

Journal of Graduate Education Research

Volume 5

2024

A Geographical Lens on Rural Teacher Induction and Retention

Quinn A. Abbate
KU Leuven

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.harding.edu/jger>



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Abbate, Quinn A. (2024) "A Geographical Lens on Rural Teacher Induction and Retention," *Journal of Graduate Education Research*: Vol. 5, Article 11.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.harding.edu/jger/vol5/iss1/11>

This Original Report is brought to you for free and open access by the College of Education at Scholar Works at Harding. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Journal of Graduate Education Research* by an authorized editor of Scholar Works at Harding. For more information, please contact scholarworks@harding.edu.



HARDING
UNIVERSITY

A Geographical Lens on Rural Teacher Induction and Retention

Quinn A. Abbate

KU Leuven

How to cite this article:

Abbate, Q., A. (2024). A geographical lens on rural teacher induction and retention. *Journal of Graduate Education Research*, 5, 82-94.

ABSTRACT

Induction is a critical phase for early career teachers (ECTs) because it is where they develop their sense of professional identity and often decide whether or not to stay in the profession. Substantial research has reported high rates of rural teacher retention during induction (e.g., Ingersoll & Strong, 2011), but few researchers have examined this pattern through a geographical lens. Rural education theorists Gruenewald (2003) and Reid et al. (2010) suggest that a geographical lens is a useful way to understand the complexities of place and space—particularly rural space. Rooted in their theories, the present study aimed to address the aforementioned research gap by asking, “What does existing literature say about the impact of rural geography on the experiences of teacher induction and retention among early or mid-career teachers?” Using a secondary analysis of primary research, the study found that the two factors with the most frequent impact on induction were small administrative networks and physical distance from amenity-dense areas, while the most significant factor impacting ECTs’ desire to stay was if they were from the community. This dynamic is due to the influence of ECT background on administrative support, community acceptance, and community familiarity. The significant influence of ECT background suggests that the most impactful aspect of rural geography is not inherent to the natural environment, but rather socially constructed by those within the rural spaces. Implications of such findings for induction programming and further research are discussed.

Keywords

Early career teachers, Rural education, Teacher induction

INTRODUCTION

TEACHER INDUCTION AND RETENTION

In the past decades, there has been a growing amount of educational research on teacher induction, the first phase of the teaching career (e.g., Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Kelchtermans, 2019; Langdon et al., 2014). Induction is the initiation of new teachers into communities of practice and is an important aspect of their career development (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Langdon et al., 2014). This transitional stage includes elements such as mentoring programs, orientations, and socialization activities, all of which aim to support teachers’ well-being and improve performance and retention (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Induction is a particular point of interest for research on early career teachers (ECTs), as it is where they develop their sense of professional identity and where many decide to leave the field (Ingersoll, 2003; Kelchtermans, 2019).

Recent research has focused on connections between teacher induction and retention (e.g., Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Hulme & Wood, 2022). There are often more factors at play in turnover

than solely negative induction experiences, but low-quality induction is a factor that can motivate ECTs to seek external support (Ewing & Smith, 2003; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Burke et al., 2015). This phenomenon prompts a closer look at how elements of the induction phase can influence teachers' motivations to leave their job. Teacher turnover is a critical issue for education researchers because it can cause systemic educational problems like staffing shortages, low student achievement, and difficulty implementing curriculum (Guin, 2004; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Close examination of research on induction and retention may aid in understanding such issues and the methods required to effectively address them. This study thus builds on existing research on induction with a particular concern for retention among early and mid-career teachers.

RURAL EDUCATION RESEARCH

Among the growing body of research on induction and retention are studies that suggest geographical location is an influential factor in shaping teachers' experiences with these processes (e.g., Mafora, 2013; Roberts & Fuqua, 2021). Rural geographies are a particular focus of research in this field since factors unique to rural contexts can make induction processes like mentoring difficult and make it hard to retain staff (Berry et al., 2012; Mafora, 2013; Roberts & Fuqua, 2021). Such findings are crucial to understanding problems with low-quality induction and turnover in rural areas, but there has not been an in-depth look at research related to this topic since 1999 (Yarrow et al., 1999). Given the plethora of research in this field in the last two decades, it is due time for an updated study.

A new review of this topic is also important as scholars have recently noted problems and oversights in the field of rural education research. Notably, researchers are grappling with the difficulty of defining rural development and examining how it is defined by deficit or *metrocentric* norms (Azano et al., 2019; Dillon-Wallace, 2021; Green & Reid, 2021, p. 30; Roberts & Guenther, 2021). When research is conducted from a metrocentric perspective, it overlooks the specificities of rural environments or focuses only on the negative aspects of these environments (Green & Reid, 2021). New research proposes alternative ways to understand rurality in and of itself (e.g., Corbett, 2021; Dillon-Wallace, 2021; Green & Reid, 2021). Reviewing literature that considers rurality from such new perspectives is important for understanding contemporary connections between rural spaces and teacher induction and retention.

Grounded in Gruenewald's (2003) and McGregor's (2004) theories on space and place and framed by Reid et al. (2010)'s rural social space theory, the present study aims to better understand research on the connection between rural spaces and teacher induction. To achieve this, it asks: What does existing literature say about the impact of rural geography on the experience of teacher induction and retention among early or mid-career teachers?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A theoretical framework allows researchers to connect central concepts, ask specific research questions, and construct the goals and processes of the research methodology (Ravitch & Carl., 2021). The present study uses a framework of recent theories on place, space, and rurality to ground its review of relevant literature. In particular, it focuses on Gruenewald (2003)'s theory of place-based education, McGregor (2004)'s theories on network actors in schools, and Reid et al. (2010)'s model of rural social space. These theories are frequently cited by scholars in rural education who use a geographical lens, which prompts a critical focus on them for the present review.

PLACE AND SPACE

Place has long been of interest to researchers because, as Geertz (1996) notes, "No one lives in the world in general" (Geertz, 1996, p. 259). People's identities, opportunities, actions, and interactions are often tied to the places they are from and in (Gruenewald, 2003a, p. 622). According to Gruenewald, people are "place makers," meaning they socially construct place and invest it with meaning (Gruenewald, 2003a, p. 626). His view is one of many in a line of research on spatiality—the social production of space (e.g., Halfacree, 2006; Helfenbein & Buendía, 2017; Lefebvre, 1991; Massey, 1994). As geographer of space Massey (1994) posits, place is but a moment in dynamic networks of social relations and understandings, rather than a fixed entity (Massey, 1994, p. 5).

