

To what extent are students of teaching ready to work in rural schools – the realities of the Polish education system

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The social, economic and cultural development of rural areas in Poland increasingly requires that conditions be provided for the development of village schools. This in turn leads to teachers' readiness to perform their professional responsibilities. To help address such problems, this article analyses the factors influencing pre-service teachers' readiness to work in rural schools. Empirical data for the analysis were gathered using quantitative and qualitative indicators from student essays about their self-perception as future teachers. Data were collected in 2017–2019 from students of teaching specialties at the Pedagogical University of Kraków (Poland).

The results indicate that personal resources as well as professional competence factors were related with a readiness to work in rural schools. Social resources, as part of accepting work in a rural area, were also essential. Non-personal resources were partially important. In conclusion, readiness for working in a rural school is more developed in respondents from rural areas, as well as in those who study part-time and have developed professional competence.

KEYWORDS: Poland, readiness for teaching, rural school, students of teaching specialties, teaching competence.

Przygotowanie studentów pedagogiki do pracy w szkołach wiejskich – realia polskiego systemu oświaty

Rozwój społeczny, gospodarczy i kulturalny obszarów wiejskich w Polsce w coraz większym stopniu wymaga stworzenia warunków dla funkcjonowania szkół wiejskich. To z kolei wymaga ukształtowanej gotowości nauczycieli do wykonywania obowiązków zawodowych. Celem artykułu jest analiza czynników wpływających na gotowość studentów specjalności nauczycielskich do pracy w szkołach wiejskich. Dane empiryczne zostały zebrane poprzez prowadzenie badań ilościowych i jakościowych. Za materiał badawczy posłużyły eseje studentów – przyszłych nauczycieli na temat ich postrzegania siebie jako

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przyszłych nauczycieli. Dane zostały zebrane w latach 2017–2019 od studentów różnych kierunków specjalności nauczycielskiej Uniwersytetu Pedagogicznego w Krakowie (Polska).

Uzyskane wyniki wskazują, że zarówno zasoby osobiste, jak i kompetencje zawodowe mogą być pozytywnie powiązane z gotowością do pracy w szkole wiejskiej. Niezbędne są również zasoby społeczne jako czynniki wpływające na rozwój gotowości do podejmowania pracy nauczycielskiej na wsi. Częściowo ważne były również zasoby nieosobowe. Podsumowując, gotowość do pracy w szkole wiejskiej jest bardziej rozwinięta u respondentów z terenów wiejskich, a także u tych, którzy uczą się w trybie niestacjonarnym i mają rozwinięte kompetencje zawodowe.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: gotowość do nauczania, kompetencje nauczycielskie, Polska, studenci specjalności nauczycielskich, szkoła wiejska.

Introduction

Readiness for working as a teacher is a complex and often variably perceived phenomenon (Cochran-Smith, 2005; Korthagen, 2010; Liston, Whitcomb & Borko, 2006; Tait, 2008). Some authors turn to the notion of readiness as an indicator for teachers' awareness and future performance in specific parts of the job (Mohamed, Valcke & De Wever, 2017). The readiness of trainees for their future profession is traditionally measured by the means that teachers of tertiary education usually have at their disposal – exam grades, teaching practice feedback from supervisors, as well as a final evaluation given by state examinations (Straková, 2015). Otherwise, readiness for working as a teacher is a complicated phenomenon, which is a combination in itself of professional competence (substantive knowledge, practical skills and social abilities), self-esteem to practice, as well as an acceptance of living in a rural area (rural lifestyle, small community, type of residence, etc.).

The concept of readiness for a teaching job acquires special meaning in the case of rural schools, when a young teacher feels the responsibility of his/her authority not only within the school walls, but also outside of them (Azano & Stewart, 2016). This increases the social role of the teacher, who now must pay attention to their own professional and personal behaviours both at school and in the community where the school is located (González, Moll & Amanti, 2006; Straková, 2015).

The quality of the preparation of teachers for working in rural schools, their readiness for performing professional functions, their personal and professional development, skills of assessing pedagogical situations, as well as the ability to select appropriate methods of overcoming the difficulties encountered in the educational process largely affects the development of rural schools, transforming them from only an educational unit to a cultural and civic centre, a place which unifies and identifies the local rural residents. Preservice teachers are typically high performing students who bring a unique level of motivation with them to the classroom (Azano & Stewart, 2016). Thus, they should be viewed as experts for change dynamics or even as of change agents (Fullan, 1993). A comprehensive theory of social transmission explains what produces and sustains the values, standards and behaviour patterns promulgated by cultural institutions. They are products of the impacts wielded by members of society (Bandura, 1986). It is in this context this study can be suggested as a tool to deepen existing knowledge regarding the preparation of future teachers for professional activity in a rural school.

