



Teacher's Pedagogical Strategies in Under-Resourced Rural Schools in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

The persistent and severe under-resourcing of rural public schools is one of the challenges that the South African educational system is faced with. Extensive research has conclusively demonstrated that adequate resources are one of the essential elements that augment quality teaching. However, rural schools are faced with disparities due to a lack of resources that negatively shape teaching and learning. This study explored teachers' pedagogical strategies in rural schools with limited resources and how they teach to ensure that teaching and learning occur under such dire circumstances. The study was based on an interpretive paradigm, using a qualitative approach with a case study research design. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews with 14 teachers in two schools purposively selected as participants. The study's findings showed that teachers in under-resourced rural schools use various pedagogical strategies such as background-based knowledge teaching and cooperative learning to ensure effective classroom instruction and learning. The study concluded that the various pedagogical strategies of teachers in rural under-resourced schools assist in mitigating the challenges of under-resourcing. Thus, approaches directly focused on supporting rural schoolteachers such as customised teacher professional development and establishing a sustainable funding model for rural school developments should be established to improve instruction and learning standards in rural schools.

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INTRODUCTION

In South Africa, inequality in the schooling sector remains a challenge in the education system. A report compiled by Amnesty International detailed that the South African education system remains afflicted by glaring disparities and persistent underachievement in schools, which can be traced back to the enduring legacy of apartheid.¹ After years of democracy, the South African education system distribution is still unequal and uneven among the population,² with schooling systems that are categorised into what Adams and Adebayo et.al., term the affluent (more adequately resourced) and non-affluent (less adequately resourced) school categories.³

Statistics South Africa asserts that the education system for the non-affluent is found in historically deprived townships and these rural schools have remained entrenched in abject poverty.⁴ Despite the abolition

¹ Amnesty International, *Broken and Unequal: The State of Education in South Africa* (Amnesty International, 2020).

² Lorette Arendse, "The School Funding System and Its Discriminatory Impact on Marginalised Learners," *Law, Democracy & Development* 15 (2011): 339–60.

³ Christopher Adams, "Social Determinants of Student Trust in High Poverty Elementary Schools," in *Analyzing School Contexts: Influences of Principals and Teachers in the Service of Students*, ed. Karen Hoy and Michael DiPaola (IAP Information Age Publishing, 2010), 255–80; Kutu Augustine Adebayo, Nzimande Ntokozo, and Ngema Zukiswa Grace, "Availability of Educational Resources and Student Academic Performances in South Africa," *Universal Journal of Educational Research* 8, no. 8 (August 2020): 3768–81, <https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2020.080858>.

⁴ Statistics South Africa, *Millennium Development Goals 1: Eradicate Extreme Hunger and Poverty* (South Africa: Statistics South Africa, 2015).

of racial segregation 29 years ago, schools that primarily catered to White students during apartheid continue to receive adequate resources and maintain functionality, even though they are now racially integrated. However, many of the schools that served Black students during apartheid did not receive enough resources, resulting in dysfunction and a lack of essential education skills for learners.⁵ Despite progress in reducing poverty in South Africa, there is still a significant level of inequality in the education system, which hinders efforts to alleviate poverty and as a result, educational attainment remains low.⁶ García and Weiss established that the socio-economic status of children is one of the key determinants of their academic achievement.⁷ Under-resourcing in rural schools helps maintain a cross-generational ageless cycle of poverty where children inherit their parent's socioeconomic status regardless of their own ability or efforts.⁸

Maharajh, Nkosi and Mkhize concur that the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS), which is the approved curriculum in South African schools, is ineffectual due to the lack of ideal circumstances, including resources.⁹ Such ineffectuality is mostly identified in rural schools as they are remote, relatively underdeveloped and under-resourced. Statistics South Africa echoes that in the historically disadvantaged schools in South Africa, the quality of education remains incredibly low as these schools lack even the most basic learning infrastructure necessities like laboratories, libraries, and internet access.¹⁰ As a result, due to a lack of learning opportunities, students in South Africa often face high rates of repetition and dropout.¹¹

Despite the South African Constitution the South African Schools Act and various policy documents emphasizing the importance of equal education for all learners in the country, the reality in rural under-resourced schools falls short of these standards.¹² Less than ideal educational standards are provided to students in rural schools with limited resources. According to the Department of Basic Education, in 2018, out of 23, 471 public schools, 20, 071 lacked a lab, 18, 019 lacked a library, 16, 897 lacked internet access, and over 1,000 lacked sports facilities. The statistics also revealed that 4 358 schools had unlicensed simple pit latrines for sanitation, 1, 027 lacked the necessary perimeter fence for teacher and student safety, 239 lacked power, and 37 lacked any sort of sanitary facilities.¹³ The aspiration for equal access to comparable standards of learning and teaching, similar facilities, and equitable educational opportunities has not been realized. As a consequence, this disparity directly impacts the quality of education accessible to children.