McGregor (2004) has drawn on new understandings of spatiality as space-time to advocate for a network view of educational contexts (McGregor, 2004, p. 367). McGregor focuses on relations between teachers, students, and material objects in schools to suggest that place is not a physical reality but one that is negotiated by a network of actors (McGregor, 2004). This approach is relevant to consider when investigating teacher induction and turnover in the current study, as induction is an interaction-filled process aimed to create a support network for ECTs. According to McGregor, if researchers view places and spaces as socially constructed and always changing, then places of work are ways of creating meaning out of "heterogeneous and dynamic spatio-temporal and material arrangements" (McGregor, 2004, p. 352). Viewing the workplaces where induction is occurring through McGregor's perspective can help researchers better understand how meaning-making occurs in those contexts.

While McGregor's ideas are relevant for examining the relations in a community of practice, taking a social constructivist view of place does not necessarily mean that places in and of themselves should not be considered significant subjects of inquiry. Gruenewald notes that even though places are socially constructed, they evolve and impact the place makers that are in them (Gruenewald, 2003a, p. 639). In other words, "places make us" (Gruenewald, 2003a, p. 621). This

cyclical constructive relationship necessitates a focus on place in education research, a field that has historically overlooked the topic in favor of reinforcing context-less institutional practices (Gruenewald, 2003a). A place-based approach to education that is aware of the complexities of where people live, is necessary to research real human experiences (Gruenewald, 2003b, p. 3). From this perspective, it follows that it is important to take a geographical lens to education research, a point echoed by the growing body of literature on rural education.

RURAL PLACE AND SPACE

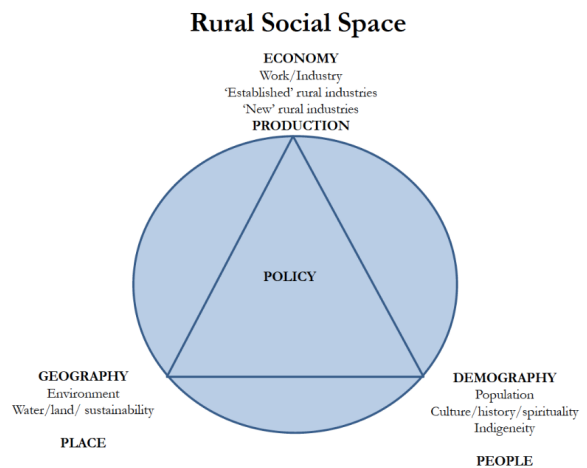
Researchers studying rurality and rural schools have recently applied Gruenewald's ideas and developed the term *place-attentiveness* to elevate the importance of place in the field (e.g., Reid et al., 2010; White & Downey, 2021; White & Reid, 2001). These scholars argue that close attention to the construction of place is important because it allows for the examination of social forces that simplify or marginalize our conception of rural settings (White & Downey, 2021). Thus, to take a critical approach toward research phenomena in rural contexts, a focus on the construction of place is key.

Rural education researchers not only suggest that acknowledging place is necessary, but that there is a need to be less judgmental a priori about the type of geographical location studied. For instance, Reid et al. (2010) problematize the deficit perspective historically used to name and discuss rural education. Rooted in Bourdieu's work on the power of naming, Reid et al. (2010) explain that discussing elements of rural education from metropolitan or negative lenses has classified rural spaces as "undesirable" in the public consciousness (p. 265). This language can also imply that those who work in city schools are somehow "better" than those who do not (Reid et al., 2010, p. 265). Research that pays particular attention to rural places from Reid et al. (2010)'s lens is necessary to alter flawed public perceptions of the field.

To encourage a more authentic understanding of rural areas, Reid et al. (2010) developed the theoretical model of rural social space. The model presents a way of understanding rurality as the relationship between three connected factors: economy, geography, and demography (Reid et al., 2010, p. 269). Instead of viewing rural contexts as undesirable geographical entities, they encourage the understanding of rural social space as "the set of relationships, actions, and meanings that are produced in and through the daily practice of people in a particular place and time" (Reid et al., 2010, p. 269). This model allows researchers to understand rural places as more than just locations, but a set of "social-spatial and socio-temporal phenomena" situated within a network of policy (Reid et al., 2010, p. 269).

Figure 1

The Model of Rural Social Space



Note. Reprinted from Green, B., & Reid, J. (2021). Rural social space: A conceptual-analytical framework for rural (teacher) education and the rural human services. In P. Roberts & M. Fuqua (Eds.), *Ruraling education research: Connections between rurality and the disciplines of educational research*, 37. Reprinted with permission.

Overall, Gruenewald (2003)'s plea for place-based education justifies an inquiry into the geographical context of teaching. Furthermore, as rural education researchers show, understanding place as socially constructed does not mean that place is irrelevant, rather it necessitates a focus on rural places that pays particular attention to the dynamic social phenomena within them. The present review thus takes a geographical lens to the study of teacher induction and retention. It pays close attention to conceptions of rurality within research on teacher induction and how characteristics of rural social spaces are connected to experiences of induction and turnover.

METHODOLOGY

As a systematic literature review, the present study was a rigorous secondary analysis of primary research. In accordance with common systematic review processes, the research question and theoretical framework were developed first, followed by a search strategy, and then inclusion and exclusion criteria for selecting studies (Zawacki-Richter, 2020). The chosen articles were carefully read and analyzed through a narrative synthesis approach.

CRITERIA FOR SELECTION

The search for relevant literature occurred from November 2022 to February 2023. First, two books (Roberts & Fuqua, 2021; White & Downey, 2021) were read to frame an understanding of the field of rural education and identify relevant keywords. This led to the identification of search terms including "teacher induction," "teacher retention," "rural schools," "rural teachers," "rurality," and "early career teacher."

