

Improving the Quality of Life of Rural Teachers and Optimizing the Targeted Training System: Practical Reflection Based on Rural Cases

Anuar Ahmad*

Doctor, Faculty of Education, The National University of Malaysia,
Bangi, Malaysia, 43600
Email: anuarmd@ukm.edu.my

Bingbing Chen

Ph.D, Faculty of Education, The National University of Malaysia,
Bangi, Malaysia, 43600
Email: P118379@siswa.ukm.edu.my

Wanyi He

Ph.D, Faculty of Education, The National University of Malaysia,
Bangi, Malaysia, 43600
Email: P120341@siswa.ukm.edu.my

Rui Wan

Master, Fuzhou Preschool Education College, 99 Wang Anshi Avenue, Linchuan
District, Fuzhou City, Jiangxi Province, China.
Email address: 1021819521@qq.com

*Corresponding Author Email: anuarmd@ukm.edu.my

Received Date: 19-07-2024; Accepted Date: 21-11-2024; Publication Date: 26-11-2024

Abstract

This study seeks to investigate strategies for enhancing the well-being of rural teachers in China by refining training intervention models, with a particular emphasis on effective implementation approaches to improve professional networks and resource availability. A qualitative research design was employed, involving structured interviews with five rural teachers. The interviews provided insights into recurring themes such as professional isolation, mentorship, and technology integration. The findings indicated that the lack of resources and physical separation from both students and colleagues negatively impacted instructional quality and teacher well-

How to cite (APA):

Ahmad, A., Chen, B., He, W., Wan, R. (2024). Improving the Quality of Life of Rural Teachers and Optimizing the Targeted Training System: Practical Reflection Based on Rural Cases. *International Journal of Instructional Cases*, 8(2), 1-17.



**International Journal
of Instructional Cases**

being. It was found that the implementation of mentorship programmes alleviated feelings of isolation, provided both emotional and professional support, and contributed to the enhancement of teachers' confidence. Additionally, the integration of technology facilitated access to updated information, collaborative opportunities, and improvements in teaching practices. The study recommends that well-structured mentorship programmes and technology-based education and training systems within educational institutions can significantly enhance the quality of education in such regions. However, while these interventions show promise, broader adoption and sustained efforts are essential to ensure their long-term effectiveness.

Keywords: Rural teachers, Quality of life, Target Training System, Professional Development, Mentorship Programs, Rural Education Challenges

Introduction

The well-being of teachers is fundamental to the quality of education, particularly in rural areas where challenges tend to be more acute. Teachers' job satisfaction and overall quality of life are closely intertwined with their effectiveness in the classroom and, consequently, with student outcomes. In rural settings, educators often encounter barriers such as isolation from professional networks, limited access to resources, and suboptimal living conditions. These challenges contribute to elevated stress levels and high turnover rates, which can undermine the stability and quality of education in these communities ([Azano et al., 2019](#)). Research indicates that improving teacher well-being is crucial not only for the teachers themselves but also for the wider educational system. For instance, enhancing access to professional resources and improving living conditions can foster greater teacher engagement and retention, ultimately benefiting students and rural communities. [Zhao et al. \(2023\)](#) highlight that well-designed, targeted professional development programmes can significantly enhance teacher morale and instructional quality in rural areas. Additionally, [Whaland \(2020\)](#) underscores the importance of a comprehensive approach to teacher development that offers ongoing support and opportunities for educators to apply their learning in professional practice. Thus, improving teacher well-being through enhanced training models and increased resource availability can positively impact both teacher retention and student performance.

Problem statement

Rural teachers in China encounter substantial challenges, including professional isolation and restricted access to resources, which adversely affect their quality of life and teaching effectiveness. These difficulties not only impact their well-being but also impede the development of rural education systems. To address these issues, targeted training and support mechanisms are essential. This research seeks to explore strategies to enhance the quality of life for rural teachers in China by implementing customised training systems designed to address their specific challenges.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the challenges posed by professional isolation and limited access to resources, and their impact on the quality of life of rural teachers in China.
2. To assess practical strategies, including personalised professional development plans and technology integration, for enhancing the skills of rural teachers in China.
3. To investigate how targeted training systems, such as mentorship programmes, can contribute to improving the well-being of rural teachers in China.

Aims of the Study

This study aims to investigate the challenges faced by rural teachers in China, including professional isolation and inadequate resources, and how these factors impact their quality of life and job performance. The research also seeks to explore the effectiveness of targeted training systems, such as mentorship programmes and technology integration, in enhancing the well-being and professional development of rural teachers. Ultimately, the study aims to propose practical strategies for improving education systems in rural China by optimising teacher support.

