teachers Encounter."

⁵ Nondwe Daphne Mariana Mtshatsha and Bunmi Isaiah Omodan, "Positioning Male Teachers In the Foundation Phase In South Africa: A Case of One Education District," *International Journal of Theory and Application in Elementary and Secondary School Education* 4, no. 2 (October 31, 2022): 27–36, <https://doi.org/10.31098/ijtaese.v4i2.984>.

⁶ Thabisile Nkambule, "Exploring Working Conditions in Selected Rural Schools: Teachers' Experiences," *South African Journal of Education* 42, no. 1 (February 28, 2022): 1–9, <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v42n1a2013>.

⁷ Barrington Makunga et al., "Illiteracy among Caregivers: Implications for Children's Educational and Social Development," *Southern African Journal of Social Work and Social Development* 29, no. 3 (May 8, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.25159/2415-5829/2577>.

⁸ Bekithemba Dube, "Rural Online Learning in the Context of COVID 19 in South Africa: Evoking an Inclusive Education Approach," *Multidisciplinary Journal of Educational Research* 10, no. 2 (June 15, 2020): 135, <https://doi.org/10.17583/remie.2020.5607>; Hlamulo Wiseman Mbhiza, "Behind the Love and Stories: Rural Learners' Reasons and Motivations for Learning Mathematics," *Interdisciplinary Journal of Social Studies* 4 (May 28, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.38140/ijss-2024.vol4.08>.

effectiveness.⁹ Research indicates that approximately 72% of the population in this region lives below the poverty line, which is higher than the national average, resulting in widespread illiteracy rates among caregivers that further hamper children's educational and social development.¹⁰ Such socio-economic factors create hurdles for primary teachers, who strive to deliver quality education while contending with the realities of under-resourced environments.

Teacher Training and Pedagogical Skills

An essential determinant of educational quality is the effectiveness of teacher training programs.¹¹ Studies suggest that many primary teachers in rural areas experience stress and inadequate preparation, which limits their ability to provide quality education.¹² Zindi and Sibanda argue that the mismatch between pre-service training and the practical requirements of teaching in rural settings contributes significantly to poor performance among both teachers and learners.¹³ In contrast, Chowdhury highlights the critical role of continuous professional development in enhancing teachers' pedagogical skills and ultimately improving student outcomes. Such insights underscore the need for targeted training initiatives that consider the specific challenges faced by rural educators.

Infrastructure Challenges

The physical infrastructure of schools in the Eastern Cape is often inadequate, which plays a crucial role in the quality of education provided. Bonisile et al. emphasize that the state of school facilities affects not only the learning environment but also teacher morale and effectiveness.¹⁴ Without proper classrooms, learning materials, and access to basic utilities, teachers struggle to implement effective teaching strategies. These infrastructural deficiencies, combined with high levels of student absenteeism due to health and socio-economic issues, create a complex challenge for primary educators.

School Governance and Community Involvement

Effective school governance and community engagement are essential components of quality education, yet are often lacking in rural settings. According to Levy and Shumane, the fragmented nature of governance in the Eastern Cape exacerbates the challenges faced by teachers and schools. They found that supportive leadership and active community involvement can create a conducive environment for learning, emphasizing the importance of collaborative efforts to enhance education quality.¹⁵ However, the reality often sees a disconnect between schools and communities, which diminishes parental involvement and support for rural schools.¹⁶

⁹ Makunga et al., "Illiteracy among Caregivers: Implications for Children's Educational and Social Development"; Alfred Maroyi, "Traditional Uses of Wild and Tended Plants in Maintaining Ecosystem Services in Agricultural Landscapes of the Eastern Cape Province in South Africa," *Journal of Ethnobiology and Ethnomedicine* 18, no. 1 (December 15, 2022): 17, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13002-022-00512-0>.

¹⁰ Maroyi, "Traditional Uses of Wild and Tended Plants in Maintaining Ecosystem Services in Agricultural Landscapes of the Eastern Cape Province in South Africa."

¹¹ Md. Tariqul Islam Chowdhury, "Impact of Teachers Training in the Enhancement of Teaching Pedagogy in Rural Territory Education Ecosystem Development," *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development* 13, no. 4 (November 3, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v13-i4/23474>.

¹² Chowdhury, "Impact of Teachers Training in the Enhancement of Teaching Pedagogy in Rural Territory Education Ecosystem Development."