1. Theoretical background

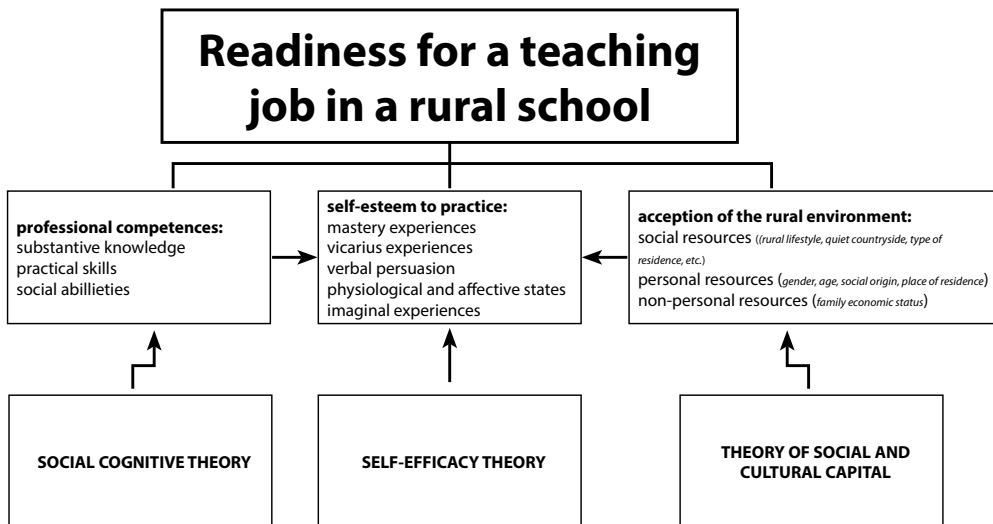
1.1. Overview of underpinning theories

The theoretical approach of the study involves two concepts intended to open up the definition of readiness to teaching in rural schools: social cognitive theory and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997) as well as Bourdieu's concepts of the relationships between culture, materiality and social relations in the formation of, and domination through, spaces (Bourdieu, 1982). Self-efficacy is mainly understood as the beliefs a person has about one's own personal skills, capabilities or decision-making process. One of the first professionals who paid attention to this construct was Bandura (1977), who researched the nature and structure of self-efficacy beliefs as well as the processes through which such self-beliefs operate (Pajares, 2002). The concept of relationships between culture, materiality and social relations in the formation of, and domination through, spaces was introduced to the sociological literature by Bourdieu (1986) with his study *The forms of capital* (Bourdieu, 1986). To this end, this paper focuses on social cognitive theory and Bourdieu's theory of social and cultural capital because they can help to explore user perceptions and to understand the criteria and barriers to students-future teachers' own professional confidence in teaching in rural schools.

1.2. Conceptual framework

The research began with formulating a framework for teacher competence and the influence of resources (social, personal and non-personal) for studying readiness for working in rural schools. Thus, social cognitive theory, self-efficacy theory and the theory of social and cultural capital were adopted to help develop a readiness-development framework to guide this study (Figure1).

Figure 1. The framework to guide the research of students' readiness for a teaching job in a rural school.



Source: Own research.

1.2.1. Social cognitive theory and readiness for working as a teacher in rural schools

Social cognitive theory is concerned with the process of knowledge acquisition or learning. Cognitive functioning involves knowledge, much of it specialized, and the cognitive skills for operating with it. Hence, cognitive attainments require the acquisition of domain-relevant knowledge along with judgmental rules that apply to that area of activity (Feldman, 1994).

Within the social cognitive perspective, social factors play an influential role in cognitive development and there are many motivators of the pursuit of competence. Maturational factors and the information gained from exploratory experiences contribute to cognitive growth. However, most valuable knowledge is imparted socially (Bandura, 1998).

This theory helps to prove the main components of professional competences (substantive knowledge, practical abilities and social competence) as the chief factors influencing psychological self-esteem on future teachers' practice and the development of readiness for working as a teacher.

1.2.2. Self-efficacy theory and readiness for working as a teacher in a rural school

Self-efficacy, or confidence, is one of the most enabling psychology models to have been adopted into positive psychology. It is the optimistic belief in personal competence or chances of successfully accomplishing a task and producing a favourable outcome (Bandura, 1977). Researchers have examined how personal and environmental (instructional, social) factors affect self-efficacy and how self-efficacy influences learning, motivation, and achievement (Schunk, 1995).

According to self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997; Gosselin & Maddux, 2003), there are at least five identifiable primary sources that are affected by individual interpretations of former and current experiences – mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, physiological and affective states and imaginal experiences. Each of them is a direct determinant of behavioural intention and, ultimately, in case of this study, of readiness for professional activity.

1.2.3. The theory of social and cultural capital and readiness for working as a teacher in a rural school

In order to emphasize the role of the school and the teacher in the social transformation of the village, this study is also based on the theory of social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1982, 1986). This theory proves the definitions of cultural capital, which could be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications, and social capital as a form of capital which may be institutionalized in the form of a title of nobility (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Bourdieu appears to be arguing that people's behaviour is the result of accepting the "objective probabilities" of future success. The actions based on these expectations create social reality, rather than the "objective probabilities" creating expectations which lead to action (Breton, 1964). The most important issue of the theory of social and cultural capital for this study is that there is a visible link between cultural capital and educational attainment. Such a statement suggests that educational capital is as much a vehicle of social mobility as of social reproduction (Bourdieu, 1982) and educational credentials are a major mechanism of social reproduction in advanced capitalist societies (Grassby, 1970). To this end, accepting and appreciating rurality (rural life-style, quiet countryside, type of residence, etc.) as well as personal (gender, age, social origin, place of residence, etc.) and

non-personal (family economic status, etc.) resources are intrinsic components of shaping future teacher readiness for working in rural schools.