An initial manual search of Google Scholar was conducted with the above search terms. The findings suggested that the term “early career teacher” was too limiting, as research on the impact of rural geographies often focused on mid-career teachers as well. The following Boolean search was thus constructed: (“teacher induction”) AND (“rural schools” OR “rural”) AND (“retention” OR “turnover”). This search was used in ERIC and Scopus. Relevant sources from the Google Scholar manual search were also included in the final dataset. This search focused solely on peer-reviewed academic journal articles that were originally published in English in the last twenty-three years. Limiting the search with this criteria ensured the sources were reliable, relevant for the problem statement and research questions, and addressed recent approaches in the field that have not yet been reviewed. The following table articulates the precise criteria for inclusion and exclusion.

Table 1

Criteria For Inclusion and Exclusion

Inclusion	Exclusion
The research is empirical.	The research is not empirical.
The source is an academic peer-reviewed journal article.	The source is not in an academic peer-reviewed journal.
The article was published between 2000-2023.	The article was published before 2000.
The research uses pre-service teachers as participants.	The research uses pre-service teachers as participants.
The research focuses on teacher induction in rural contexts	The research is not focused on teacher induction in rural contexts.
The research uses a geographical lens to investigate teacher induction or retention in rural contexts.	The article is an evaluation of an intervention program rather than the impact of rural geographies.

IDENTIFICATION OF LITERATURE

Between the databases, a total of 267 relevant articles were found. 22 from Google Scholar, 144 from ERIC, and 101 from Scopus. Of these, 14 were found to be duplicates. Titles and abstracts of the remaining 253 articles were screened according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria above.

After the initial screening process, a total of 187 sources did not meet the inclusion criteria. The remaining 66 articles were read more closely to determine if they had relevant research questions, methodological approaches, and insights for this review. Studies were most often excluded for one of three reasons: focusing on the impact of an intervention program in a rural setting rather than the setting itself, not focusing enough on induction to provide insight to this study’s research question, or not using a geographical lens to consider the impact of place. It also became evident that data on this topic is often collected from university students studying to be teachers rather than early or mid-career teachers. In the end, the selection resulted in 25 studies to be included in the analysis.

DATA ANALYSIS

Each study was closely read, and key information was written down. Afterwards, a spreadsheet was created to organize information from all the studies including the title, author, publication date, journal, region of focus, definition of “rural” if available, and main findings. To address the research question, main findings regarding the impact of rurality on induction were extracted from each study. While reading, inductively identified themes were noted, and similarities and differences among data were recorded. Studies in which defining elements of the rural had a negative impact and a positive impact were grouped together and analyzed respectively. Attention to retention in this process revealed that ECTs’ connections with a rural community played the most significant role in shaping their desire to stay, regardless of induction quality. Three main factors were identified as the reason for this trend: administrative support, cultural similarities, and community connection. This study presents and analyzes findings in terms of those factors.

FINDINGS

A preliminary finding was that there is a limited focus on this subject in academic research. There is a substantial body of recent literature on factors impacting teacher induction and retention, but a large portion of it examines the influence of non-geographic factors like economic development, level of administrative support, and crises like Covid-19 (e.g., Fall & Billingsley, 2011; Redding et al., 2019; Simons et al., 2022) In the rare cases when a geographic lens is applied to this topic, it is often to settings that are defined as urban (e.g., Bleeker et al., 2012; Whipp & Geronime, 2017).

Research on specifically rural settings often focuses on the challenges school administrators like principals and superintendents face rather than teachers (e.g., Tran & Smith, 2020). The studies that do focus on teachers’ experiences tend to interview pre-service teachers or prospective teachers, rather than early or mid-career teachers (e.g., Ai et al., 2022; Hudson et al., 2020). Also, many scholars appear interested in the impact of professional development programs in rural settings, and not the impact of the rural spaces themselves (e.g., Glover et al., 2016; Yang & Rao, 2021). These factors made it

challenging to find relevant literature for this study. However, the relatively small body of relevant studies provides multidimensional insights into the ways that rural space can impact teacher induction and turnover.

THE IMPACT OF RURAL ELEMENTS

Synthesis of the sources revealed that the elements of rural spaces most commonly found to have an impact on ECT induction were related to two main characteristics: small professional networks and distance from amenity-dense areas. These two elements of rural spaces were overwhelmingly characterized as having a negative impact on the induction phase, with phrases like “lack of” often used by authors and participants to stress what aspects of rural towns create stress, confusion, and frustration for new teachers (e.g., Harris, 2001, p. 23; Leech et al., 2022, p. 4; Nkambule, 2022, p. 5). However, a few authors discussed the ways ECTs adapted to challenging conditions and found potential positive outcomes of small professional networks. Regardless of the impact of these elements on induction quality though, this study’s attention to retention reveals that ECT background played the most impactful role in whether ECTs desired to leave. The following subsections elaborate on these findings.

Small Professional Networks

The first element of rural space that authors found impacted ECT induction in rural schools was the small number of people working in the field of education. Many authors discussed how small populations in rural communities resulted in few educational professionals, such as administrators, mentor teachers, and colleagues that taught the same grade or subject (Burton & Johnson, 2010; Frahm & Cianca, 2021; Harris, 2001; Manwa et al., 2016; Mafora, 2013). In other words, the networks of educational professionals were frequently made up of a few people. The absence of mentors and colleagues who were familiar with the grade level or had the time and resources to support ECTs often resulted in feelings of stress and “professional isolation” for new teachers, and in many cases increased a desire to leave (Burton & Johnson, 2010, p. 382; Ekinci, 2020; Mafora, 2013, p. 236). As an interviewed principal from New York State noted, new teachers were in many ways “on an island” (Frahm & Cianca, 2021, p. 7).

The absence of guidance shaped the way that ECTs approached their teaching and impacted the nature of their professional relationships in mostly negative ways. For instance, Manwa et al. (2016) studied rural schools in Zimbabwe and found that there were no mentors or staff to support ECTs. They reported that “trust was a key issue” among teachers, and ECTs had to cope with the lack of informed guidance by “copying other people’s work or begging for advice” (p. 68). Similarly, Kartal et al. (2017) found that all of their teacher participants in Turkey “had problems with the school administration,” as they didn’t receive much information from them, and there was no one to get help or support from when encountering administrative problems (p.