Literature Review

Challenges of Isolation and Limited Resources for Rural Teachers

Rural teachers often encounter significant challenges, such as professional isolation and a lack of resources, which adversely impact their work environment and the quality of their teaching (see [Figure 1: Challenges of Isolation and Limited Resources for Rural Teachers](#)). [Mangione and Cannella \(2021\)](#) highlight that isolation leads to reduced peer interaction, thereby hindering teachers' professional development and networking opportunities. This limited engagement with colleagues restricts the exchange of ideas and impedes professional growth, ultimately affecting teaching quality. Furthermore, [Mncube et al. \(2023\)](#) assert that rural teachers also grapple with a shortage of resources, including insufficient teaching materials and inadequate educational facilities, which exacerbate the challenges they face and constrain their ability to deliver effective education.

In a similar vein, [Hong \(2012\)](#) argues that rural teachers are often isolated from their communities, which increases the likelihood of them leaving the profession due to the lack of support they receive. When teachers do not receive adequate support from their local communities, they are more prone to exiting the profession, which destabilises the rural education system (see Lack of Community Support in [Figure 1](#)). [Downes and Roberts \(2018\)](#) also emphasise that the absence of social contact has a detrimental effect on the psychological well-being of rural teachers, as well as their students. Vulnerable teachers are more susceptible to feeling demotivated, and their

lack of full engagement can lead to distractions, resulting in poor performance and, consequently, lower student achievement.

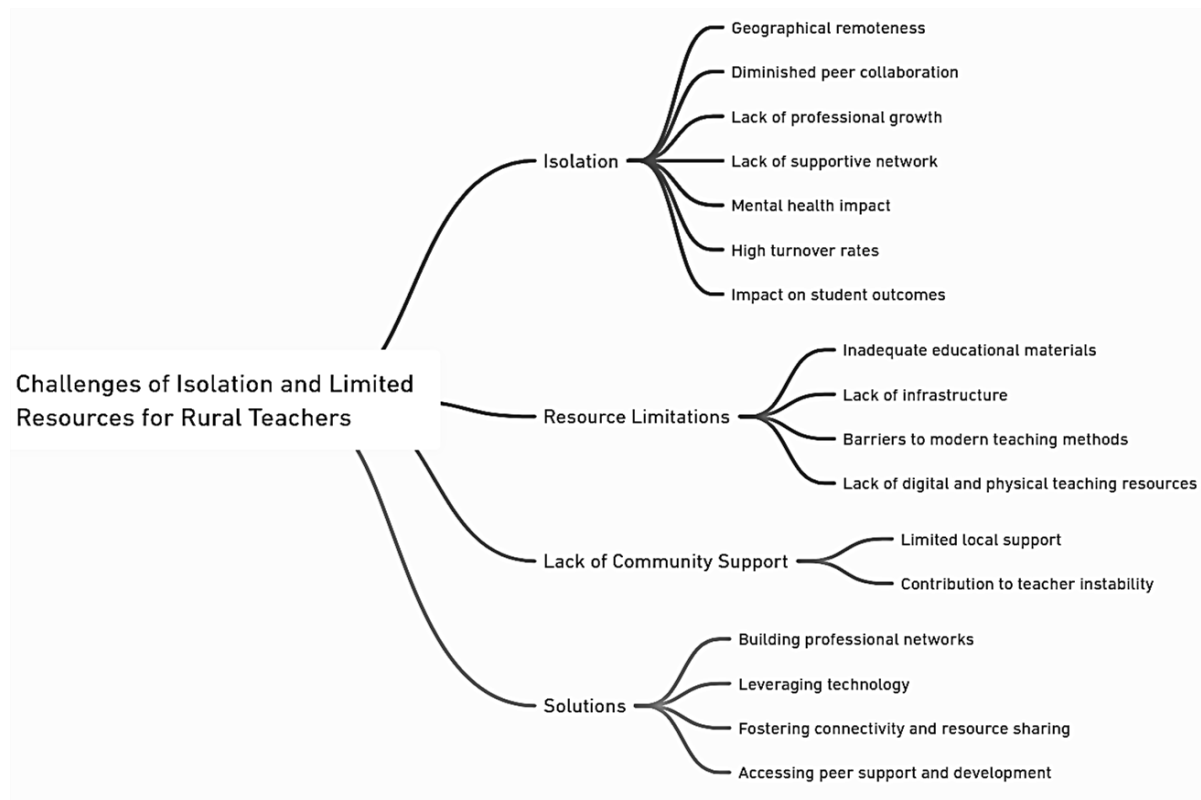


Figure 1: Challenges of Rural Teachers. (Source: Author)

An example that highlights these challenges is the case of rural Guangxi Province in China, where, according to [Stenman and Pettersson \(2020\)](#), teachers face limited access to both digital and physical teaching aids, hindering the implementation of modern teaching strategies. [Kamat and Nasnodkar \(2019\)](#) suggest that addressing these challenges can be achieved by embracing technology and establishing professional networks to support rural teachers. By fostering networking and resource sharing, rural educators can gain peer support and professional development, thereby reducing the impact of isolation and resource shortages on both teachers' well-being and student performance.