As this conceptual framework intends to explore the potential moderators for assessing the importance of the factors inhibiting vs. supporting readiness for working as a teacher in rural schools (gender, age, place of residence, social origin, family economic status, university study), it appears reasonable to assume that a combination of all the above-mentioned theoretical constructs can be used as a benchmark to guide the investigation of the readiness for working as a teacher in a rural school.

1.3. Current study

The present study reports the first data or rather statements gathered from an ongoing study ($n=60$) piloting large scale, longitudinal, qualitative interviews of students between 2017 and 2019. The first part of the research started in 2017 with the aim of obtaining a better understanding how candidates for teaching in Poland are prepared for working in schools. The starting point for this study is to understand the factors influencing the trajectories of Polish students – future teachers to work in small rural schools.

1.3.1. Study area

Poland's population is ranked sixth among European Union countries (Eurostat, 2018). However, in the case of population density, Poland is in the group of average-populated European countries. There are 122 people/1 km² (in cities – 1088, in rural areas – 51). The number of city residents in the total population is decreasing, whereas the number of people living in rural areas has been gradually increasing since 2003. According to population demographic forecasts for the years 2008–2035 compiled by Statistics Poland, there will be a constant decline in population in cities by the end of this period, while rural areas will experience an increase in the size of the population. Therefore, it follows that the demographic potential of the Polish countryside in the foreseeable future will be significant, oscillating around 40% of the total population of the country (Statistics Poland, 2018).

Since the study respondents were students of teaching specialties at the Pedagogical University of Kraków, the Lesser Poland province [Małopolska Voivodeship] with its capital in Kraków was used as a case study, reflecting increasing concerns about the situation of available human resources in small rural schools, in terms of the readiness of pre-service teachers to work there. This research is expected to contribute to a better understanding of the methodology of building models for the development of career-long skills among school teachers, particularly highlighting students–future teachers' readiness for working in small schools and raising the social and cultural levels of Polish rural areas. This problem is particularly significant for Poland where 3.4% of GDP is contributed by agriculture, rural areas occupy 46.5% of its territory, and about 40% of the population lives in rural areas, including 40.6% in of 3–18 year olds (Statistics Poland, 2018).

Research has shown that in recent years within the Lesser Poland province, the attractiveness of the village as a place of residence has increased significantly. Such positive changes in the attitude of Polish citizens to the countryside may be a consequence of the inclusion of the Polish Common Agricultural Policy into EU policy. The village has also become more attractive to educated and affluent people who choose to live in suburban villages and commute to work in the city, but in return they have the opportunity for more

comfortable living (e.g., owning a house with a garden; Matysiak-Błaszczyk & Słupska, 2013). Accordingly, access to educational and cultural facilities in small villages are vital to local communities in rural areas.

1.3.2. Polish rural schools

A rural school is usually considered to be a small school. This means that most of these schools teach less than 100 pupils. The number of children in the vast majority of rural schools is no more than 70. There are 1,514 primary schools in Lesser Poland in 2022 of which in rural areas are 1061. This is 70% of all primary schools in the region province. The number of children attending rural primary schools at that time was 152,096 students, which constituted about 52% of all children studying in primary schools in the region (Urząd Statystyczny w Krakowie, 2022).

These data demonstrate a clear need for the enhanced attention of society and the government on the development and improvement of rural schools as well as providing them with highly professional staff. That also confirms the expediency and relevance of our study.

It is also worth focusing on the situation of staffing policies in rural schools in Poland. In 2022, the number of full-time teachers in rural primary schools was around 291,886 (56,6% of the total number of teachers in primary schools), including 84.8% – female and 15.2% – male. The number of students per one teacher is troubling. Rural schools have a ratio of approximately 20 students per one teacher, which is almost twice as high as in urban schools, where there are approximately 10 students per one teaching job position (Główny Urząd Statystyczny [GUS], 2022). These data indicate a definite impediment to teaching work and in most cases discourages teachers, especially young ones, from working in a rural school. This situation translates into the lack of teachers of special subjects and having various subjects taught by one teacher who often does not specialize in subjects that are offered as additional ones. Overcoming this problem requires increasing government support for rural schools as well as having future teachers obtain good preparation prior to entering the profession (Barber & Mourshed, 2007).

1.3.3. Teacher training in Poland

There are five Public Pedagogical Universities currently in Poland (Ministry of Higher Education of Poland, 2022). But only several of them provide end-to-end teacher education for all school levels (pre-school, primary and secondary). The Pedagogical University of Kraków offers students from various faculties the opportunity to obtain teaching qualifications. For this purpose, students willing to work as teachers follow a programme in a selected field of study with a teaching specialty.