35). On the other hand, a few studies noted that the absence of mentors or small professional networks resulted in teachers working to strengthen their relationships with one another (e.g., Frahm & Cianca, 2021; Gallo, 2020; Janzen & Cranston, 2015; Malloy & Allen, 2007). Gallo (2020), remarks:

While it is common to think of teachers in rural areas of being professionally isolated from other teachers who teach similar grade levels or subject areas, the teachers in this study find other ways to support one another that don’t focus on shared planning about specific classroom content. Supporting colleagues is a professional necessity to offset the difficulty of recruiting and retaining teachers in challenging teaching positions. Too often rural schools are painted in broad strokes as effortlessly close-knit because they have a smaller staff and fewer students. However, the participants in this study illustrate that the sense of community within the school is a result of a concentrated effort to support one another and prevent the frequent turnover that haunts so many rural schools (p. 8).

The above excerpt demonstrates how characteristics of rural spaces that can have negative impacts on induction may result in coping methods and practices that are positive for ECTs. However, while the effort to create strong peer relationships can potentially counteract the negative impact of small population size that drives some teachers to leave, this was not a common finding.

Isolation

The other element that many authors found played a role in the quality of the induction phase was the distance between rural communities and other populated areas with access to more amenities. Many authors used the term “isolation” to refer to the way this distance negatively impacted the induction phase for ECTs (Burton & Johnson, 2010, p. 380; Erawan, 2019, p. 118; Frahm & Cianca, 2021, p. 1; Gallo, 2020 p. 7; Hellsten et al., 2011, p. 12; Miller, 2020, p. 17; Walker-Gibbs, 2018, p. 309) Several scholars found that ECTs in rural schools felt isolated because they were far from their friends and family and could not easily visit them (Burton & Johnson, 2010; Frahm & Cianca, 2021; Hellsten et al., 2011). Teachers who lived far from family and friends often reported missing familial and social connections as a negative part of teaching where they teach, and often a reason they wanted to leave, while teachers who lived with or near family often reported this as a reason they wanted to stay. (Arinaitwe & Corbett, 2022, p. 26; Burleigh, 2016; Ekinci, 2020; Hellsten et al., 2011).

The distance from communities with more amenities also proved to be a challenge for ECTs. Many scholars reported that teachers found the long distance from amenities like robust healthcare, grocery shopping, and activities for children challenging, and often a key reason why they wanted to leave

their job (Janzen & Cranston, 2015; Kono, 2012; Kaden et al., 2016; Opoku et al., 2020). Also, in their study in Ghana, Opoku et al. (2020) noted that the need to travel long distances for access to vital services was a cause of teacher absenteeism in addition to a motivating factor for leaving (p. 203).

The extent to which distance from amenities caused dissatisfaction among teachers varied depending on the level of amenities within the community of focus. For instance, Kaden et al., (2016) found that lack of access to shopping and healthcare caused dissatisfaction, and there was only one health aid worker in the community they studied in Arctic Alaska (p. 142). On the other hand, Janzen & Cranston (2015) studied a Canadian community with more amenities and found that only a few teachers were bothered by the remote nature of their setting, typically because the town lacked extracurricular activities for children (p. 176). It is also worth noting that Janzen & Cranston (2015)'s study was the only one that mentioned the positive impact of natural elements of the rural community, like access to canoeing (p. 176). Since residents of the studied community had access to basic amenities like healthcare and grocery stores, and ones that make life easier, like an airport, they were able to enjoy activities in nature without sacrificing easy access to vital resources. The lack of focus on nature in other studies suggests that in order for natural elements to be a significant factor in retention, residents' basic needs must be met first. Unlike the way that professional isolation led to resilient coping strategies in some studies, no studies found that the challenge of accessing resources for social or physical well-being had positive outcomes.

The Role of ECT Background

The most significant finding from this study was that the factor that had the most impact on ECTs' desire to leave their positions in rural schools was whether or not they were from the rural community they taught in. Being from the community strengthened ECTs' relationships with colleagues, lowered their levels of personal isolation, and nearly ensured acceptance by and familiarity with the community. If ECTs were not from the town, the opposite occurred. For example, educational leaders from Arinaitwe & Corbett (2022)'s study in Uganda expressed a view commonly noted by participants in other studies:

Albert [the headteacher] reported that school authorities preferred teachers seen as homegrown. This view was reported also by Elliot, a community leader at Gakenke High School: *'We feel, teachers from the locality should occupy first [sic] because the school is ours, we struggled for it. This issue is a challenge to teachers themselves who work far.'* Elliot indicates how the wider rural community expected the central government to preserve employment for teachers from the local district (p. 22).

This quote reflects the sentiment evident in several studies that school leaders and administrators in rural communities preferred to work with staff who were from the town, even when schools were hard to staff (Arinaitwe & Corbett, 2022; Ekinci, 2020; Gallo, 2020; Manwa et al., 2016; Sharplin, 2014). This preference had various influences, including a belief that local teachers would stay longer in the position, as opposed to outside graduates who preferred to work in urban locations (Arinaitwe & Corbett, 2022, p. 22). It also emerged from the idea that local teachers could culturally connect with the students better than teachers with a different cultural background, thus making their jobs easier (e.g., Arinaitwe & Corbett, 2022; Burton & Johnson, 2010; Kaden et al., 2016).

The hesitation to accept teachers from other communities shaped the ways locals viewed and treated ECTs. For instance, one American teacher who taught in the Midwestern community he grew up in was considered "returned" not "from" there because he had moved away for a significant period of time (Gallo, 2020, p. 6). Similarly, another American teacher interviewed by Burton & Johnson (2010) was from a rural community just like the one she began teaching in, but still felt "personal isolation" and distrust from the community because she lacked an intimate understanding of the "kinship networks" in that particular town (p. 382). In contrast, another ECT who was from the town she taught noted feeling "professional isolation" from the absence of teachers in the same grade but felt immediate acceptance from the town when she began teaching (Burton & Johnson, 2010, p. 381). In other words, the reasons for and impacts of their feelings of isolation were different because of their different connections to the town. Feeling not trusted by locals complicated the job for outsider ECTs in ways that local ECTs did not have to experience.

School administrators' distrust of outsiders also impacted how they supported ECTs in the induction phase. For instance, Sharplin (2014) studied ECTs in Australia who were teaching in rural communities that they were not from, and found that despite the presence of administrative support staff, teachers felt "professionally disconnected and without collegial support," which led to a lack of confidence and the feeling of "powerlessness among their colleagues" (p. 103). Similarly, Ekinci (2020) studied Turkish ECTs (who are required to move to a rural community to start their career) and found that they were not welcomed or supported by the staff at the school, which led to teachers feeling confused and frustrated. As one teacher said:

... You have just arrived at school, you are far from your family, a village school, a remote place, and the trouble is already big. If you are welcomed warmly, you can adopt more easily, but there is no warm welcome, nobody says what I should do; they do not ask "Have you found a house? Do you have any problems? How are you?"; in the first month, I was like in depression... (p. 372).