Teaching is defined and influenced by various aspects, including culture, society and geographic environment.¹⁴ Teachers have a mandate and duty to assist in ensuring that effective teaching and learning take place in their classrooms. They must teach in a world that evolves continuously and in which education is changing from only teaching learners to developing a reliable compass and skills in their learners to adeptly navigate a complex, ever-changing, and unpredictable world. Education should focus on fostering "identity, autonomy, principles, nurturing curiosity, and harnessing cognitive, social, and emotional abilities to actively contribute to society." Teachers need resources in their classrooms to fulfil this mandate.¹⁵

Rural under-resourced schools are no exception to this educational evolution and teaching in such schools demands that teachers ensure that learners attain quality education. Research on educational challenges in rural schools mostly focuses on the challenges teachers experience and not on how teachers successfully teach under these dire circumstances. Thus, this study, examined, the pedagogical approaches employed by teachers in under-resourced rural schools to ascertain how they facilitate effective teaching, learning, and

⁵ Nic Spaull, "Schooling in South Africa: How Low-Quality Education Becomes a Poverty Trap," *South African Child Gauge* 12, no. 1 (2015): 34–41.

⁶ S Plagerson and S Mthembu, "Poverty, Inequality and Social Exclusion in South Africa: A Systematic Assessment of Key Policies, Strategies and Flagship Programmes," *Johannesburg: CSDA*, 2019.

⁷ Emma García and Elaine Weiss, "Education Inequalities at the School Starting Gate: Gaps, Trends, and Strategies to Address Them.," *Economic Policy Institute*, 2017.

⁸ Spaull, "Schooling in South Africa: How Low-Quality Education Becomes a Poverty Trap."

⁹ Lokesh R Maharajh, Thandi Nkosi, and Mbekelezi C Mkhize, "Teachers' Experiences of the Implementation of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) in Three Primary Schools in KwaZulu Natal," *Africa's Public Service Delivery & Performance Review* 4, no. 3 (2016): 371–88.

¹⁰ Statistics South Africa, *Millennium Development Goals 1: Eradicate Extreme Hunger and Poverty*.

¹¹ Statistics South Africa, *Millennium Development Goals 1: Eradicate Extreme Hunger and Poverty*.

¹² *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* (Government Gazette, 1996); Republic of South Africa, *South African Schools Act 84 of 1996* (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1996); Pierre Du Plessis, "Problems and Complexities in Rural Schools: Challenges of Education and Social Development," *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 5, no. 20 (2014): 1109.

¹³ Amnesty International, *Broken and Unequal: The State of Education in South Africa*.

¹⁴ Makovec Danijela, "The Teacher's Role and Professional Development," *International Journal of Cognitive Research in Science, Engineering and Education (IJCRSEE)* 6, no. 2 (2018): 33–45.

¹⁵ Juliana Maffea, "Lack of Resources in Classrooms," *English Department: Research for Change - Wicked Problems in Our World*, 2020, <https://research.library.kutztown.edu/wickedproblems/4>.

successful implementation of the curriculum. Using a qualitative research approach, the study collected data from fourteen teachers in two rural schools in the Eastern Cape purposively sampled and interviewed, and findings were analysed through content analysis. Through focussing on rural under-resourced schools in South Africa, the study pursues to bring context-specific insights into the teaching practices within this educational setting. Such insights are aimed at contributing to the discussions of how such settings can be strengthened based on what has been found to be an opportunity to address the inequalities and enhance what is already identified as effective by the teachers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptualisation of Pedagogy

The concept of pedagogy is derived from the Greek word “paidagōgēō” in which “país, genitive, paidos” means child and ágō means lead; therefore it literally means “to lead the child”. The Latin-derived version of the concept which is established in the English language translates the word pedagogy to mean “child instruction” and thus includes teaching and learning together within the operational context.¹⁶ Therefore in simple terms, pedagogy refers to the teaching and learning environment, referred to by Shah and Campus as the “art or science of teaching children”; as such, the term is commonly used interchangeably in an educational setting.¹⁷