Role of Mentorship Programs in Enhancing Rural Teacher Well-being

Teacher support programmes have been recognised as valuable tools for promoting teacher well-being, particularly in rural settings, where professional isolation and resource shortages are prevalent. [Hudson \(2013\)](#) highlights that these programmes provide both emotional and professional support, helping rural teachers navigate the challenges that make teaching particularly demanding in such areas. These programmes not only offer guidance but also establish a crucial support system for teachers who may otherwise feel isolated. However, [Smith and Ingersoll \(2004\)](#) argue that the quality of mentoring is a key factor in determining the success of such

programmes. If mentorship programmes lack a well-defined structure, they may fail to provide the necessary support, leading to frustration rather than enhancing the teachers' well-being.

In the context of China, mentorship programmes have the potential to alleviate the challenges faced by rural teachers. For example, [Roberts et al. \(2021\)](#) conducted a study in the rural areas of Yunnan Province, where first-time teachers were paired with mentors. The results indicated that such programmes help reduce teacher turnover by providing not only training but also emotional support. However, [Zhang et al. \(2021\)](#) highlight that despite the benefits of mentorship systems, their implementation is hindered by a lack of resources and qualified mentors in rural areas. Regarding the potential enhancement of well-structured programmes and the involvement of experienced mentors, it is important to note that in districts such as rural Guangxi, the proposed improvements in mentorship programmes have not been fully effective. Therefore, while the concept of mentorship holds significant promise, the strategies must be adequately funded to truly enhance teacher satisfaction.

Improving rural teaching skills through targeted training systems

Teacher professional development and training are recognised as crucial strategies for enhancing teaching effectiveness, particularly in rural areas where educators often lack access to professional development resources. [Darling-Hammond \(2017\)](#) argue that targeted training systems, which are flexible and designed to meet the specific needs of rural teachers, can improve teaching capabilities by providing effective instructional methods. These systems aim to equip teachers with the professional development they require. However, due to a lack of resources and limited access to professional development opportunities, rural teachers are often unable to obtain the necessary training. Nevertheless, [Renko et al. \(2020\)](#) suggest that while the general idea that teacher training can enhance skills is valid, its effectiveness depends on it being part of an ongoing series of sessions, rather than a one-time event, to ensure sustained improvement.

In the context of China, programmes designed to focus on training teachers in rural areas have shown some positive impacts. [Liu et al. \(2016\)](#) conducted a study in rural Sichuan Province, where a targeted training system aimed at enhancing teaching practices and strategies in mathematics was implemented. A comparison between teachers' pre-program practices and post-program data revealed positive changes. However, [Zhang et al. \(2021\)](#) argue that many rural training programmes lack a focus on the cultural and contextual understanding of the teachers, which can undermine their sustainability. For instance, in rural regions like Guangxi, teachers often struggle to apply the general training content to their specific classroom contexts, rendering the training less effective ([Fu et al., 2021](#)). These findings suggest that the effectiveness of targeted training systems depends on ongoing facilitation, contextualisation of professional development, and addressing the specific challenges faced by rural

teachers. Without these considerations, such programmes are unlikely to achieve the desired outcomes.

Literature Gap

However, there is limited evidence regarding the long-term effectiveness of targeted training systems that specifically address the challenges faced by teachers in rural and frontier areas of China. Most studies focus on enhancing teaching skills through short-term training, with less attention given to the sustainability of these interventions and their ability to adapt to local cultural and contextual needs. Additionally, the discontinuation of support and resource provision in many rural educational settings suggests a need for further research to develop more effective and enduring training systems for rural teachers.

Research Methodology

Overview

The study adopts a qualitative research approach, utilising structured interviews with five purposively selected rural teachers. Data collection involves open-ended questions aimed at exploring their experiences. Thematic analysis is employed to identify recurring themes, ensuring consistency in both data collection and analysis throughout the research process. These steps are illustrated in [Figure 2](#).