The Teacher Training Programme consists of a pedagogical and psychological module (10 ECTS) and a didactical and practical module (15 ECTS). The pedagogical and psychological module has theoretical courses, such as the Basics of Psychology (a main course and a special course for primary school) – 4 ECTS, Educational Concepts and Practices (a main course and a course for primary and secondary schools) – 5 ECTS, Safety and Hygiene of students and working teachers – 1 ECTS. The Didactical and Practical module consists of a theoretical course on didactics (a basic course and a course for particular school subjects) – 8 ECTS and teacher training practice at a school – 7 ECTS.

After completing the Teacher Training Programme, students acquire teacher's competences (specified knowledge, teaching skills and competences).

There are nearly 13,000 students at the Pedagogical University of Kraków (Pedagogical University of Kraków, 2022). More than half of the students are from the Lesser Poland province, which is why using them in our research was completely adequate and practically justified.

1.4. The aims of the study

Taking into account the above-mentioned theoretical concepts and empirical findings, the exploratory study conducted had the following purpose: to explore the extent of pre-service teachers' readiness to teach in rural schools among the university students of teaching specialties. The following research questions were specified:

- Which factors raise or inhibit a student's readiness to work as a teacher in a rural school (i.e., substantive knowledge, practical skills, social abilities, self-esteem and acceptance of rurality)?
- Which kinds of resources: social (rural life-style, quiet countryside, type of residence, etc.), personal (gender, age, social origin, place of residence) and non-personal (family economic status) influenced the readiness of students-future teachers to work in rural schools?

2. Material and methods

2.1. Participants' overview

The sample was organised in accordance with the convenience–voluntary sampling scheme (Gravetter & Forzano, 2010; Weathington, Cunningham & Pittenger, 2010). The sample included participants who: (1) provided written consent to participate in the study; (2) were students of any field of study but only in a teaching profile, i.e., a profile preparing graduates to work as teachers.

The study involved 60 volunteers (including 44 women), students of the Pedagogical University of Kraków, located in a large industrialized region of south-east Poland, who completed half of their teacher training program. The average age of the participants was 24–25 years ($SD = 4.782$). Among the respondents, 50% were residents of villages, while the other 28.3% and 21.7%, lived in smaller towns (less than 50,000 residents) and cities (over 50,000 residents) respectively. The vast majority of respondents (83.3%) declared a medium family income, while the remaining respondents (16.7%) stated that it was above average. The study involved full-time students (60%) and part-time students (40%).

2.2. Materials and instruments

The empirical materials used in the study of readiness for working as a teacher in rural schools were collected from students' written essays, in which they were asked to reflect on one of the following topics:

- 1) How do I evaluate myself as a future teacher?;
- 2) As a future teacher, what difficulties am I afraid of and how can I overcome them?

Participants also were asked to provide basic information on their socio-demographic background, i.e.: 1) their gender, 2) age, 3) field of study, 4) type of studies, 5) teaching experience, 6) social and economic situation of their family, 7) social origin, and 8) place of residence.

2.3. Procedures

After completing the Pedagogical and Psychological module (10 ECTS), students were asked to prepare essays on one of the topics listed above during the following week (see subsection 3.2.). Students were informed that the study is anonymous and participation is voluntary. In case of any questions about the purpose of the study, the lecturer explained that the material collected will serve to determine the expectations of future teachers regarding the necessary competences to perform the role of a well-prepared teacher and the competences necessary for addressing the various difficulties faced in the reality of schools.

After obtaining written consent for participation in the study, the lecturer provided students with the essay topics and each of the volunteers chose one. After a week, during the next meeting in class, the volunteers submitted their essays prepared at home. The aims, procedure and materials used in the study were approved by the Ethics Committee for Research at the Pedagogical University of Kraków.

2.4. Analysis approach

The data obtained from the responses were transcribed and analysed using qualitative content analysis (Schreier, 2012) the most important points are summarized, and end of chapter questions provide an opportunity to check for understanding."; "author": {"dropping-particle": "", "family": "Schreier", "given": "M.", "non-dropping-particle": "", "parse-names": false, "suffix": ""}, "id": "ITEM-1", "issued": {"date-parts": ["2012"]}, "number-of-pages": 280 pages", "publisher": "Sage Publications", "publisher-place": "London", "title": "Qualitative content analysis in practice", "type": "book"}, "uris": ["http://www.mendeley.com/documents/?uuid=d8d7ef62-75d6-49f6-9acd-5bace4bdb059"]}], "mendeley": {"formattedCitation": "(Schreier, 2012. The content analysis focused on identifying factors that are significant for acquiring a readiness for teaching in rural schools and a willingness to overcome barriers and difficulties connected with teaching there. Quantitative data were analysed by means of IBM SPSS v 21. Quantitative data analyses were used to develop a general picture of the perceived characteristics of a pre-school teacher in accordance with the main study criteria (substantive knowledge, practical skills, social abilities, self-esteem and acceptance of rurality) and to identify any dependencies between the study criteria and socio-demographic background of the respondents.