This teacher's experience demonstrates how locals' distrust of outsiders manifested in lack of communication with and expressed care for newcomers. Only one out of the eight teachers in the study reported being welcomed warmly by staff, and this teacher was the only one who developed a positive perception of the profession, suggesting that locals' expressions of trust play an impactful role in the induction phase (p. 372).

Feelings of personal isolation were often worsened by the distance that ECTs who were not from the community had to travel to visit family and friends. As aforementioned, many ECTs reported that traveling far distances to visit family had a negative impact on their induction process. For instance, one Canadian teacher reported how she would frequently cry when her family would leave after visiting (Hellsten et al., 2011, p. 14). The lack of connection to loved ones often exacerbated existing stresses, like the lack of trust from the community and the struggle to understand the community's cultural values, practices, and relationships (Burton & Johnson, 2010; Ekinici, 2020; Hellsten et al., 2011; Janzen & Cranston, 2015). In contrast, teachers who were from the community they taught in were often surrounded by their friends and family members and reported that their close proximity was one of the many reasons they had no desire to leave their positions (Arinaitwe & Corbett, 2022; Gallo, 2020; Leech et al., 2022). The following section analyzes the implications of these findings, particularly the role of ECT background, and considers what the findings suggest about the impact of rural spaces on induction and retention and the potential implications of induction programming.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to understand how rural space impacts teacher induction. Synthesis of the sources reveals that the two factors related to rural space with the most frequent impact on teacher induction were small professional networks and physical distance from amenity-dense areas. The factor that played the most significant role in whether or not ECTs wanted to leave their positions was if they were from the community. Analysis suggests that the significant role of ECT background is due to its influence on three aspects of rural ECTs' lives: professional support, community acceptance, and community familiarity.

Professional Support

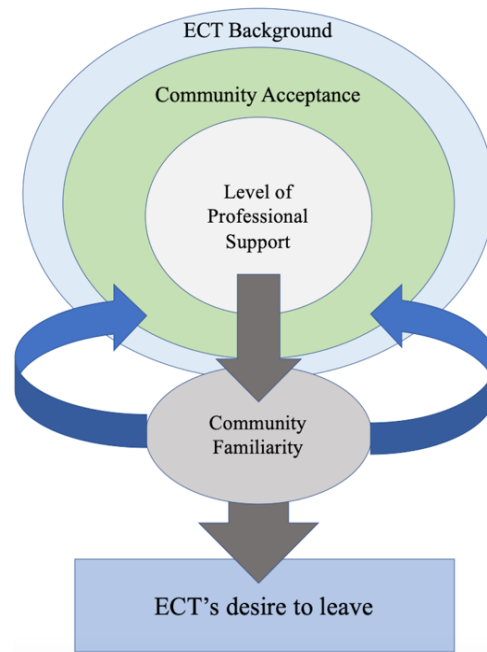
The review of the literature suggests that whether or not ECTs were from the community they began teaching in impacted the dynamic of their relationships with colleagues in the education sector. In other words, the nature of the relationships between rural educational actors and ECTs was shaped by ECT background (Ekinici, 2020; Frahm & Cianca, 2021; Janzen & Cranston, 2016; Kaden et al., 2016; Sharplin, 2014). This dynamic recalls McGregor (2004)'s theories, which posited that the meaning of educational space is constructed from relations among a network of actors in a school. The present study's findings prompt a closer look at such theories of the social construction of spatiality, as they suggest that these theories

accurately represent the social dynamics of rural educational spaces.

The impact of ECT roots on the strength of professional relationships suggests that rural schools may benefit from induction programming that works to foster strong relationships between support staff and non-local ECTs. This focus (when occurring alongside efforts to promote community acceptance and familiarity) may enhance retention by proactively preventing problems with ECTs feeling not trusted or supported by local staff due to their background. Even in contexts in which professional networks were small and it was difficult to provide ECTs with mentoring, teachers who received welcoming greetings and questions about their lives reported a more positive experience and more of a desire to stay than teachers who did not (Ekinici, 2020; Frahm & Cianca, 2021; Kaden et al., 2016). Therefore, even in schools with few staff members, fostering a welcoming atmosphere in the induction process for teachers from outside the community could positively impact the confidence, capabilities, and desire to stay among ECTs.

Figure 2

The Impact of ECT Background



Community Acceptance

ECT background influenced the initial levels of trust and acceptance from the wider community. For example, less than half of the teachers Kaden et al. (2016) studied felt support from the community or integrated into the community, and less than half planned to stay in their positions (p. 137-139). In contrast, local ECTs felt immediate support from their communities, and they were more set on staying (Burton & Johnson, 2010; Gallo, 2020). This relationship between community acceptance and

teacher retention highlights the important role of ECT background in rural teacher induction.

Although initial feelings of distrust often fostered a desire to leave among outsider ECTs, the negative impacts of distrust were sometimes mitigated when ECTs felt they gained the community's acceptance (Burton & Johnson, 2010; Hellsten et al., 2011; Janzen & Cranston, 2011). As one non-local rural teacher recognized: "the people here have to be able to trust you," which "takes some time" (Janzen & Cranston, 2011, p. 176). The significant impact that trust from rural community members had on the experiences and feelings of rural ECTs validates Reid et al. (2010)'s theories on rural social space. Reid et al. (2010) posit that it is "not just the location and landmarks" that define a space but the "meanings" produced through the daily practices and interactions of people in a particular space and time (p. 269-270). This dynamic is precisely what was occurring in the reviewed research, which prompts scholars in this field to take a closer look at the impact of meaning-making among rural residents on rural teachers' experiences.

The emphasis in these studies on the importance of feeling accepted by the community suggests that actors involved in the induction process should work on developing and expressing the community's trust and welcoming attitudes to ECTs from outside of the community. While other observed factors such as distance from amenities and family might still motivate ECTs from elsewhere to leave, the role of community acceptance in positive induction experiences suggests that the impact of locals expressing trust in ECTs should not be overlooked. This focus (when occurring alongside an effort to familiarize outsider ECTs with the cultural values and practices of their new community) may have the potential to enhance retention.