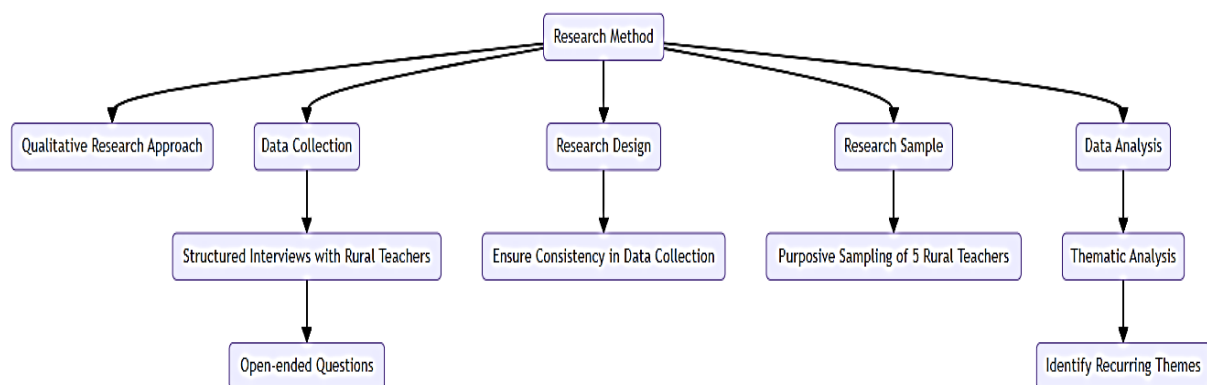


Figure 2: Overview of the Research Methodology (Source: Author)

Research Method

To gather in-depth data for the study, a qualitative research methodology is employed to explore the perceptions and perspectives of rural teachers in China regarding their professional practices. The rationale for using this approach lies in its ability to provide a deeper understanding of the views and feelings of teachers within rural settings, particularly in relation to the importance of adjusting training systems to improve their performance and well-being. Qualitative research facilitates the collection of rich data on how rural teachers perceive mentorship programs and the integration of technology into their professional development.

Data Collection

For this study, structured interviews are conducted with rural teachers in China who are currently participating in existing mentorship and technology-integrated training programs. The interviews aim to elicit the teachers' perceptions of the changes these systems have brought to classroom practices and their overall well-being. Participants are asked open-ended questions that allow them to express their views on topics such as the effectiveness of mentorship, the role of technology in addressing professional isolation, and the efficiency of training systems in enhancing their teaching abilities. This approach provides valuable insights into how these training systems impact teachers in rural areas.

Research Design

This research employed structured interviews as the research design to ensure that the responses from participants are comparable. Specifically, this design allows all participants to be questioned in the same way, facilitating the identification of patterns and themes relevant to the study's objectives. Structured interviews enable the study to capture pertinent information regarding the influence of mentorship programs and technology integration on the effective training and development of rural teachers. This approach ensures consistency in data collection and provides clear insights into the impact of these systems on teacher performance and well-being.

Research Sample

The participants of the study consist of five rural teachers from various rural regions of China, each of whom has participated in mentorship and technology-enhanced training programs. The sample includes teachers with varying years of experience, providing a diverse perspective on the impact of these training systems. This diversity allows for a comprehensive understanding of how training initiatives address issues such as professional isolation and resource constraints across different rural settings. By including teachers with different levels of experience, the study aims to capture a broad range of insights into the effectiveness of these systems in improving teaching practices and teacher well-being.

Sampling Technique

In this study, purposive sampling is used to select participants who are actively involved in the training programs of interest. The use of purposive sampling is particularly suited for this research as it allows for the selection of individuals with first-hand experience of the mentorship and technology-enhanced training programs. This approach ensures that the data collected is meaningful and relevant, as the participants can provide valuable insights based on their direct involvement in the training systems being studied.

Data Analysis

The data gathered from the respondents' interviews will undergo thematic analysis, a method that involves identifying and analysing patterns and themes related to the study's goals, such as the effectiveness of mentorship and technology-based training systems in improving teaching competencies, and the challenges faced by rural teachers. Thematic analysis allows for a systematic presentation of complex data, providing insights into how specific training systems influence rural teachers' professional practices and personal well-being. Additionally, this approach enhances the reliability of the study by offering a structured framework for data analysis, ensuring consistency and rigor in interpreting the findings.

Data Analysis and Findings

The themes illustrated in [Figure 3](#) are taken from the interview guides that are going to be analysed in this section. The thematic analysis process began with generating initial codes from interview transcripts, where key phrases and concepts were identified. These codes were then grouped into broader categories based on similarities and patterns. For example, codes related to teacher isolation, lack of peer support, and limited collaboration were categorized under 'Professional Isolation.' After categorization, final themes were generated, such as 'Inadequate Access to Resources' and 'Technology as a Tool for Development.' These themes represent overarching ideas drawn from the data and reflect the main challenges and solutions rural teachers experience (see [Table 1](#): Themes and their Description). This systematic approach ensures that the final themes accurately reflect the experiences shared by participants during the interviews.