Pedagogy, as a concept, encompasses various elements such as theories, strategies, methods, resources and aids that teachers use to fulfill instructional purposes for effective learning in the classroom. The imperative goal or focus for every teacher in the classroom is to improve student achievement and ensure quality teaching and learning.¹⁸ Pedagogical strategies teachers use to foster learning in the extensive variation of subjects and content in each grade or class, therefore, vary widely depending on the subject matter and outcomes that need to be achieved. Teachers always aim to find the best teaching method/s or strategy to use to ensure that teaching and learning are organized effectively, bonding both the teacher’s and learners’ engagement.¹⁹

Both earlier and extant literature have researched extensively on the various pedagogical practices used or that can be used by teachers to enhance effective teaching and learning – these would be dependant on the level of the learners – and could include active learning strategies, teacher-directed, play-based, co-operative and inquiry-based strategies among others.²⁰ The consensus from both time frames of literature is that the various pedagogies teachers use are multidimensional depending on the setting where they are applied, and as a result, an amalgamation of more than one is usually applied by teachers to get the best results. According to Devlin et.al., 10 principles play a role in promoting effective teaching strategies:

- (1) Teaching and curriculum design needs to be focused on meeting students’ future needs, implying the development in students of generic capabilities such as critical thinking, teamwork and communication skills, among others.
- (2) Students must have a thorough understanding of fundamental concepts even if that means less content is covered.
- (3) The relevance of what is taught must be established by using real-life, current and/or local examples and by relating theory to practice.
- (4) Student beliefs must be challenged to deal with misconceptions.
- (5) A variety of learning tasks that engage students, including student discussion, need to occur in order for meaningful learning to take place.
- (6) Genuine, empathetic relationships with individual students should be established so that interaction can take place.
- (7) Teachers should motivate students by displaying their own enthusiasm, encouraging students and providing interesting, enjoyable and active classes.
- (8) Curriculum design should ensure that aims, concepts, learning activities and assessments are consistent with achieving learning outcomes related to future student needs;
- (9) Each lesson must be thoroughly planned but flexible so that necessary adaptations may be made based on feedback during the class.

¹⁶ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Holy Spirit* (New York: Harper SanFrancisco, 1990).

¹⁷ Kory Knott, “A Cost-Sensitive Model for Revitalizing United Methodist Churches” (George Fox University, 2018).

¹⁸ Sonia Guerriero, “Teachers’ Pedagogical Knowledge and the Teaching Profession,” *Teaching and Teacher Education* 2, no. 1 (2014).

¹⁹ Uchechi Bel-Ann Ordu, “The Role of Teaching and Learning Aids/Methods in a Changing World.,” *Bulgarian Comparative Education Society*, 2021.

²⁰ Noémie Le Donné, Pablo Fraser, and Guillaume Bousquet, “Teaching Strategies for Instructional Quality: Insights from the TALIS-PISA Link Data,” 2016.

- (10) Assessment must be consistent with the desired learning outcomes and should, therefore, be authentic tasks for the discipline.²¹

Of significance in educational settings is for effective learning to occur and teachers, being the custodians of the teaching and learning context, need to rise above all the challenges and ensure that the various principles of pedagogy are realized and that learners achieve.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Shulman's Knowledge and Teaching: Foundations for New Reform

Lee Shulman's theory for teaching reform centers around a teaching approach that highlights comprehension, reasoning, transformation, and reflection.²² He contends that these aspects have been neglected in both research and policy, justifying the emphasis on them.²³ In this theory, Shulman addresses the intellectual, practical, and normative foundations for professionalizing teaching. Shulman's argument gives rise to four key questions: "What are the sources of the knowledge base for teaching? How can these sources be conceptualized? What are the processes of pedagogical reasoning and action? What are the implications for teaching policy and educational reform?"²⁴ These questions are pertinent to this study as it aims to investigate how teachers approach teaching in rural under-resourced schools.

Shulman explains that his theoretical approach has been influenced by two projects: one studying how new teachers learn to teach and another aimed at establishing a national board for teaching. He argues that while empirical research on effective teaching is valuable, it should not be the sole basis for defining the knowledge base of teaching. Instead, he proposes shifting the focus towards a more comprehensive knowledge base for teaching. He asserts that a teacher has the ability to transform understanding, performance abilities, and desirable attitudes or values into educational representations and actions. Shulman alleges that these representations serve to make the unknown known, help those without understanding comprehend and discern, and enable the unskilled to become proficient. Thus, teaching starts with the teacher's understanding of what is to be learned and how it should be taught.²⁵ Throughout the process, students are provided with specific instructions and learning opportunities, but ultimately, the responsibility for learning lies with the students themselves. Shulman acknowledges this as a fundamental aspect of teaching, yet he also considers it an incomplete concept.²⁶ To promote student comprehension, the teacher's understanding is founded on categories of knowledge, which include:

- Content knowledge: pertains to academic-related information, including data and the structures, rules, and conventions for organizing and utilizing that information.
- General pedagogical knowledge: encompasses skills such as classroom management and using group work that is not specific to a particular subject and can be applied in various classroom settings.
- Pedagogical content knowledge: involves information or data that helps guide learners toward understanding. It includes various methods of presenting a subject in ways that make it comprehensible to others.
- Curriculum knowledge: encompasses materials and programs that serve as essential tools for teachers. This knowledge can be vertical, spanning across grades within a discipline, or horizontal, covering a grade level across different subjects.
- Knowledge of learners and their personalities and potential: allows teachers to tailor and adjust their instruction to meet individual student needs.
- Knowledge of educational contexts includes an understanding of the classroom environment, the governance and financing of school districts, and the characteristics of school communities. Awareness of the surrounding community helps teachers gauge how their educational actions might be perceived. This knowledge also informs teachers on how to navigate classroom practices in relation to school, community, and state conventions, laws, and rules.

²¹ Marcia Devlin and Gayani Samarawickrema, "The Criteria of Effective Teaching in a Changing Higher Education Context," *Higher Education Research & Development* 29, no. 2 (2010): 111–24.

²² Lee Shulman, "Knowledge and Teaching: Foundations of the New Reform," *Harvard Educational Review* 57, no. 1 (1987): 1–23.

²³ Shulman, "Knowledge and Teaching: Foundations of the New Reform."

²⁴ Shulman, "Knowledge and Teaching: Foundations of the New Reform."

²⁵ Shulman, "Knowledge and Teaching: Foundations of the New Reform."

²⁶ Lee S Shulman, "Those Who Understand: A Conception of Teacher Knowledge.," *American Educator* 10, no. 1 (1986).

- Knowledge of educational purposes and values and their philosophical and historical foundations: aids teachers in motivating learners by providing a deeper understanding of the reasons behind educational goals and the underlying principles and history supporting them.²⁷

These categories blend to form the foundation of teaching knowledge, and in this study's focus on teachers' pedagogical practices, particular attention is given to pedagogical content knowledge. Pedagogical content knowledge captures the "instruction strategies" teachers employ when teaching specific subject matter. Shulman defines it as the knowledge of how to effectively teach within a particular subject area.²⁸ This knowledge allows teachers to facilitate student learning by using clear explanations, relevant analogies, and engaging methods of presentation that make the learning process interesting, motivating, and even entertaining.²⁹ The concept of pedagogical content knowledge is fundamental to teaching and is widely recognized as a crucial aspect of a teacher's professional expertise.³⁰

In this study, the focus lies on the pedagogical practices of teachers, and it is noteworthy that Shulman introduced a model for pedagogical reasoning and action consisting of six components: "comprehension, transformation, instruction, evaluation, reflection, and new comprehension."³¹ Wilson further expounds that these components of pedagogical reasoning and action are interconnected in a linear manner.³² The process of pedagogical reasoning begins with comprehending the subject matter and progresses to new comprehension after reflecting on the instruction. Instruction involves various observable teaching actions, such as classroom management, clear explanations, dynamic descriptions, task assignments and checks, as well as effective interactions with students through questions, answers, praise, and constructive feedback.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research methodology was used to explore teachers' pedagogical practices in rural under-resourced schools to understand how individual teachers interpret and make sense of their experiences. A qualitative technique was used and open-ended questions were used to inspire debate and produce rich data.³³ The design was a case study of two schools to generate expository data and to obtain a thorough analysis.³⁴

The setting of the study was two rural primary schools in the OR Tambo Inland District, Eastern Cape Province in South Africa. Four teachers, one male (n=1) and one female (n=1) from each school were sampled for the semi-structured interviews, totaling four teachers (n=4). A total of 10 participants (n=10) comprising three teachers (n=3) from School A and seven teachers (n=7) from School B participated in the focus group discussions. The study used purposive sampling to select participants that could provide insight into and understanding of teachers' experiences in under-resourced schools.³⁵ Pseudonyms for the schools (School A and School B) and for the participants were employed in accordance with ethical guidelines for reporting empirical data.³⁶ A total of 14 participants who took part in the study are profiled in Table 1 from both the structured interviews and focus group discussions at the two schools.

