

NEEDS OF THE OKLAHOMA RURAL TEACHER
THAT ARE NOT MET IN PRE-SERVICE TRAINING

NEEDS OF THE OKLAHOMA RURAL TEACHER
THAT ARE NOT MET IN PRE-SERVICE TRAINING

By

MARY ALTA BREWSTER

Bachelor of Science

Southwestern State Teachers College

Weatherford, Oklahoma

1937

Submitted to the Department of Educational Administration

Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

1940

LIBRARY
O. A. M. COLLEGE
WEATHERFORD, OKLA.

APPROVED:

AUG 6 1940

Lea Jones
In Charge of Thesis

N. Couggs
Dean of the School of Education

H. B. M. Tutosh
Dean of the Graduate School

126887

PREFACE

The job of teaching the one-room school is unlike that of any other in the teaching profession, yet, it is the one job for which no specific preparation is offered in the state of Oklahoma.

The latest available statistics from the State Department of Public Instruction show 2,799 one-teacher schools in Oklahoma, with a total enrollment of 76,952 pupils. Since few city superintendents will employ inexperienced teachers, many of the holders of elementary teaching certificates are forced to secure their initial experience in this type of school. Therefore, many rural teachers know nothing of rural conditions or the job of teaching in this distinctive situation. Their only training which could be classed as "rural preparation" has been a two-hour course in Rural School Problems. This course is required for a one-year elementary certificate, but not for a life certificate.

This study grew out of a vital interest in, and an intimate knowledge of, the problems of the teacher in the one-room school. Problems which could have been minimized or entirely alleviated had proper attention been given pre-service training.

To Miss Vera Jones, Associate Professor of Education, Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College, I am deeply indebted. Her advice, criticism, and encouragement has been a source of inspiration throughout the period of this study.

For helpful suggestions and time given freely to conferences, I am also indebted to Doctor N. Conger, Dean of the School of Education,

and Doctor D. C. McIntosh, Dean of the Graduate School, Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College. Few educators show such an insight into, or a more vital interest in, the betterment of rural schools and the conditions of rural life.

Acknowledgement is made in the footnotes for materials from all other sources.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
PREFACE	iii
I. INTRODUCTION	1
The Problem	1
Related Studies	1
Plan of Study	3
II. NEEDS AS RECOGNIZED BY OKLAHOMA EDUCATORS	4
III. NEEDS AS RECOGNIZED BY RURAL TEACHERS	8
IV. COURSES IN RURAL EDUCATION OFFERED IN OKLAHOMA COLLEGES	16
V. GENERAL SUMMARY	18
Findings	18
Conclusions and Recommendations	20
BIBLIOGRAPHY	22

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

In 1928 John J. Tigert, then United States Commissioner of Education, said,

Large numbers of children in the rural schools are still deprived of the services of trained teachers in spite of the fact that there is no scarcity--in many cases there is a surplus of persons holding teaching certificates and therefore legally qualified to teach.

Today, twelve years later, the same statement would be true.

Teachers in the one-room schools have more college preparation, they hold higher types of teaching certificates, but they are no better prepared for the job of teaching in a one-teacher rural school.

This study is an attempt to show what both beginning and experienced teachers, now employed in the one-teacher schools of Oklahoma, believe to be the deficiencies in their training. Contrasted with these beliefs are the opinions of those responsible for teacher-training in the state colleges.

It attempts to answer the questions:

1. What are the specific needs of the rural teacher during the training period?
2. How may offerings be differentiated or enriched to meet these needs?

Related Studies

A number of studies have been made which are closely related to this problem. These are given because of their implications for pre-service training.

1

In 1929 Anderson and Kibbe found and classified 19,740 difficulties which had been experienced by rural teachers in Wisconsin.

Summarized, these problems were:

1. Problems of general technique	12,596	63.8%
2. Problems of special technique	3,867	19.6%
3. Problems of general management	2,384	21.1%
4. Problems of community relationships	893	4.5%
Total	<u>19,740</u>	<u>100%</u>

Because of the vast number of problems found this study has answered the problem "What are the crucial needs of the rural teachers in Wisconsin?" Its implications for teacher training in any state are valuable.