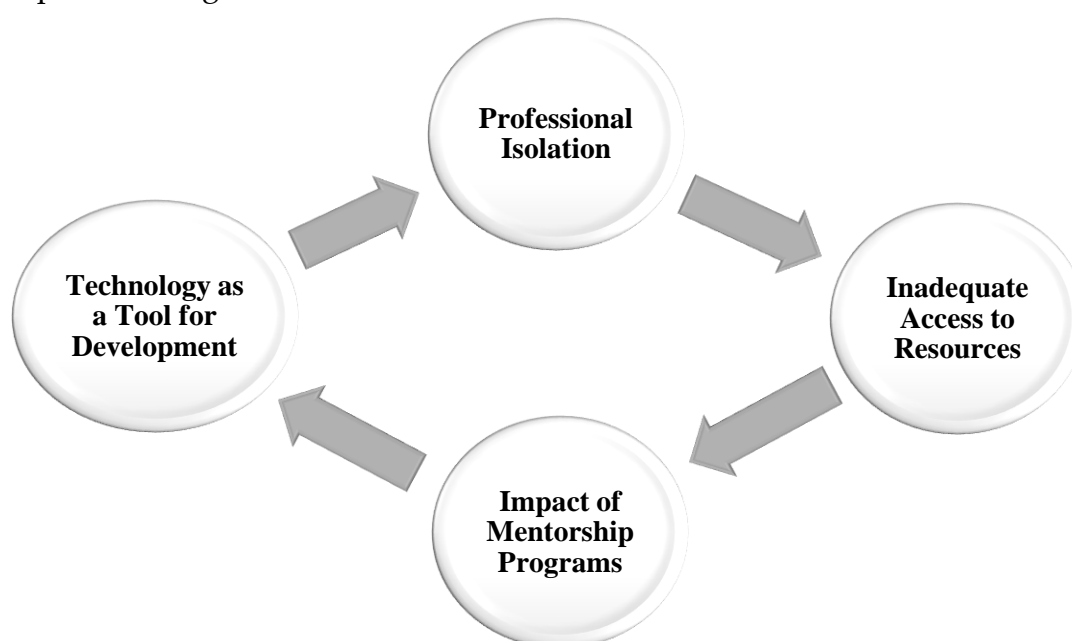


Figure 3: Identified Themes. (Source: Author)

Table 1: Themes and their Description (Source: Author)

S No.	Themes	Description
1	Professional Isolation	This theme focuses on the challenges rural teachers face regarding isolation from peers, leading to a lack of collaboration and support.
2	Inadequate Access to Resources	This theme highlights the difficulty in accessing teaching materials, technology, and professional development opportunities in rural areas.
3	Impact of Mentorship Programs	This theme explores how mentorship programs have provided rural teachers with emotional and professional support, reducing isolation and increasing confidence.
4	Technology as a Tool for Development	This theme emphasizes the role of technology in improving teaching practices, access to resources, and reducing professional isolation for rural teachers.

Professional Isolation

Lack of professional contact is one of the critical issues affecting teachers in rural areas, reducing opportunities for networking and resource sharing. Participants highlighted several challenges they face, including difficulties in exchanging ideas, accessing modern learning materials, and receiving professional development. Some of the responses from participants regarding isolation and its consequences are provided, illustrating the struggles and challenges of teaching in rural contexts, further exacerbated by insufficient technology and co-scaffolding.

Teacher 1:

"The problems of professional isolation arise from the fact that I seldom communicate with my colleagues; I also experience some problems in getting the necessary teaching aids since the availability of the Internet and up-to-date teaching aids is limited."

Teacher 2:

"Sometimes I don't feel there are many teachers I could freely discuss with and share ideas with. Our school does not have adequate books properly stocked or even proper structure of the school building. This can be disheartening and demoralizing to teach like this."

Teacher 3:

"There are not enough working experience opportunities available; there are not many new tools for teaching available and I personally feel very outdated compared to teachers who work in big cities and have more resources available to them."

Teacher 4:

"One of the biggest struggles is being isolated. I am the only teacher in my subject, and it can

be difficult to get any kind of advice. Another problem is the lack of technology and more up-to-date teaching resources"

Teacher 5:

"While I am on a rural post, I do not get proper teaching and learning tools, thus enhancing my instructional techniques is challenging as am not exposed to professional development or can collaborate with peers."

Teachers 1 and 3 discussed the challenges of being lone teachers and the lack of resources, which hinder teamwork and teaching effectiveness. Teacher 2 and Teacher 4 reported difficulties in sharing ideas and the lack of access to current teaching materials due to inadequate structures. Similarly, Teacher 5 mentioned the lack of peer support and training programs for both teachers and students, which could help combat feelings of isolation and improve teaching methods.

Inadequate Access to Resources

Rural teachers face significant challenges related to access to basic teaching resources, which limits their ability to provide quality education. The issues highlighted by participants include a lack of appropriate teaching aids, relevant resources, and optimal infrastructure, as well as limited access to technology. These constraints hinder both teaching efficiency and professional development. The participants expressed concerns about outdated resources and the absence of technology in their rural teaching settings, making it exceedingly difficult to deliver quality education.

Teacher 1:

"Getting access to teaching aids is very hard: Since most of us do not have internet and current teaching aid influence the quality of teaching."

Teacher 2:

"We do not have adequate books, even furniture to support these lessons and classrooms; morale drops in such conditions."