²⁷ Shulman, "Those Who Understand: A Conception of Teacher Knowledge."

²⁸ Shulman, "Those Who Understand: A Conception of Teacher Knowledge."

²⁹ Julie Antionette Cogill, "Primary Teachers' Interactive Whiteboard Practice across One Year: Changes in Pedagogy and Influencing Factors" (University of London, 2008).

³⁰ M L Botha and C P S Reddy, "In-Service Teachers' Perspectives of Pre-Service Teachers' Knowledge Domains in Science," *South African Journal of Education* 31, no. 2 (2011).

³¹ Shulman, "Knowledge and Teaching: Foundations of the New Reform."

³² M S Wilson, "150 Different Ways of Knowing: Representations of Knowledge in Teaching," *Exploring Teachers' Thinking*, 1987, 104–24.

³³ Paul D Leedy and Jeanne Ellis Ormrod, *Practical Research*, vol. 108 (Pearson Custom Saddle River, NJ, USA, 2005).

³⁴ Hanna Kallio et al., "Systematic Methodological Review: Developing a Framework for a Qualitative Semi-structured Interview Guide," *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 72, no. 12 (2016): 2954–65.

³⁵ Leedy and Ormrod, *Practical Research*.

³⁶ John W Creswell, *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating* (W. Ross MacDonald School Resource Services Library, 2013).

Table 1. Profile of Respondents

Respondents	School	Gender	Age	Highest qualification	Experience in teaching	Post level: 1-Educator, 2-HoD, 4-Principal	Employment status	Learning area offered	Grade taught
Semi-structured interviews									
Sallie	School B	F	36	Bachelor of Education	05	1	Permanent	Numeracy, Literacy and Life Skills	3
Mluleki	School B	M	45	BEd Hons	17	1	Permanent	Natural Sciences	9
Mandla	School A	M	39	Advanced Certificate in Education	15	3- Acting Principal	Permanent	Natural Sciences	6
Noxolo	School A	F	34	NPDE	05	1	Permanent	Technology	6
Focus group discussions									
Nothemba	School A	F	43	Advanced Certificate in Education	16	1	Permanent	Numeracy, Literacy and Life Skills	3
Siza	School A	M	42	Advanced Certificate in Education	8	1	Permanent	Social Sciences	4-7
Patricia	School A	F	49	Advanced Certificate in Education	19	1	Permanent	Xhosa and Arts and Culture	4-7
Lukho	School B	F	49	BEd Hons	19	2- HoD	Permanent	Xhosa & Life Orientation	6
Nomangesi	School B	F	50	BEd Hons	24	1	Permanent	Numeracy, Literacy & Life skills	3
Siziwe	School B	F	46	Advanced Certificate in Education	10	1	Permanent	Technology & Natural Science	6
Sizwe	School B	M	42	Advanced Certificate in Education	7	1	Permanent	Social Sciences, Arts and Culture	9
Luntu	School B	M	43	BEd Hons	17	4- Principal	Permanent	Technology	9
Lungiswa	School B	F	40	Advanced Certificate in Education	5	1	Permanent	Social Sciences, Arts and Culture	6
Monica	School B	F	40	Advanced Certificate in Education	8	1	Permanent	Economic and Management Sciences & IsiXhosa	9

The research methodology employed in this study involved the collection of qualitative data through an interview schedule. Semi-structured interviews and Focus group discussions with open-ended questions were conducted, often followed by additional probing to delve deeper into the subjects.³⁷ The interviews centered around the teachers' pedagogical practices in rural under-resourced schools, and field notes were also taken during the process. Data was analysed using content analysis. Roller defines qualitative content analysis as an orderly process in which the researcher reduces content and analyses it by extracting meaningful concepts that are relevant to the data generated.³⁸ It involves reducing the transcribed data into concepts describing the

³⁷ Kathryn E Newcomer, Harry P Hatry, and Joseph S Wholey, *Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation* (Wiley Online Library, 2015).

³⁸ Margaret R Roller, "A Quality Approach to Qualitative Content Analysis: Similarities and Differences Compared to Other Qualitative Methods," in *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, vol. 20, 2019.

phenomenon under investigation by designing categories, concepts and conceptual maps.³⁹ Data collected were categorised into themes that collectively presented the findings of the study. The study received ethical clearance from both the University of Fort Hare and the Department of Basic Education in the Eastern Cape. All participants in the study provided voluntary consent, and each participant signed an informed consent form prior to their involvement in the research. Member checking was ensured as the transcription of the interviews was sent to the participants for verification. The primary focus of the study was on the pedagogical strategies employed by teachers in two rural under-resourced primary schools in one South African education district in the Eastern Cape Province.