The data were categorized and analysed according to the factors which raised or inhibited students' readiness to teach in rural schools. The unit of analysis was one sentence. The main coding categories were formed in a data-driven manner (Siklander, Kangas, Ruhalahti & Korva, 2017). The structure of the main and sub-categories was developed by reflecting on the background theories. The categories were revised in frequentative form by three researchers in order to increase the validity of the research findings. The most effective factors are not clearly separated but rather linked with each other. For instance, we connected substantive knowledge, practical skills and social abilities in the sub-category of "professional competence".

As a result, the following categories were revealed and connected:

- *Professional competence*: substantive knowledge (subject knowledge, psychological, pedagogical and methodological knowledge), practical skills for conducting lessons in small groups, outdoor practical lessons, using garden-based learning for different subject; social abilities of cooperating with parents and with a small local community.
- *Self-esteem to practice*: mastery and vicarious experiences; confidence in addressing difficult school situations; internal beliefs about the value of a rural environment; positive

psychological and affective states towards the rural community; imaginal experiences about the advantages of a rural school; easier use of innovative teaching methods; opportunities to test oneself in conditions of a small rural community.

- *Acceptation of rurality*: calm, measured lifestyle; mutual community support; type of residence; healthy fresh food; opportunities to live close to family; professional and social self-sufficiency.

3. Results

The response rate was 98%. The collected material was analysed by 3 assessors, who transcribed every sentence appearing in the essays into one of three separate categories: (1) *Professional competence* (with the sub-categories of: teachers' substantive knowledge, practical skills and teachers' social abilities), (2) teachers' self-esteem and (3) acceptance of rurality. The Krippendorph- α s ranged from 0.788 to 0.896 for the quantified categories.

In this way, it was possible to extract 925 sentences, about 60% of them were assigned to category 1 (e.g., "The teacher should be able to engage their students in exploring the world on their own"), about 23% assigned to category 2 (e.g., "If I was able to teach something to my students, it provided me with great satisfaction"), and about 16% assigned to category 3 (e.g., "I prefer to live in the countryside close to nature").

In the next step, sentences representing specific categories were divided into positive, negative or neutral attitudes. The Krippendorph- α s ranged from 0.886 to 0.906 for the quantified categories. Approximately 84% of the sentences were positive for the teachers' substantive knowledge sub-category (e.g., "Very good knowledge of my subject allows me to reliably implement the core curriculum but also to inspire students with my passion for the subject"), and about 16% were negative (e.g., "I feel that I lack psychological knowledge for work as well as with students and parents"). About 73% of the sentences were positive for the teachers' practical skills sub-category (e.g., "I plan lessons by trying to use different methods and techniques and also to present the material in an unconventional way"), and approx. 27% of the sentences were negative (e.g., "I lack experience and practice"). In the teachers' social abilities sub-category, approx. 80% of the sentences were positive (e.g., "My strength is the ability to make contact and work with others"), about 19% were negative (e.g., "I am paralyzed by fear when I think that I will have to stand in the middle of a class full of students"), and 1% were neutral (e.g., "Beginning teachers have a long way to go to acquire the ability to communicate with students"). About 75% of the sentences were positive in the teachers' self-esteem category (e.g., "I intend to apply praise more often than punishment, to set a positive attitudinal model for students, to inspire their confidence"), and approx. 25% of the sentences were negative (e.g., "A very difficult task is to objectively assess the state of one's own competences, I am not sure if I have them"), while in the acceptance of rurality category, about 88% of the sentences were positive (e.g., "I dream about returning to my home village as a teacher"), and approx. 12% of the sentences were negative (e.g., "I am not for rural life, I am afraid of the routine of a small school and the lack of entertainment"). All sentences included in other categories were neutral (e.g., "Children behave badly at school when they are bored").

The research indicates that the most relevant factor influencing pre-school teachers' readiness for working in rural schools was professional competences (approx. 60%). By

identifying knowledge as a factor, we specify it as acquisition of different kinds of substantive knowledge (subject knowledge, psychological, pedagogical and methodological knowledge). Students noted that deep basic knowledge of the subject helps in feeling confident during the lesson, as well as enabling them to organise lessons in unusual circumstances, outside the classroom, to be prepared to answer questions from students, to direct their interest in science, and help clarify unclear topics (e.g., “I can show my future students the beauty of the world, but also the threats that human activity brings, I think it helps me to be on the same wavelength with my students in a rural school”). Teachers’ practical skills and social abilities also have great impact on the students’ readiness to work as a teacher in rural schools (e.g., “Making quick decision and the desire to achieve the goal will help me conduct classes in an interesting and unusual way, especially in a small school where students have really good experience”).

The significance of the teachers’ self-esteem category was mentioned:

A teacher is a person who should provide students with knowledge, but also a person who should be the students’ tutor and mentor, I think I’m patient, reliable and responsible. This feature in teaching in a small community is also great, because here people treat a teacher as an authority and a model of behaviour.

However, external factors, such as negative mastery experience, physiological and affective states, often inhibit students’ confidence in working together with a small local community, and therefore discourage them from working in rural schools.