Teacher 3:

"I do not have access to proper resources or training programs. This makes it very hard to enhance my teaching style, I feel professionally lonely, I do not engage with my peers."

Teacher 4:

"New teaching aids are rare to come by and I sometimes feel so handicapped as compared to my colleagues in urban centres who have access to resources."

Teacher 5:

"Due to the absence of technology and other resources, it becomes very difficult for me to

prepare high-quality lessons and make them enjoyable for the students."

Teacher 1 and Teacher 4 highlighted the challenges of limited time and lack of access to modern printed materials and technology, which significantly interfered with their teaching. Teacher 2 pointed out the basic difficulties, such as insufficient learning materials and inadequate classroom environments, which negatively impact motivation. Teacher 5 expressed that teaching effectiveness was severely compromised using outdated teaching aids in the school. Meanwhile, Teacher 3 discussed how accessing new teaching resources was particularly challenging for rural educators.

Impact of Mentorship Programs

These programs have significantly improved the quality of life and productivity of teachers in rural areas. Teachers report feeling more connected, supported, and confident in their knowledge and practices. Mentorship has provided valuable feedback, introduced new teaching methods, and fostered social interaction that was previously lacking. Participants' responses regarding the mentorship program highlight the importance of support in preventing teacher burnout, ultimately improving performance in rural schools, which are often characterized by isolation and a lack of essential resources.

Teacher 1:

"I liked the idea of this mentorship; it made me feel less alone I received feedback on how to teach my students and felt more comfortable I think this was the thing I lacked before, some support."

Teacher 2:

"Mentorship has been a great support for me. It is relieving to have someone to turn to for guidance and assistance with issues'; it has enhanced my teaching and reduced my loneliness in this rural setting."

Teacher 3:

"The targeted training that was introduced through the mentorship helped me to be a better teacher in the classroom as it provided me with strategies on how to deal with the students and relieved the immense pressure that comes with being posted in a rural school where you are all alone."

Teacher 4:

"The mentorship program was very beneficial for me for it offered me new conceptualizations and modes of teaching. A good mentor was a plus for me psychologically as a rural teacher."

Teacher 5:

"Mentorship, one of the specific training interventions, empowered me. It made me realise that I am not the only one experiencing such difficulties and the mentoring that I received has assisted in enhancing my efficiency and mitigating feelings of burnout."

Teacher 1 and Teacher 3 emphasized the importance of having a mentor to reduce feelings of loneliness and to acquire useful teaching practices, which in turn boosted their self-efficacy. Teacher 2 noted that during challenging situations, the mentorship program primarily focused on providing emotional support. Mentors helped enhance the emotional well-being of participants by offering ideas and strategies, as highlighted by Teacher 4. Teacher 5 stated that the confidence and skill development gained from mentors played a significant role in alleviating burnout, while also supporting teachers in overcoming the difficulties of teaching in rural areas.

Technology as a Tool for Development

Technology has become a central tool in enhancing the professional practice of teachers in rural areas by providing access to resources, facilitating collaboration, and supporting training opportunities. Teachers highlight that the integration of technology in schools, both in urban and rural settings, has helped bridge the disparities in access to teaching aids, e-learning activities, and virtual social networks. The participants' responses underscore that technology has alleviated feelings of isolation, facilitated the development of new skills, and enabled teachers to stay updated with educational trends, ultimately enhancing their efficiency in rural settings.

Teacher 1:

"Technology could help to fill in the gap in that more training resources could be accessed through the internet and distance learning would enable me to be trained even if I could not travel to urban areas."

Teacher 2:

"Technology integration would enable me to establish a link to the current teaching learning materials and with other teachers' Online collaboration tools would also help to reduce the feeling of loneliness and enable me to develop professionally more efficiently."

Teacher 3:

"More engaging e-learning platforms would allow me to keep abreast with the teaching trends, which would be helpful when implementing in classrooms; learning at my own pace was also possible, meaning that the implementation could be seamless."

Teacher 4:

"In real-time introduction of workshops and webinars with the usage of modern technologies, unavailable in country areas, I would have the opportunity to improve myself as a professional."

Teacher 5:

"Use of digital resources and virtual communities would enable me to interact with other teachers and get acquainted with the current educational practices which will be very essential for the development of a rural teacher like me."

Hence, Teacher 1 and Teacher 3 emphasized that technology is valuable for accessing training materials and other educational resources, which would otherwise limit learning opportunities. Teacher 2 elaborated on how technology integration promotes cohesiveness and skill acquisition while also reducing feelings of loneliness. Teacher 4 pointed out that real-time workshops and webinars have proven to be effective for professional development. Teacher 5 highlighted the significance of digital resources and the ability to remain connected to virtual communities, which helps in keeping up with modern teaching techniques.