FINDINGS

Background knowledge

The findings of this study indicate that teachers used the environment as part of their teaching strategy. Mandla, a Natural Sciences teacher, shared that he exposed the learners to concepts or topics discussed in his class by showing them these concepts in the environment. For example, when he was teaching them about wetlands, he took the learners outside to experience it firsthand. The use of environmental resources like “amalongwe” (cow dung) as a teaching approach was also noted by the participant, Mluleki. Sizwe shared the following:

“One other way is to use the natural environment as we lack some of these resources. Say you are teaching about flowers, and then you must wait for a season that will have flowering time and make examples with plants such as ‘invumvu’, which is a plant they know and see every day. If you teach energy, you make examples of paraffin, candle wax, and amalongwe (cow dung). So, you use the resources they know before you go to the ones you speak about without them being able to see.”

Patricia added:

“In Arts and Culture, most of the time we do practical work, then you send learners to go outside and look for rubbish material to make things like paper mâché and other projects. We can’t buy things as we do not have money.”

Cooperative learning and use of printed material

The participants shared similar insights about strategising their teaching around limited resources by placing learners in groups to compensate for the shortage of textbooks. This approach was indicated in both schools and the teachers used a photocopy of certain materials that they had access to. Nomangesi illustrated this as follows:

“As the availability of resources at the foundation phase is a problem, we usually put the learners in groups and copy material for them to share in groups to cover the shortage of books. This assists also with developing skills and values within learners such as sharing and supporting each other.”

Sallie shared that:

“At times we have no reading books, in fact, at times no books at all, I would photocopy in town for the learners the page I need and give out to the learners or would read to the learners aloud as they listen.”

Exploration-Based Teaching

The data collected indicated that at times when there was access to funds, School A took learners to various places on excursions and field trips. As the participants indicated, the field trips and excursions exposed learners to the outside world and to things they were not familiar with. The field trips encourage exploration and inquisitive thinking as learners probe to gain more knowledge. For instance, Noxolo shared that:

“Ok, we also conduct school tours, but these can only happen when we have enough funds available. During these tours, we take the learners to different places and show them things like “yipizza le” (this is pizza) and other significant things such as aquariums etc. Our learners enjoy the tours because they help them to explore and know things.”

The extract from Siza illustrates further:

³⁹ Andrea Bingham and P Witkowsky, “Qualitative Analysis: Deductive and Inductive Approaches,” *Vanover C, Mihás P, Saldaña Jeditors. Analyzing and Interpreting Qualitative Data: After the Interview. SAGE Publications, 2022, 133–46.*

“As you are here today, tomorrow we are going on a tour. That is one way of showing learners things and places, some of which they learn about in learning areas such as Social Science. We are trying to get them used to seeing various things out there in the world instead of being surprised at old age. But it is not an easy thing because of lack of funds most of the time.”

Respondents from School B mentioned that they discontinued educational tours due to their high cost, which the school and the community at large could not afford.

Using journals, pictures, and newspapers

The respondents shared that one other pedagogical strategy is using media resources such as journals, magazines and pictures collected from their homes and in town to hand out to the learners. They noted that they do these collections as some learners do not have such materials in their homes. This was shared by Lukho:

“As an intermediate phase teacher, who teaches Xhosa and has no reading books, I look for newspapers written in Xhosa, like fever, take a scribbler and paste the cuttings so that they have a reading book.”

Twinning with Other Schools

The findings revealed that teachers from School A and one respondent from School B consult with other schools (twinning) and ask for assistance with any resources they may be able to provide. Mandla shared as follows:

“We try our best, we visit other schools seeking assistance, and they do provide some resources to show to our learners. However, it's not always easy for us to obtain all the materials we need in this manner.”

The respondent also mentioned seeking help from high schools in which they serve as feeder schools. He alleged that they are also not well-resourced but that they do receive resources as part of the General and Education Band (GET) schools. These resources, as the respondents alleged, get depleted quickly as there may be various feeder schools asking the same high school for assistance. Salie (School B) revealed that she travels to another school to ask for books if her school has no textbooks for a specific subject or content. The participant was a Grade 3 teacher, and she described that these young learners need to see things as well as be able to read and write every day. The data also indicated twinning with other schools assists teachers in forming learning communities for professional development and assistance with difficult topics. Patricia shared as follows:

“We also practice cooperation among teachers. If we encounter challenges in a particular subject area, we seek help from other teachers in different schools. This collaborative approach allows us to work closely together and facilitates a smoother teaching experience.”