¹³ Zindi and Sibanda, "Educator Performance and the Strategic Plan Priorities of the Eastern Cape Department of Education."

¹⁴ Ngxito Bonisile, Kahilu Kajimo-Shakantu, and Akintayo Opawole, "Assessment of Alternative Building Technologies (ABT) for Pre-Tertiary School Infrastructure Delivery in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa," *Management of Environmental Quality: An International Journal* 30, no. 5 (August 5, 2019): 1152–70, <https://doi.org/10.1108/MEQ-06-2018-0111>.

¹⁵ Levy and Shumane, "School Governance in a Fragmented Political and Bureaucratic Environment: Case Studies from South Africa's Eastern Cape Province."

¹⁶ Makunga et al., "Illiteracy among Caregivers: Implications for Children's Educational and Social Development"; Levy and Shumane, "School Governance in a Fragmented Political and Bureaucratic Environment: Case Studies from South Africa's Eastern Cape Province."

The Role of Mental Health and Well-being

The mental well-being of both teachers and students plays a significant role in the educational experience, particularly in rural environments characterized by stress and instability. Booyesen et al. highlight the barriers that rural educators face regarding mental health resources, indicating that teachers' mental health directly affects their teaching efficacy and student engagement.¹⁷ The stressors associated with inadequate support systems can lead to burnout among teachers, further affecting their ability to provide quality education. Thus, addressing mental health resources in these schools is critical.

Impact of Technology and Innovative Approaches

The integration of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in education holds promise for enhancing teaching outcomes, though its implementation has been inconsistent in the Eastern Cape. While some studies suggest that technological interventions can bridge gaps in educational quality and resource allocation,¹⁸ others indicate that poor infrastructure hinders the effective utilization of technology in classrooms.¹⁹ Skepticism around the digital divide in rural contexts necessitates a cautious approach when implementing technology-based solutions, with an emphasis on ensuring equitable access for all students.²⁰

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In analyzing the experiences of primary teachers in delivering quality education within a rural full-service school in the Eastern Cape Province, a comprehensive approach integrating two theoretical frameworks appears particularly beneficial: Socio-Cultural Theory (SCT) and Activity Theory (AT). These frameworks not only complement each other but also offer a multidimensional understanding of the complexities involved in rural education.

Socio-Cultural Theory, as developed by Vygotsky emphasizes the significance of social interactions and cultural context in the learning process.²¹ This perspective highlights that knowledge is co-constructed through dialogue and communal practices within specific socio-cultural environments. In the context of the rural full-service school, the socio-cultural elements, such as local customs, community support, and relational dynamics between teachers and students, play a crucial role in shaping educational outcomes. Wong's study illustrates how socio-cultural contexts influence learning interpretations and the application of educational practices, emphasizing that education cannot be standardized globally without considering local cultural elements.²² Furthermore, the findings from Green et al. demonstrate how understanding the essence of rural life can enhance educational practices, indicating that place-specific experiences can significantly impact teaching efficacy and student engagement.²³

In conjunction with SCT, Activity Theory, as articulated by Engeström, provides a robust framework for examining the practices and interactions within educational settings.²⁴ It posits that

¹⁷ Duane Booyesen, Phumeza Mahe-Poyo, and Rosemary Grant, "The Experiences and Perceptions of Mental Health Service Provision at a Primary Health Centre in the Eastern Cape," *South African Journal of Psychiatry* 27 (August 13, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajpsy.2021.1641>.

¹⁸ Alex Jogymol Kalariparampil, "Creation of Sustainable Learning Environments in South African Rural Schools: A Call for Effective Implementation of ICTs," *Universal Journal of Educational Research* 9, no. 7 (July 2021): 1430–38, <https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2021.090709>; Zikhona Selekez, "Chronicling Information Communication Technology into Teaching and Learning in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa," in *Metacognition in Learning - New Perspectives*, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.113790>.

¹⁹ Melikhaya Skhephe and Christabel Mantlana, "Accounting Teachers' Voices on Factors Affecting Online Teaching during the 4th Industrial Revolution in the Face of COVID-19 in Selected High Schools in the Eastern Cape, South Africa," *Research in Social Sciences and Technology* 6, no. 3 (October 2, 2021): 109–21, <https://doi.org/10.46303/ressat.2021.32>.