Discussion

The findings from this study provide valuable insights into the challenges faced by rural teachers in China, particularly regarding professional isolation, resource scarcity, and the role of mentorship in leveraging technology to improve their professional practice. The study objectives were successfully met, as evidenced by the themes that emerged from the interviews. These findings align with existing literature, underscoring critical concerns for rural education. The first research question aimed to assess the impact of professional isolation and inadequate resources on the quality of life of rural teachers in China. The results clearly demonstrate the isolation experienced by rural teachers, which limits their opportunities for peer interaction and collaboration. Teachers reported challenges in communication, accessing new resources, and meeting their professional development needs, all of which negatively affect their teaching practice and job satisfaction. This finding is consistent with [Burton et al. \(2013\)](#), who identified similar issues faced by rural teachers in the U.S., including feelings of loneliness and a lack of teaching aids, which hinder effective teaching.

In addition, teachers also reported limitations in basic requirements such as infrastructure, textbooks, technology, and teaching aids. This observation aligns with the study by [Ayoroa et al. \(2009\)](#), which confirmed that rural schools often lack essential teaching and learning materials, making it difficult for teachers to provide quality education. Consequently, the outcomes of this study highlight how the

absence of contemporary resources and facilities in rural China exacerbates teachers' challenges, mirroring concerns previously identified in rural schools in other countries (Long et al., 2016). The second aim of the study was to explore how structured training tools, such as the mentorship program, could alleviate stress for rural teachers. The findings indicate that the absence of mentorship programs exacerbates professional isolation and negatively impacts teachers' current and future teaching practices, as low confidence and inadequate skills are prevalent. Teachers reported that mentorship programs were beneficial in providing feedback, introducing new teaching strategies, and facilitating social connections that were previously lacking. These findings resonate with the work of Barrio and Hollingshead (2017), who argued that mentorship programs can enhance professional satisfaction for teachers in rural areas and help reduce turnover rates.

It is also evident from the results, both self-generated and through analysis, that mentorship programs help reduce burnout and enhance the psychological well-being of teachers. This aligns with the study by Kemmis et al. (2014), which examined the use of mentorship in rural areas, revealing that such programs strengthen the professional identities of teachers and equip them with the necessary tools to succeed in challenging environments. From this study, mentorship plays a crucial role in addressing isolation and the resource constraints that teachers in rural areas often report. The third objective was to assess practical approaches for facilitating the development of rural teachers in China, including professional development plans and the use of technology. The findings of this study indicate that technology can play a pivotal role in helping rural schools share resources and facilities with urban schools, while also providing rural teachers with up-to-date teaching materials, virtual workshops, and opportunities for interaction with other educators. This is consistent with the findings of Liu et al. (2016), who advocated for the use of technology-based interventions to enhance teacher training and professional development in rural areas.

Teachers in this study noted that the integration of technology helped address the issue of loneliness in their professional lives, providing opportunities for communication with peers and facilitating the introduction of new educational knowledge. This finding aligns with Liu et al. (2016) study, which indicated that technology offers rural teachers the opportunity to learn at their own pace and incorporate modern teaching techniques into the classroom. The two strategies—implementing e-learning platforms and virtual communities—proved highly effective in improving teachers' performance by providing them with resources to overcome the challenges associated with their rural settings. Thus, the results of this study highlight the professional challenges and lack of resource support faced by rural teachers in China. However, when properly addressed, professional development challenges, such as inadequate mentorship and limited technology integration, can significantly impact training systems and improve the welfare and development of teachers in these areas.

Conclusion

This study highlights the challenges faced by rural teachers in China, focusing on professional isolation, resource deficiencies, and the impact of mentorship programmes and technology. Using structured interviews, the research identified key themes that reflect the difficulties rural educators face. The findings reveal significant isolation, limited collaboration, and a lack of access to modern teaching resources, which negatively impact job satisfaction and teaching effectiveness. Inadequate infrastructure and technology further hinder educational quality. The study advocates for mentorship programmes to provide emotional support and boost teachers' confidence, while also emphasising the role of technology in reducing isolation and improving teaching practices. The findings demonstrate that mentorship and technology adoption are essential to overcoming these challenges, enhancing rural education, and fostering teacher satisfaction and professional growth.

Study Limitations

The study has several limitations, primarily arising from the qualitative research approach and the small sample size of five rural teachers, which may not be fully representative of the broader rural education context in China. Additionally, the use of structured interviews constrained the participants' ability to provide in-depth responses, limiting the richness of their insights. The study is also geographically and temporally limited, meaning the findings cannot be generalised to all rural settings. Future research should expand the sample size to include a more representative group of participants and incorporate both qualitative and quantitative methods to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by rural teachers.