Noxolo also mentioned that when teachers from various schools come together, they often discover that they face similar problems, which unfortunately limits their ability to offer substantial assistance to one another. In School B, the participants shared that they have never tried such a strategy of asking for assistance from any school. Sallie, from School B, confirmed that she is the only person who individually practices the twinning strategy with other schools.

Chalkboard-Based Teaching

Both schools relied on chalkboards as a means of facilitating teaching and learning. The teachers explained that they write information on the chalkboard for the students to read or copy. For instance, Sallie mentioned that she sometimes writes stories on the chalkboard or creates stories herself, using them to derive questions for the students. This approach is used as a workaround for the lack of sufficient text or reading books. Lukho shared a similar practice during isiXhosa lessons, where she writes stories on the chalkboard due to the shortage of reading materials. Additionally, the participants mentioned using drawings on the chalkboard to convey meaning when models or actual objects are not available. Mluleki explained that in the absence of resources, they create drawings, and charts, and discuss the pictures as a way to enhance understanding. This assists in displaying concrete material that learners can see.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study validate the fact that schools located in rural areas struggle with resources that hinder teaching and learning activities. These shortages confirm that the South African schooling system is categorised into what Adams terms the affluent (more adequately resourced) and non-affluent (less adequately resourced)

school categories.⁴⁰ This confirms that in historically disadvantaged regions of South Africa, the education standard remains extremely low, as schools fail to fulfill even the fundamental needs for learning infrastructure.⁴¹ This provides some context of the reasons behind learners facing learning deprivation, increased grade repetition, and elevated dropout rates.⁴²

The research study discovered that to promote and support the process of teaching and learning in rural under-resourced schools, teachers adopt various pedagogical strategies, blended to achieve learner academic attainment. According to Shulman, a teacher has knowledge that is not shared by students, and as a result, they translate knowledge, performance abilities, or desirable attitudes or values into instructional representations and behaviours.⁴³ These are techniques of expressing ideas by talking, displaying, acting out or other means so that the unknown may be understood, the uneducated can grasp and discern, and the unskilled can become proficient. The findings revealed that teachers utilise the environment as a pedagogical strategy to augment learning in various subjects and topics such as wetlands, energy and artwork. Students would sometimes be taken outside to experience firsthand what is being taught in compensation for the lack of concrete material the teacher could have brought to the classroom. The improvisation teachers acknowledge that numerous rural communities lack the essential professional assistance, support systems, and governance structures, as well as adequate books and learning materials required to provide necessary support and care for learners. It is imperative that all students in South Africa are provided with the same quality of education, similar facilities and equal opportunities for learning, according to the constitution,⁴⁴ the South African Schools Act⁴⁵ and several policy papers.⁴⁶ The teachers, therefore, implement what Shulman articulates as pedagogy based on pedagogical content and curriculum knowledge, where content and pedagogy are combined and presented in a comprehensible manner, using materials and programmes that act as essential resources for teachers to guide and educate learners effectively.⁴⁷ Furthermore, the strategy the participants are using concurs with Devlin and Samarawickrema view as they establish that one of the principles of pedagogical strategies is relating what is taught to real-life situations.⁴⁸

The findings also indicated that teachers employed cooperative learning and the use of printed material as a form of pedagogical strategy. This pedagogical strategy allows teachers to place learners in groups, which makes it easier to use photocopied material that all learners can use as opposed to individual learning which requires each learner to have their own copy. As Du Plessis posits, rural schools specifically struggle to satisfy educational demands due to their restricted access to development resources.⁴⁹ Poverty rates pose obstacles to development and, therefore, staff needs intervention strategies to maximise their access to current resources. This approach pertains to what Shulman refers to as familiarity with educational settings, including schools and the community, comprehension of the classroom dynamics and awareness of the broader context that influences the classroom.⁵⁰ This knowledge equips teachers with the guidance they need to make informed decisions and take appropriate educational steps.

The study also found that teachers made use of an exploration-based teaching strategy in which learners are taken on field trips and excursions that expose them to the outside world to explore and see firsthand what they learn in school. As the findings revealed, the field trips provide learners with opportunities to explore and enquire more on various aspects to strengthen their knowledge development. However, as the study revealed, field trips and excursions are costly for the schools and parents in these rural areas, which serves as a limitation to the quality of teaching and learning.⁵¹ Rural schools and their communities frequently experience poverty and disadvantages as a result of variables that have a detrimental impact on the delivery of excellent education due to their remoteness and undeveloped character. They lack essential infrastructure such as sanitation facilities, access to clean water, functioning roads, electricity, power choices, transportation choices, and information and communication technologies.