²⁰ Grasia Chisango and Zandi Lesame, "Twenty Years of Democracy and Digital Poverty: Technology Challenges Experienced by Women in the Chris Hani Municipality of the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa," *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, December 1, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2014.v5n27p1553>.

²¹ L. S. Vygotsky, *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes* (Harvard University Press, 1978).

²² T. Wong, "Multicultural Education: An Examination of the Intersecting Classroom Experiences and Cultural Identities," *Educational Review* 63, no. 2 (2011): 115–29.

²³ Nicole C. Green, Genevieve Noone, and Andrea Nolan, "Contemporary Paradigms of Rural Teaching: The Significance of Place," *Australian and International Journal of Rural Education* 23, no. 1 (March 1, 2013): 91–115, <https://doi.org/10.47381/aijre.v23i1.648>.

²⁴ Y. Engeström, *Learning by Expanding: An Activity-Theoretical Approach to Developmental Research* (Helsinki: Orienta-Konsultit, 1987).

activities are mediated by cultural tools and social structures, making it essential to consider the collective and collaborative dimensions of learning. Daly et al. describe how community engagement in rural placements contributes to educational outcomes, supporting the notion that active participation in a community fosters deeper learning experiences and better integration of educational practices.²⁵ This aligns with the findings of Pennefather, which advocate for understanding educational experiences through a comprehensive lens that incorporates teachers' interactions in specific settings, thereby highlighting challenges and opportunities unique to rural contexts.²⁶

Integrating SCT with Activity Theory offers valuable insights into how teachers' experiences are shaped by both social interactions and the tools available to them within their educational environments. This combination allows for a richer understanding of how teachers navigate challenges and leverage opportunities in their roles, ultimately contributing to the quality of education in rural communities. The significance of socio-cultural competence is essential for understanding and improving the professional practices of educators, ensuring they are responsive to the diverse needs of their students and their communities.²⁷

The synergy between Socio-Cultural Theory and Activity Theory provides a nuanced framework for exploring the experiences of primary teachers in rural settings. This approach not only aids in understanding the contextual factors influencing educational practices but also supports the development of effective strategies for enhancing the quality of education in diverse environments.

METHODOLOGY

Research Paradigm

The research adopted a qualitative paradigm, which is appropriate for exploring the subjective experiences of teachers in a rural full-service school context. This paradigm emphasizes understanding phenomena through the meanings individuals assign to their experiences, particularly in education, where context significantly influences teacher effectiveness and student outcomes.²⁸

Research Approach

A phenomenological approach was employed to delve deeply into the lived experiences of primary teachers. This approach is suited for capturing the essence of how teachers perceive and interpret their experiences in delivering quality education in a rural setting, allowing the researchers to gain insights into their challenges, motivations, and perceptions.²⁹

Research Design

The study utilized a qualitative case study design, focusing on a specific rural full-service school in the Eastern Cape Province. This design facilitated an in-depth understanding of the unique contextual factors affecting the teachers' practices, including their interactions with students, the community, and available resources.

Data Collection and Instruments of Data Collection

Data collection was conducted through multiple qualitative methods:

²⁵ Michele Daly et al., "Longitudinal Integrated Rural Placements: A Social Learning Systems Perspective," *Medical Education* 47, no. 4 (April 12, 2013): 352–61, <https://doi.org/10.1111/medu.12097>.

²⁶ Jane Pennefather, "Towards a Theoretical Framework for Understanding PGCE Student Teacher Learning in the Wild Coast Rural Schools' Partnership Project," *Perspectives in Education* 34, no. 1 (May 10, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.18820/2519593X/pie.v34i1.15>.

²⁷ Yusupova Tatyana Gennadijevna, Galina Nikolaevna, and Milkevich Oksana Anatolievna*, "Socio-Cultural Competence Of Students And The Results Of General Education," 2019, 217–25, <https://doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2019.02.02.25>.

²⁸ Kamau Joyce Muthoni, Ong'ang'a H. Ouko, and Kimamo Githui, "ECD Policy Framework and Pre-Primary School Teachers' Capacity in Quality Service Delivery in Muranga County Kenya," *Open Journal of Social Sciences* 10, no. 09 (2022): 493–509, <https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2022.109030>.