The third relevant factor in supporting pre-school teachers’ readiness to work in rural schools is the acceptance of rurality expressed in their essays (about 16%), because it provides the option of living in the countryside, with a rural life-style, whereas work in a small school is perceived as attractive. In this case, it is important to show the statistical dependence of this category with place of residence and the acceptance of rurality category, as well as the dependence between type of study and the category of readiness for working in a rural school.

Regarding the assessment of sentences assigned to the sub-category of teachers’ social abilities and acceptance of rurality, the interactive impact of place of residence and type of studies turned out to be significant. The value of the statistics for the teachers’ social abilities sub-category was $F(2.54) = 3.516$; $p < 0.05$; $\eta^2 = 0.115$; for acceptance of rurality, the value of the statistics was $F(2.54) = 3.073$; $p = 0.05$; $\eta^2 = 0.102$.

In the sub-category of teachers’ social abilities, the sentence assessments of students living in a large city or village were similar regardless of the type of study, while among those living in a mid-sized city, the sentence assessments were clearly higher for respondents studying full-time than in the group studying part-time. For the category of acceptance of rurality, sentence assessments were very similar among students living in rural areas regardless of the type of studies they undertook. Conversely, students who lived in a large city and who study extramurally had clearly lower assessments than those of full-time students. The reverse regularity occurs among residents of the mid-sized towns and villages – the essays of extramural students had more positive sentences in the category of acceptance of rurality than full-time students.

The mean and deviation values for assessing the sentences assigned to the sub-category of teachers’ social abilities and the category of acceptance of rurality in individual subgroups of students are provided below in Table 1.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics

	Place of residence	Type of study	M	SD	Number of sentences
Assessment of the sub-category teachers' social abilities	City: more than 50k	Full-time	1.875	1.642	8
		Part-time	1.600	1.816	5
		Total	1.769	1.640	13
	Town: below 50k	Full-time	2.800	1.229	10
		Part-time	-.571	1.618	7
		Total	1.411	2.181	17
	Village	Full-time	2.333	2.000	18
		Part-time	1.500	1.930	12
		Total	2.000	1.982	30
	Total	Full-time	2.361	1.726	36
		Part-time	.916	1.998	24
		Total	1.783	1.957	60
Assessment of the category acceptance of rurality	City: more than 50k	Full-time	2.375	1.060	8
		Part-time	1.000	1.414	5
		Total	1.846	1.344	13
	Town: below 50k	Full-time	1.200	2.043	10
		Part-time	3.142	2.672	7
		Total	2.000	2.449	17
	Village	Full-time	1.944	1.589	18
		Part-time	2.000	1.858	12
		Total	1.966	1.670	30
	Total	Full-time	1.833	1.647	36
		Part-time	2.125	2.112	24
		Total	1.950	1.835	60

Source: Own research.

In turn, Figures 2 and 3 present the profiles of the results showing the discussed interactions for assessing the sentences assigned to the sub-category of teachers' social abilities and the category of acceptance of rurality, respectively.

Assessment of the subcategory teachers' social abilities

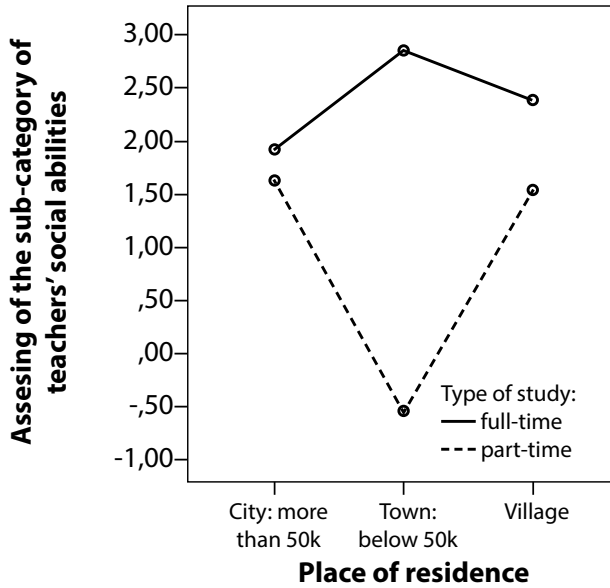


Figure 2. The teachers' social abilities sub-category assessed by students depending on the type of their study and place of residence.

Assessment of the category acceptance of rurality

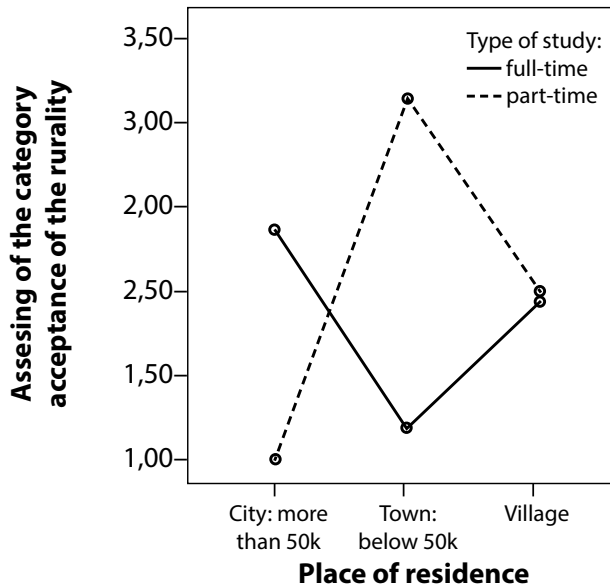


Figure 3. The acceptance of rurality category assessed by students depending on the type of their study and place of residence.