Community Familiarity

Community familiarity also played a critical role in whether or not ECTs wanted to stay in their positions. This was in large part because understanding the community made it easier for teachers to connect with students on a cultural level (Burton & Johnson, 2010; Kaden et al., 2016; Kartal et al., 2017). For example, a local ECT in the study by Burton & Johnson (2010) felt "instantly" connected with her students because of her history in the town and understanding of community connections (p. 382). Being familiar with the community had a cyclical relationship with community acceptance. If ECTs felt that they were trusted and accepted by the community, they had more open communication with locals, and it was therefore easier for them to familiarize themselves with the community (e.g., Burton & Johnson, 2010; Gallo, 2020). In turn, if they had intimate knowledge of the community locals were more likely to trust them, which was why ECTs who were from the community had an easier time garnering acceptance (e.g., Burton & Johnson, 2010; Gallo, 2020). In contrast, if they did not feel trusted or welcome, they struggled to foster open communication and found it difficult to familiarize themselves with community practices and values. For example, a teacher in

Kartal et al. (2017) reported confusion at her students playing a violent game and contacted parents about it, only to learn that it was a normal, accepted practice in the community (p. 35). The way ECTs across studies emphasized the benefits of cultural familiarity suggests that induction programs for non-local ECTs may benefit from focusing on cultural adaptation and integration. This would pre-emptively combat ECTs' common feelings of isolation that result from feeling like an unwelcome or distrusted outsider who does not understand local values. If residents of rural communities express more openness and initial trust to ECTs from other places, the ECTs may feel more confident and will become more familiar with the community. Their increased familiarity could in turn create more trust in the eyes of the community and as a result, a desire to stay.

CONCLUSION: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CONSTRUCTED MEANING

Drawing on the studies of Gruenewald (2003) and Reid et al. (2010) the present study applied a geographical lens to the topic of teacher induction, investigating how rural spaces impact the induction experience of early-career teachers (ECTs). Given historically documented high rates of turnover among ECTs, the study paid particular attention to retention among the reviewed studies. This study found that small professional networks and geographic distance from amenity-dense areas have a substantial impact on the quality of induction, while whether or not ECTs were from the community has the most noteworthy impact on the desire to leave.

There is an evident tension in the content and implications of the reviewed studies. Even though the definitions and discussions about the "rural" in the frameworks of many articles suggest an influence of deficit perspectives on rurality, the findings regarding the significance of ECTs' backgrounds recall Reid et al. (2010)'s model of rural social space. Across multiple geographical regions, the element of the "rural" that had the most significant impact on ECTs' desire to leave was not related to what these spaces did or did not physically have. The decisions had to do with the meaning assigned to being from the rural community created by the people who were from it. This echoes Reid et al. (2010)'s conception of rural social space as "the set of relationships, actions, and meanings that are produced in and through the daily practice of people in a particular place and time" (p. 269). Residents of rural communities viewed local teachers as trustworthy based on their pre-existing relationship to the community, and outsider teachers as initially not trustworthy. This value assigned to being from the community infiltrated all aspects of the induction experiences for ECTs, particularly their relationships with professional networks, locals, and their ability to familiarize themselves with the community. The teachers who wanted to stay were almost always the ones who were from the town they taught in. This suggests that the most significant element of rural geographies is not a geographical element at all, but a socially constructed element assigned to a particular geographical space, valued by the people within it.

This study has implications for researchers, policymakers, and other educational actors in rural education. First of all, the found impact of a socially constructed characteristic of rural space on teachers' plans to stay in their jobs supports the theories of scholars like Reid et al. (2010), who advocate for an understanding of the social construction of rural space. The finding on ECT background also suggests that rural schools struggling to retain teachers should consider working on helping ECTs from outside the community better understand local cultural practices. Helping outsiders adapt to local traditions, values, and social practices (like the normalization of the violent game in Kartal et al., 2017) may help enhance teachers' familiarity with the community. Local staff efforts to familiarize non-local ECTs with the community may also suggest to the ECTs that they are truly wanted there, which, as the quoted teacher from Ekinçi (2020) noted, could help in

supporting emotional stability at the start of a teaching job, and as a result increase ECTs' desire to stay.

There were a few noteworthy limitations to this study. The primary limitation was the small body of relevant literature on the topic. Although a mix of manual and Boolean searches was utilized to extract as much relevant literature as possible, the keyword search may have limited how much literature was found. In addition, the inclusion and exclusion criteria could have limited it as well, such as the decision to only include literature from 2000 on. Future research could build on this finding by focusing on the impact of ECT background and how it potentially varies based on factors like geographical location or level of economic development. Future research may also benefit from investigating if findings are similar among rural teachers in a digital setting.