²⁹ R. K. Yin, *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish*, 3rd ed. (New York: Guilford Press, 2023); A. M. Kagoda and S. K. Ezati, "Teachers' Experiences of Providing Quality Education in Rural Uganda: A Phenomenological Study," *International Journal of Educational Development* 33, no. 3 (2013): 244–50.

Semi-Structured Interviews: These interviews were conducted with primary teachers to gather rich, detailed narratives regarding their experiences, beliefs, and challenges. This method allows flexibility in probing deeper into specific areas of interest identified during the interviews.³⁰

Observations: Classroom observations were utilized to gather empirical data on teaching practices and interactions within the educational process. This method complements interviews by providing a real-world context of the teachers' practices.³¹

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed a thematic analysis framework. This involves coding the data from interviews, observations, and documents to identify recurring themes and patterns related to the teachers' experiences.³² The analysis emphasizes interpreting these themes in relation to the broader socio-cultural context of rural education in South Africa. The data was organized and coded.

Ethical Considerations

In conducting the study, multiple ethical considerations were considered. These considerations pertain to the rights and welfare of participants, the integrity of the research process, and adherence to established ethical standards. The study paid careful attention by ensuring informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, being sensitive to ethical dilemmas faced by teachers, adhering to responsible research practices, and being culturally aware. In so doing, the study contributed valuable insights into the complexities of providing quality education in rural settings. Rigorous ethical adherence enhanced the credibility of the research, respect and also protected the participants involved.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In examining the experiences of primary teachers in providing quality education in rural full-service schools in the Eastern Cape Province, qualitative insights drawn from participant interviews reveal numerous challenges and practices that characterize their day-to-day teaching environment. Many teachers expressed frustration over inadequate resources and infrastructural deficiencies, which directly impact their ability to deliver effective, quality education. One teacher remarked:

"The classrooms are overcrowded, and we lack basic teaching materials, which makes it difficult to engage students meaningfully. You cannot even group learners in class to allow for collaborative learning because of overcrowding. Classroom control and management are out of the scope in this situation."

This observation aligns with the findings of Pillay, who highlighted the necessity for targeted interventions aimed at addressing the unique needs of rural schools, noting the importance of resource availability for enhancing both teaching and learning outcomes.³³

Furthermore, digital inequalities prominently surfaced in the discussions among participants, with teachers describing how limited access to technological resources hinders educational delivery.

"We can't depend on online resources because our schools often lack internet connectivity," one teacher stated, encapsulating the sentiments shared by many in the group.

This situation correlates with the findings that underscore the negative impacts of unstable electricity and inadequate access to digital resources in rural educational settings.³⁴ Such testimonies

³⁰ Yin, *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish*.

³¹ M. Zein, "The Use of Observation Methods in Educational Research: A Case Study of Teachers' Practices," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 13, no. 1 (2014): 112–30.

³² R. Bent, J. Sweeney, and W. Denson, "Using a Qualitative Case Study Design to Understand Teachers' Practices: A Focus on Data Analysis and Thematic Development," *Journal of Qualitative Research in Education* 8, no. 2 (2016): 143–58.

³³ Preya Pillay, "Navigating Challenges and Crafting Solutions: Implementing CAPS for Grade 7 Natural Sciences in Rural South African Schools," *Interdisciplinary Journal of Education Research* 6 (August 23, 2024): 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.38140/ijer-2024.vol6.29>.

³⁴ Lungiswa Nqoma et al., "Stretching the Boundaries of Transformative Learning to Selected Rural Schools of Eastern Cape in South Africa," 2024, <https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.113918>.

point to a critical need for policymakers to strategize developing a robust educational infrastructure that encompasses technology access to elevate the learning experience in rural areas.

Teachers also reported feeling isolated from professional development opportunities, which exacerbates the challenges they face in adopting innovative teaching methods. One participant poignantly noted that: *"Without regular training and support, we are left to navigate these challenges on our own,"* reflecting a broader sentiment echoed in the literature, which indicates that skills shortages significantly affect teacher performance in the region.³⁵ Moreover, the lack of consistent professional development and training has profound implications for educational quality, as highlighted in the work of Yin, who emphasized that effective teacher preparation is essential for raising educational standards in rural settings.³⁶

Language barriers also persist as a considerable hurdle in rural classrooms, with many teachers indicating that they face challenges in catering to the linguistic diversity of their learners. One participant conveyed: *"When we have learners from different language backgrounds, it becomes hard to ensure that everyone understands the lesson."*

This sentiment resonates with the argument that language considerations are critical when implementing curricular frameworks in resource-limited contexts.³⁷ Thus, addressing language diversity through targeted teacher training and resource development is essential for improving educational outcomes.