4. Discussion

This study sought to explore the factors influencing students' readiness for working as a teacher in a rural school in the context of different types of resources (social, personal, and non-personal) in the Polish context. Readiness is mostly used to indicate teachers' competence in delivering certain aspects of their job or even the whole job (Winterton, Delamare-Le Deist & Stringfellow, 2006).

In this study, the most significant factors appear to be: Professional competences (with the sub-categories of: teachers' substantive knowledge, practical skills and teachers' social abilities), Teachers' self-esteem and Acceptance of rurality. Based on the results, it is important to discuss the following issues. First, on the basis of earlier studies of teachers' readiness for the job, professional competences can "represent a marker or reference point for judgments about the preparedness of beginning teachers" (Swabey, Castleton & Penney, 2010). Pre-service teachers and the students they teach have "funds of knowledge" (González et al., 2006) that can make learning and teaching dynamic, engaging, and meaningful, while still addressing the curricular demands teachers encounter in standards-based classrooms (Fecho, 2011; Stewart, 2012). This is why, in our case, pre-service teachers' perceived mastery of core teacher competences is the indicator of the variable "job readiness".

Another significant factor is Teachers' self-esteem. Novice teachers encounter difficult challenges in responding to the needs of various teaching situations (Korthagen, 2010; Liston et al., 2006; Tait, 2008). In this aspect, teachers' self-esteem formed on the basis of self-efficacy in professional experience plays a prominent role. The development of self-efficacy is closely intertwined with a person's experiences, competences, and developmental tasks in different domains at different stages in life (Tsang, Hui & Law, 2012). In the present study, the correlation between students' readiness for a teaching job vs. formed teacher's self-esteem as the result of practical training (vicarious, mastery and imaginal experiences) is noted. Students who had experience in a rural school in any capacity felt more confident than those who did not, but those practicum experiences must be carefully planned and structured around a framework that attends to the nuances of culture and place (Azano & Stewart, 2016).

The results of the third factor – Acceptance of rurality – indicate some links with the conclusions of Azano and Stewart (2016), who highlighted that participants in their study consistently identified the rural community as a benefit of teaching in a rural school. In our study, students who resided in mid-sized towns and villages had a more positive attitude toward the rural lifestyle and rural community, they resonate with the specificity of a rural place, culture and environment and they are willing to take on the challenge of teaching in a small rural community. This proves Theobald's (1997) statement about place-conscious education as a scaffold to make "meaning of schooling" (Theobald, 1997). In the case of our study, the discussion about the professional competences category and acceptance of rurality explains how crucial it is that pre-service teachers understand the nuances of place and culture. Place-based pedagogy refers to educational practices seeking to tie the realities of place and students' lives to meaningful instruction, particularly for the purpose of student engagement (Azano, 2011) particularly for the purpose of student engagement, are typically referred to as place-based education. This study investigates how one teacher considered place in making instructional choices for eighth grade English students in a rural

high school, and students' perceptions of this teacher's place-based instruction. Findings indicate that the teacher initially used his own understanding of place to activate students' prior knowledge. Additionally, when the teacher used place-based content to mediate instruction rather than his personal experience, students were able to construct their own understandings of place. While findings indicate that place-based strategies may increase curricular relevance, they also signal that without a critical lens rural students may be hindered in their capacity to identify and analytically interpret the challenges affecting their communities and the structures that serve to reproduce inequalities. The study concludes with a critique of the learning experience and makes suggestions for implementing a critical pedagogy of place in the English classroom.

author:{"dropping-particle":"","family":"Azano","given":"Amy","non-dropping-particle":"","parse-names":false,"suffix":""},"container-title":"Journal of Research in Rural Education","id":"ITEM-1","issue":"10","issued":{"date-parts":["2011"]},"page":"1-12","title":"The Possibility of Place : One Teacher ' s Use of Place-Based Instruction for English Students in a Rural High School","type":"article-journal","volume":"26"},"uris":["http://www.mendeley.com/documents/?uid=b34bfb9c-711a-41b2-877f-6521c375e72e"],"mendeley":{"formattedCitation":"(A. Azano, 2011. This is why connecting curricula to students' individual cultures is a vital element of teaching and learning, especially in the context of place-based education (Azano & Stewart, 2016).

Finally, our analysis shows that personal resources, such as social origin, place of residence as well as the factor of professional competences may have a positive influence on psychological self-esteem, influencing a student to practice teaching and gain a readiness to work in rural schools. Social resources, as part of the factor of acceptance of rurality, were also important. Non-personal resources (family economic status) were partially important because the majority of respondents were from rural areas, whose attractiveness has increased significantly as a result of EU subsidies for agriculture and rural infrastructure development in Poland.