REFERENCES

- Ai, B., Li, X., & Li, G. (2022). When city meets rural: Exploring pre-service teachers' identity construction when teaching in rural schools. *SAGE Open*, 12(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440221079910>
- Arinaitwe, G., & Corbett, M. (2022). Rural teacher shortages and home-grown solutions: A Ugandan case study. *Australian and International Journal of Rural Education*, 32(1), 18-32. <https://doi.org/10.47381/aijre.v32i1.320>
- Azano A., Downey, J., & Brenner, D. (2019). Preparing pre-service teachers for rural schools. In J. Lampert (Ed.), *The Oxford research encyclopedia of education*: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.274>
- Berry, A. B., Petrin, R. A., Gravelle, M. L., & Farmer, T. W. (2012). Issues in special education teacher recruitment, retention, and professional development: Considerations in supporting rural teachers. *Rural Special Education Quarterly*, 30(4), 3-11. <https://doi.org/10.1177/875687051103000402>
- Bleeker, M., Dolfin, S., Johnson, A., Glazerman, S., Isenberg, E., & Grider, M. (2012). The state of teacher induction in urban America. *Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*, 111(2), 443-465. <https://doi.org/10.1177/016146811211401410>
- Burke, P. F., Aubusson, P. K., Schuck, S. R., Buchanan, J.D., & Prescott, A. E. (2015). How do early career teachers value different types of support? A scale-adjusted latent class choice model. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 47, 241-253. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2015.01.005>
- Burleigh, D. (2016). Teacher attrition in a northern Ontario remote First Nation: A Narrative Re-Storying. *In Education*, 22(1), 77-90. <https://doi.org/10.37119/ojs2016.v22i1.253>
- Burton, M., & Johnson, A. S. (2010). "Where else would we teach?" Portraits of two teachers in the rural south. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 61(4), 347-386. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487110372362>
- Corbett, M. (2021). Structures of feeling and the problem of place in rural education. In S. White & J. Downey (Eds.), *Rural education across the world: Models of innovative practice and impact* (pp 167-183). Springer.
- Dillon-Wallace, J. (2021). How can rural education research make inclusive education better? In P. Roberts & M. Fuqua (Eds.), *Ruraling education research: Connections between rurality and the disciplines of educational research* (pp. 177-194). Springer.
- Dlamini, J., Ray Du Plessis, A., & Markham L. (2022). Staffing and retention challenges of teachers in rural schools of Eswatini: The case of the Lubombo region. *International Journal of Rural Management*, 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09730052221084767>
- Ekinci, N. (2020). A study on the experiences of beginning classroom teachers on teacher induction practices in rural areas in Turkey. *Journal of Teacher Education and Educators*, 9(2), 349-382. Retrieved January 22, 2023, from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1281911.pdf>
- Erawan, P. (2019). The need analysis of supporting beginning teachers in schools in remote rural areas. *Journal of Teacher Education and Educators*, 8(2), 115-129. Retrieved January 22, 2023, from <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/jtee/issue/48420/589754>
- Ewing, R., & Smith, D. (2003). Retaining quality beginning teachers in the profession. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, 2(1), 15-32.
- Fall, A. M., & Billingsley, B. S. (2011). Disparities in work conditions among early career special educators in high- and low-poverty districts. *Remedial and Special Education*, 32(1), 64-78. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0741932510361264>
- Feiman-Nemser, S. (2001). From preparation to practice: Designing a continuum to strengthen and sustain teaching. *Teachers College Record*, 103(6), 1013-1055. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0161-4681.00141>
- Frahm, M., & Cianca, M. (2021). Will they stay or will they go? Leadership behaviors that increase teacher retention in rural schools. *The Rural Educator*, 42(3), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.35608/ruraled.v42i3.1151>
- Gallo, J. (2020). Against the grain: Narratives of rural teachers' professional lives. *The Rural Educator*, 41(2), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.35608/ruraled.v41i2.862>
- Geertz, C. (1996). Afterward. In S. Feld & F. Basso (Eds.), *Sense of places* (pp. 259-262). School of American Research Press.
- Glover, T. A., Nugent, G. C., Chumney, F. L., Ihlo, T., Shapiro, E. S., Guard, K., Koziol, N., & Bovair, J. (2016). Investigating rural teachers' professional development, instructional knowledge, and classroom practice. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 31(3), 1-16.
- Green, B., & Reid, J. (2021). Rural social space: A conceptual-analytical framework for rural (teacher) education and the rural human services. In P. Roberts & M. Fuqua (Eds.), *Ruraling education research: Connections between rurality and the disciplines of educational research* (pp. 29-46). Springer.
- Gruenewald, D. A. (2003a). Foundations of place: A multidisciplinary framework for place-conscious education. *American Educational Research Journal*, 40(3), 619-654. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312040003619>
- Gruenewald, D. A. (2003b). The best of both worlds: A critical pedagogy of place. *Educational Researcher*, 32(4), 3-12. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X032004003>
- Guin, K. (2004). Chronic teacher turnover in urban elementary schools. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 12(42), 1-25. <https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v12n42.2004>
- Halfacree, K. (2006). Rural space: Constructing a three-fold architecture. In P. Cloke, T. Marsden, & P. Mooney (Eds.), *The handbook of rural studies* (pp. 44-62). SAGE Publications Ltd.