⁴⁰ Adams, "Social Determinants of Student Trust in High Poverty Elementary Schools."260.

⁴¹ Adebayo, Ntokozo, and Grace, "Availability of Educational Resources and Student Academic Performances in South Africa."

⁴² Statistics South Africa, *Millennium Development Goals 1: Eradicate Extreme Hunger and Poverty*.

⁴³ Shulman, "Those Who Understand: A Conception of Teacher Knowledge."

⁴⁴ *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*.

⁴⁵ Republic of South Africa, *South African Schools Act 84 of 1996*.

⁴⁶ Du Plessis, "Problems and Complexities in Rural Schools: Challenges of Education and Social Development."

⁴⁷ Shulman, "Those Who Understand: A Conception of Teacher Knowledge."

⁴⁸ Devlin and Samarawickrema, "The Criteria of Effective Teaching in a Changing Higher Education Context."

⁴⁹ Shulman, "Those Who Understand: A Conception of Teacher Knowledge."

⁵⁰ Shulman, "Those Who Understand: A Conception of Teacher Knowledge."

⁵¹ Du Plessis, "Problems and Complexities in Rural Schools: Challenges of Education and Social Development."

Using journals, pictures and newspapers was established as one of the strategies teachers implement to enhance effective teaching and learning in their rural under-resourced schools. The study revealed that the teachers collect materials such as newspapers themselves as learners find it difficult to find such materials in their homes. As Du Plessis establishes, rural areas are remote and relatively underdeveloped and many parents of the learners are illiterate.⁵²

The findings showed that twinning with other schools for support and collaboration is a strategy that teachers in rural under-resourced schools implement to ensure effective teaching and learning. The efforts made in seeking assistance from each other and the collaborative strategy of joining hands with each other assist the teachers in reducing the low quality of education offered in these rural schools. Such strategies of schools working together could be a way of mitigating the performance gaps due to socio-economic factors, specifically in the early years of a child's development as they often fail to narrow the gap of an inefficient educational system in the schooling years that follow.⁵³

Shulman asserts that a range of teaching acts must be performed in order for instruction to take place.⁵⁴ The study revealed that teachers also make use of chalkboard-based teaching as a way of teaching in their schools. Chalkboard teaching assists teachers with writing stories and drawing pictures for all learners to see on the topic being taught. This instruction strategy supports the teachers to manage, explain and discuss the subject's content to promote effective teaching.⁵⁵

RECOMMENDATION

The findings of the study showed that rural schools specifically struggle to satisfy students' requirements due to a lack of funding, a lack of academic opportunities, and poverty rates that impede growth in all sectors. Teachers, thus, adopt various pedagogical strategies integrated with the limited resources they have in their rural under-resourced schools to ensure effective teaching and learning. To make the most of their present resources, teachers require intervention tactics. The study, therefore, recommends that strategies directly focused on developing and supporting rural schools, such as regular Department of Education visits, regular improvement of school facilities and establishment of a sustainable funding model for sustainable development and improvement of teaching and learning standards should be developed and implemented.

CONCLUSION

This study has explored teachers' pedagogical strategies in rural schools with limited resources and how they teach to ensure that teaching and learning occur. The study has also revealed that teachers in rural schools face unique challenges and opportunities that require them to adapt and be resilient to ensure quality teaching and learning occurs. The study has further shed light on the profound appreciation of the commitment and resilience of the teachers to learning. The efforts of the teachers in the study indicate a special adaptation to the conditions that come with working in rural schools. The teacher's ability to traverse the unique challenges of their rural situations demonstrates a form of pedagogical alchemy, where the lack of resources is transformed into opportunities for growth and learning. This confirms the argument that teachers are the cornerstones of instructional activities. Their commitment and dedication are essential for learners in different contexts to thrive. In essence, the study invites acknowledgment of teachers as champions of hope in schools and communities and the need to support and empower them to shape a better educational sphere.

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⁵² Du Plessis, "Problems and Complexities in Rural Schools: Challenges of Education and Social Development."

⁵³ García and Weiss, "Education Inequalities at the School Starting Gate: Gaps, Trends, and Strategies to Address Them."

⁵⁴ Shulman, "Those Who Understand: A Conception of Teacher Knowledge."

⁵⁵ Shulman, "Knowledge and Teaching: Foundations of the New Reform." 17.

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