In essence, the emotional and psychological impacts of teaching in such challenging environments should not be overlooked. Teachers frequently expressed feelings of stress and burnout due to the demanding nature of their roles amid under-resourced conditions. One teacher shared: *"The stress of daily challenges often makes it hard to remain enthusiastic about teaching."*

This finding echoes the realities noted by Maqoqa et al., which reveals how a lack of support from the home environment further complicates the challenges teachers face in fostering effective home-school partnerships.³⁸

Generally, it is contended that teachers worldwide are concerned with how best to prepare and equip teachers to be pedagogically responsive to an increasingly diverse learner population. Such a concern is reverberated in South Africa as inclusive education is entrenched in the school system, with many teachers claiming that they do not have the knowledge and skills needed to teach in full-service classrooms that represent diverse learners and learning needs.³⁹

The insights gained from teacher interviews in the Eastern Cape provide a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted challenges they face in delivering quality education. The interplay of resource inadequacies, technological disparities, professional development deficits, linguistic diversity, and emotional stress all paint a comprehensive picture of the rural educational landscape. As such, both local and national education authorities must prioritize the development of systemic support structures that address these identified challenges.

Summary

The findings from this study provided invaluable insights into the multifaceted experiences of primary teachers in rural full-service schools. The qualitative methodology enabled the researcher to capture the complexities of teaching in such settings and highlight the critical factors influencing educational quality.

Out of the findings, it has become clear that the educational landscape in the Eastern Cape presents significant challenges for primary teachers, driven by a combination of socio-economic hardships, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient professional development. To improve the quality of education

³⁵ Zindi and Sibanda, "Educator Performance and the Strategic Plan Priorities of the Eastern Cape Department of Education."

³⁶ Yin, *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish*.

³⁷ Pillay, "Navigating Challenges and Crafting Solutions: Implementing CAPS for Grade 7 Natural Sciences in Rural South African Schools."

³⁸ Thabisa Maqoqa, Maisha J. Molepo, and Israel Kariyana, "Parenting and Learner Support in Rural South African Schools: Home Involvement as a Conduit for Strengthening Home-School Partnership," *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences*, December 8, 2023, 1440–52, <https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.20234133>.

³⁹ E. Walton, J. Jansen, and M. Mngadi, "Teachers' Experiences of Inclusive Education in South Africa: A Focus on Full-Service Classrooms," *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 18, no. 8 (2014): 752–67.

in this region, there is a need for comprehensive strategies that address teacher training, community involvement, mental health support, and the strategic use of technology.

By understanding these interconnected challenges, policymakers and educational stakeholders can work towards fostering an improved educational environment that empowers primary teachers and promotes sustained student learning outcomes. The insights gained can inform policy and practice aimed at improving teacher effectiveness and learner outcomes in rural contexts, as well as guide future research into rural education challenges.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommended the creation of a supportive educational landscape that empowers teachers and nurtures student growth. Through the explicit integration of ethical frameworks, an emphasis on community collaboration, cultural sensitivity, ongoing training, and interactive learning, educators can significantly enhance the quality of education provided in rural South African contexts.

The study paved the way for future research avenues aimed at exploring targeted interventions that address the specific needs of rural educators and their students. Future studies could investigate the efficacy of technology-based resource-sharing platforms among teachers, as well as partnerships with educational NGOs to provide targeted support and professional development opportunities. Additionally, examining the impacts of broader socio-economic conditions on educational quality could yield insights into the contextual factors that influence teaching and learning outcomes in rural settings.

CONCLUSION

The study of primary teachers' experiences in rural Eastern Cape schools revealed profound insights into the intertwined challenges and potential pathways to enhance educational quality. The synthesis of findings accentuated the vital need for holistic approaches that incorporate teacher training, resource allocation, and community engagement. Addressing these elements holistically offers a promising pathway toward not only improving educational quality but also fostering sustainable development in rural education systems in South Africa.

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