- Harris, M. M. (2001). Lessons from prairie teachers. *Action in Teacher Education*, 23(1), 19-26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01626620.2001.10463051>
- Helfenbein, R. J., & Buendía, E.O. (2017). Critical geography of education. In N. Ares, E. O. Buendía, & R. Helfenbein (Eds.), *Deterritorializing/Reterritorializing: Critical geography of educational reform* (pp. 27-40). Sense Publishers.
- Hellsten, L., McIntyre M., Laureen J., & Prytula, M.P. (2011). Teaching in rural Saskatchewan: First-year teachers identify challenges and make recommendations. *Rural Educator*, 32(3), 11-21. <https://doi.org/10.35608/ruraled.v32i3.425>
- Hudson, S., Young, K., Thiele, C., & Hudson, P. (2020). An exploration of preservice teachers' readiness for teaching in rural and remote schools. *Australian and International Journal of Rural Education*, 30(3), 51-68. <https://doi.org/10.47381/ajire.v30i3.280>
- Hulme, M., & Wood, J. (2022). The importance of starting well: The influence of early career support on job satisfaction and career intentions in teaching. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 46(4), 504-521. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2021.1985981>
- Ingersoll, R. (2003). *Is there really a teacher shortage?* Philadelphia, PA: Consortium for Policy Research in Education, University of Pennsylvania. <http://www.gse.upenn.edu/pdf/rmi/Shortage-RMI-09-2003.pdf>
- Ingersoll R. M., & Strong, M. (2011). The impact of induction and mentoring programs for beginning teachers: A critical review of the research. *Review of Educational Research*, 81(2), 201-233. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654311403323>
- Janzen, M. D., & Cranston, J. (2015). Motivations and experiences of teachers in a northern Manitoba community. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 61(2), 166-183. <https://doi.org/10.11575/ajer.v61i2.56060>
- Kaden, U., Patterson, P. P., Healy, J., & Adams, B. L. (2016). Stemming the revolving door: Teacher retention and attrition in arctic Alaska schools. *Global Education Review*, 1(3), 129-147.
- Kartal, S. E., Özdemir, T. Y., Yirci, R. (2017). Mentorship needs of early career teachers working in rural regions. *Turkish Journal of Education*, 6(1), 30-40. <https://doi.org/10.19128/turje.284833>
- Kelchtermans, G. (2019). Early career teachers and their need for support: Thinking again. In A. Sullivan, B. Johnson, & M. Simons (Eds.), *Attracting and keeping the best teachers* (pp. 83-98). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-8621-3_5
- Kono, C. D. (2012). Comprehensive teacher induction: Meeting the dual needs of principals and new teachers in rural schools. *Journal of College Teaching & Learning*, 9(2), 129-134. <https://doi.org/10.19030/tlc.v9i2.6908>
- Langdon, F.J., Alexander, P.A., Ryde, A., & Baggetta, P. (2014). A national survey of induction and mentoring: How it is perceived within communities of practice. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 44, 92-105. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2014.08.004>
- Leech, N. L., Haug, C. A., Rodriguez, E., & Gold, M. (2022). Why teachers remain teaching in rural districts: Listening to the voices from the field. *The Rural Educator*, 43(3), 1-9.
- Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The production of space*. Blackwell.
- Malloy, W. W., & Allen, T. (2007). Teacher retention in a teacher resiliency-building rural school. *The Rural Educator*, 28(2), 19-27. <https://doi.org/10.35608/ruraled.v28i2.482>
- Mafora, P. (2013). Managing teacher retention in a rural school district in South Africa. *Australian Educational Researcher*, 40, 227-240. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-013-0088-x>
- Manwa, L., Mukeredzi, T. G., & Manwa, L. (2016). Rural school teaching in Zimbabwe: Mentoring experiences of 'beginning primary' school teachers. *Australian and International Journal of Rural Education*, 26(2), 63-76. <https://doi.org/10.47381/ajire.v26i2.65>
- Massey, D. (1994). *Space, place, and gender*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- McGregor, J. (2004). Spatiality and the place of the material in schools. *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*, 12(3), 347-372. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681360400200207>
- Miller, G. J. (2020). Teacher retention in a rural east Texas school district. *School Leadership Review*, 15(1), Article 14.
- Nkambule, T. (2022). Exploring working conditions in selected rural schools: Teachers' experiences. *South African Journal of Education*, 42(1), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v42n1a2013>
- Opoku, M. P., Asare-Nuamah, P., Nketsia, W., Asibey, B. O., & Arinaitwe, G. (2020). Exploring the factors that enhance teacher retention in rural schools in Ghana. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 50(2), 201-217. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2019.1661973>
- Opoku, M. P., Jiya, A. N., Kanyinji, R. C., & Nketsia, W. (2022). Retention and job satisfaction among rural primary school teachers in Malawi. *Rural Society*, 31(2), 101-114. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10371656.2022.2087293>
- Plunkett, M., & Dyson, M. (2011). Becoming a teacher and staying one: Examining the complex ecologies associated with educating and retaining new teachers in rural Australia? *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 36(1), 31-47. <https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2011v36n1.3>
- Ravitch, S. M., & Carl, N. M. (2021). *Qualitative research bridging the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological*. Sage.
- Redding, C., Booker, L. N., Smith, T. M., & Desimone, L. M. (2019). School administrators' direct and indirect influences on middle school math teachers' turnover. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 57(6), 708-730. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-10-2018-0190>
- Reid, J., Green, B., Cooper, M., Hastings, W., Lock, G., & White, S. (2010). Regenerating rural social space? Teacher education for rural-regional sustainability. *Australian*

- Journal of Education*, 54(3), 262-276. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000494411005400304>
- Roberts, P., & Fuqua, M. (Eds.). (2021). *Ruraling education research: Connections between rurality and the disciplines of educational research*. Springer.
- Roberts, P., & Guenther J. (2021). Framing rural and remote: Key issues, debates, definitions, and positions in constructing rural and remote disadvantage. In P. Roberts & M. Fuqua (Eds.), *Ruraling education research: Connections between rurality and the disciplines of educational research* (pp. 29-46). Springer.
- Ronfeldt, M., Loeb, S., & Wycoff, J. (2013). How teacher turnover harms student achievement. *American Educational Research Journal*, 50(1), 4-36. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831212463813>
- Simons, E., Robinson, S. B., & Dingba, M. (2022). COVID-19 reshaped new teacher induction--for the better. *Learning Professional*, 43(4), 42-46.
- Sharplin, E. D. (2014). Reconceptualising out-of-field teaching: Experiences of rural teachers in Western Australia. *Educational Research*, 56(1), 97-110. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131881.2013.874160>
- Tran, H. & Smith, D. A. (2020) The strategic support to thrive beyond survival model: An administrative support framework for improving student outcomes and addressing educator staffing in rural and urban high-needs schools. *Research in Educational Administration and Leadership*, 5(3), 870-919. <https://doi.org/10.30828/real/2020.3.8>
- Walker-Gibbs, B., Ludecke, M., & Kline, J. (2018). Pedagogy of the rural as a lens for understanding beginning teachers' identity and positionings in rural schools. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 26(2), 301-314. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2017.1394906>
- Whipp, J. L., & Geronime, L. (2017). Experiences that predict early career teacher commitment to and retention in high-poverty urban schools. *Urban Education*, 52(7), 799-828. <https://doi.org/10.1177/004208591557453>
- White, S., & Downey, J. (2021). International trends and patterns in innovation in rural education. In S. White & J. Downey (Eds.), *Rural education across the world: Models of innovative practice and impact* (pp 167-183). Springer.
- Yang, Y., & Rao, N. (2021). Teacher professional development among preschool teachers in rural China. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, 42(3), 219-244. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10901027.2020.1726844>
- Yarrow, A., Ballantyne, R., Hansford, B., Herschell, P., & Millwater, J. (1999). Teaching in rural and remote schools: A literature review. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 15(1), 1-13. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0742-051X\(98\)00036-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0742-051X(98)00036-5)
- Zawacki-Richter, O. (2020). Introduction: Systematic reviews in educational research. In O. Zawacki-Ritcher, M. Kerres, S. Bedenlier, M. Bond, & K. Buntins (Eds.), *Systematic reviews in educational research: Methodology, perspectives, and application* (pp.v-xiii). Springer VS. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-27602-7>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Quinn Abbate recently earned her Master's of Social Science in Educational Studies from KU Leuven. She also holds a graduate certificate in Education Policy from The University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth and a Bachelor's of Arts in Humanitarian Studies from Fordham University. A former educator, she is currently working in her hometown of Chicago, IL as an education coordinator and volunteering with community-based education centers.