These results are in line with earlier conclusions about the advantages of teaching in a rural school, such as small class size and community closeness, which fall short as true incentives for recruiting highly qualified teachers (Barley & Brigham, 2008; Monk, 2007) state, and regional levels. Fast Response Project topics change to reflect new issues, as identified through lab outreach and requests for assistance from policymakers and educators at state and local levels and from communities, businesses, parents, families, and youth.

author:{"dropping-particle":"","family":"Barley","given":"Z. A.","non-dropping-particle":"","parse-names":false,"suffix":""},"dropping-particle":"","family":"Brigham","given":"N.","non-dropping-particle":"","parse-names":false,"suffix":""},"container-title":"Issues & Answers Report, REL","id":"ITEM-1","issue":"45","issued":{"date-parts":["2008"]},"page":"1-21","title":"Preparing Teachers to Teach in Rural Schools","type":"article-journal"},"uris":["http://www.mendeley.com/documents/?uid=5d2563a6-ac43-4ff1-9686-6d57e3529eba"],"id":"ITEM-2","itemData":{"DOI":"10.1353/foc.2007.0009","ISBN":"10548289","ISSN":"10548289","PMID":"17407927"},"abstract":"In examining recruitment and retention of teachers in rural areas, David Monk begins by noting the numerous possible characteristics of rural communities--small size, sparse settlement, distance from population concentrations, and an economic reliance on agricultural industries that are increasingly using seasonal and immigrant workers to minimize labor costs. Many, though not all, rural areas, he says, are seriously impoverished. Classes in rural schools are relatively small, and teachers tend to report satisfaction with their work environments and relatively few problems with discipline. But teacher turnover is often high, and hiring can be difficult. Monk observes

that rural schools have a below-average share of highly trained teachers. Compensation in rural schools tends to be low, perhaps because of a lower fiscal capacity in rural areas, thus complicating efforts to attract and retain teachers. Several student characteristics, including relatively large shares of students with special needs and with limited English skills and lower shares of students attending college, can also make it difficult to recruit and retain high-quality teachers. Other challenges include meeting the needs of highly mobile children of low-income migrant farm workers. With respect to public policy, Monk asserts a need to focus on a subcategory of what might be called hard-to-staff rural schools rather than to develop a blanket set of policies for all rural schools. In particular, he recommends a focus on such indicators as low teacher qualifications, teaching in fields far removed from the area of training, difficulty in hiring, high turnover, a lack of diversity among teachers in the school, and the presence of migrant farm workers' children. Successful efforts to stimulate economic growth in these areas would be highly beneficial. He also calls attention to the potential for modern telecommunication and computing technologies to offset some of the drawbacks associated with teaching in rural areas.

,"author":{"dropping-particle":"","family":"Monk","given":"David H.,"non-dropping-particle":"","parse-names":false,"suffix":""},"container-title":"Future of Children","id":"ITEM-2","issue":"1","issued":{"date-parts":["2007"]},"page":"155-174","title":"Recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers in rural areas","type":"article-journal","volume":"17"},"uris":["http://www.mendeley.com/documents/?uuid=2e900c7d-935e-4561-9963-4f0dda27cc81"]},"mendeley":{"formatted-Citation":"(Barley & Brigham, 2008; Monk, 2007. Other challenges relating to poverty, geographic isolation, lower teacher salaries, and a lack of community amenities (Miller, 2012) seem to trump the potential perks of living in a rural area (Azano & Stewart, 2016). So within the Teacher Training Programmes, students studying full-time need to be immersed in rural environments to raise their teaching self-esteem and readiness for teaching in rural schools.

5. Conclusions

This article presented a qualitative content analysis, which empirically aims to explore the factors influencing the development of readiness to teach in rural schools. This paper identified the main study categories for analysing empirical data: professional competences (with the sub-criteria of: substantive knowledge, practical skills, social abilities), self-esteem, and acceptance of rurality. With the aim of drawing a general picture of the perceived characteristic of the pre-school teacher and to identify some of the dependencies between these study criteria and the socio-demographical background of the respondents, quantitative data analyses were used.

The research indicates that professional competences are the most relevant factors influencing pre-school teachers' readiness to work in rural schools. The significance of the category of teachers' self-esteem was also demonstrated. The third relevant factor emerging in students' essays which support pre-school teachers' readiness to work in rural schools is the acceptance of rurality.

In conclusion, readiness to work in rural schools is more developed in respondents from rural areas, who study part-time and have developed professional competences.

The study does have limitations. The most substantial limitation concerns the methodology: identifying factors and categories for measuring readiness for the teaching job is challenging. Much of the earlier studies are based on self-reported data. This study did not use self-reports; however its aim was to further explore the phenomenon of teacher

readiness for the job in rural surroundings. These results will be used as a tool for a more accurate conceptualization of upcoming research.

The methodology and results of this study provide a new understanding of the requirements for teacher education and pre-teacher readiness to teach successfully in rural schools. Future research in this area could explore how teachers in their professional career build relations with the rural community and how they promote cultural authenticity as well as promote rural development through education.

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