References

- Ayoroa, P., Bailey, B., Crossen, A., & A. Geo-JaJa, M. (2009). Education in China: the urban/rural disparity explained. In *Globalisation, ideology and education policy reforms* (pp. 89-113). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-481-3524-0_7
- Azano, A. P., Downey, J., & Brenner, D. (2019). Preparing pre-service teachers for rural schools. In *Oxford research encyclopedia of education*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.274>
- Barrio, B. L., & Hollingshead, A. (2017). Reaching out to paraprofessionals: Engaging professional development aligned with universal design for learning framework in rural communities. *Rural Special Education Quarterly*, 36(3), 136-145. <https://doi.org/10.1177/8756870517721693>
- Burton, M., Brown, K., & Johnson, A. (2013). Storylines about rural teachers in the United States: a narrative analysis of the literature. *Journal of research in rural education*, 28(12). <https://jrre.psu.edu/sites/default/files/2019-08/28-12.pdf>

- Darling-Hammond, L. (2017). Effective teacher professional development. *Learning Policy Institute*. <https://doi.org/10.54300/122.311>
- Downes, N., & Roberts, P. (2018). Revisiting the schoolhouse: A literature review on staffing rural, remote and isolated schools in Australia 2004-2016 [Journal Article]. *Australian and International Journal of Rural Education*, 28(1), 31-54. <https://doi.org/10.47381/aijre.v28i1.112>
- Fu, Q., Yao, J., Tan, Q., & Gui, R. (2021). Teacher Training Needs and their Influencing Factors: A Case Study of 13 Chinese Border School Teachers. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 20(10). <https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.20.10.18>
- Hong, J. Y. (2012). Why do some beginning teachers leave the school, and others stay? Understanding teacher resilience through psychological lenses. *Teachers and teaching*, 18(4), 417-440. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2012.696044>
- Hudson, P. (2013). Mentoring as professional development: 'growth for both' mentor and mentee. *Professional development in education*, 39(5), 771-783. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2012.749415>
- Kamat, Y., & Nasnodkar, S. (2019). A survey on the barriers and facilitators to edtech adoption in rural schools in developing countries. *International Journal of Intelligent Automation and Computing*, 2(1), 32-51. <https://research.tensorgate.org/index.php/IJIAC/article/view/58>
- Kemmis, S., Heikkinen, H. L., Fransson, G., Aspfors, J., & Edwards-Groves, C. (2014). Mentoring of new teachers as a contested practice: Supervision, support and collaborative self-development. *Teaching and teacher education*, 43, 154-164. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2014.07.001>
- Liu, H., Liu, C., Chang, F., & Loyalka, P. (2016). Implementation of teacher training in China and its policy implications. *China & World Economy*, 24(3), 86-104. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cwe.12160>
- Long, H., Tu, S., Ge, D., Li, T., & Liu, Y. (2016). The allocation and management of critical resources in rural China under restructuring: Problems and prospects. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 47, 392-412. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2016.03.011>
- Mangione, G. R. J., & Cannella, G. (2021). Small school, smart schools: Distance education in remoteness conditions. *Technology, Knowledge and Learning*, 26(4), 845-865. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10758-020-09480-4>
- Mncube, D. W., Ajani, O. A., Ngema, T., & Mkhasebe, R. G. (2023). Exploring the Problems of Limited School Resources in Rural Schools and Curriculum Management. *UMT Education Review*, 6(2), 1-31. <https://doi.org/10.32350/UER.62.01>
- Renko, E., Knittle, K., Palsola, M., Lintunen, T., & Hankonen, N. (2020). Acceptability, reach and implementation of a training to enhance teachers' skills in physical activity promotion. *BMC Public Health*, 20(1), 1568. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-020-09653-x>
- Roberts, P., Bodycott, P., Li, Y., & Qian, X. (2021). Insights to process and practice in

- rural education: Rural education in the context of rapid (urban) development. *Rural Education Across the World: Models of Innovative Practice and Impact*, 149-166. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2020.03.012>
- Smith, T. M., & Ingersoll, R. M. (2004). What are the effects of induction and mentoring on beginning teacher turnover? *American educational research journal*, 41(3), 681-714. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312041003681>
- Stenman, S., & Pettersson, F. (2020). Remote teaching for equal and inclusive education in rural areas? An analysis of teachers' perspectives on remote teaching. *The international journal of information and learning technology*, 37(3), 87-98. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJILT-10-2019-0096>
- Whaland, M. E. (2020). *Why rural teachers stay: Examining teacher retention and attrition in New Hampshire's rural schools*. Plymouth State University. <https://dl.acm.org/doi/abs/10.5555/AAI28089273>
- Zhang, X., Admiraal, W., & Saab, N. (2021). Teachers' motivation to participate in continuous professional development: relationship with factors at the personal and school level. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 47(5), 714-731. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2021.1942804>
- Zhao, Y., Zhao, M., & Shi, F. (2023). Integrating moral education and educational information technology: A strategic approach to enhance rural teacher training in universities. *Journal of the Knowledge Economy*, 1-41. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13132-023-01693-z>