2

A study by Verne McGuffey indicates that the duties, responsibilities, and activities of the teacher in the one-room school differ greatly from those of the grade teacher in the city. The activities involving the greatest difficulties in the one-room school were:

1. Problems involved in legal relations.
2. Problems arising from managing all the grades together.
3. Problems arising from the necessity of adjusting methods to fit the rural situation.
4. Problems arising from difficult living conditions to which the teacher is not accustomed.

1 C. J. Anderson and Delie E. Kibbe, Field Problems of Wisconsin Rural Teachers, (Department of Public Instruction of Wisconsin, 1929).

2 Verne McGuffey, "Differences in the Activities of Teachers in Rural One-Teacher Schools and of Grade Teachers in Cities," Contributions to Education, No. 346, (Teachers College, Columbia University, 1929).

5. Problems arising from the necessity for assuming professional, social, and economic leadership in the community.

3

A previous study by Charters and Waples found that many activities performed by rural teachers were not required of the grade teacher in towns or cities. This shows clearly that there is a great difference between the work of rural teachers and the grade teacher in town.

Plan of Study

In considering the deficiencies in the pre-service training of rural teachers it was felt that more than one approach to the problem was necessary. The subject has been treated from two viewpoints: that of the college educator responsible for the training of teachers; and the viewpoint of the rural teacher in the field, the one who bears the brunt of public criticism regarding inadequate rural education.

Data for this study was obtained by:

1. Correspondence with the presidents of all teacher-training institutions of Oklahoma.
2. Correspondence and interviews with teachers in rural one-teacher schools in all sections of Oklahoma.

3 Charters and Waples, The Commonwealth Teacher-Training Study,
(University of Chicago Press)

CHAPTER II

NEEDS AS RECOGNIZED BY OKLAHOMA EDUCATORS

In response to the question: "Do you believe there should be any differentiation in the training of teachers for the one-teacher rural school and other elementary schools?" the following answers were received from the persons responsible for the education of teachers in the teacher training institutions of the state.

1. Yes. Problems in a rural school are different in many ways.
2. There should be some differentiation in training of teachers for the one-teacher schools. They need to understand rural conditions, rural sociology, that is to say, the conditions under which rural people live, and as much as possible about their "mind-set". They need instruction in the matter of making a program for the one-room rural school, and the exceedingly difficult problem of handling children of all ages and grades. Of course, the philosophy of education and the principles of instruction, the goals to be attained are the same in the rural school as in other elementary schools. It is my belief that the differentiation does not imply an entirely different curriculum for the rural teacher.
3. There should be very little difference in the program of a teacher trained for teaching in a one-room school and for other types of schools. A program making combination of classes and phases of administration need attention for those who plan to teach in the rural schools where supervision is not possible.
4. Possibly so. This depends on the demand for this service at any particular college. Of course, the trend is to consolidate.

5. The one-room teacher needs to be more versatile than the teacher in the city schools, for she must teach pupils in all grades and all subjects.

6. Yes. They need a course in Rural Sociology and one in Rural School Problems.

7. I am quite sure there should be a differentiation in the training of teachers for the one-teacher schools. In the first place the teacher in the one-teacher school has eight grades and for that reason she should have experience in handling an organization of eight grades. In the second place, the teaching materials are quite different in the country, and for that reason the country teacher should have experience in constructing a course of study and teaching materials for a one-teacher school. While the aims and principles of education are the same, the procedures in a one-room country school are altogether different, and for that reason a complete program for the training of one-room school teachers should be set up.

8. This school believes the problems of a one-room school teacher are a great deal different from those of a small city or metropolitan classroom teacher. These differences consist mainly of the following: (a) social background of students, (b) presence and absence of supervision, (c) equipment and housing differences, (d) janitorial services and plant maintenance, and (e) class scheduling and miscellaneous problems of teaching small graded groups.

9. I believe there should be some differentiating of the training of teachers for the one-teacher school. One should have courses which take up special problems of the one-teacher school, such as, schedule making, how to utilize the materials in a rural community, the community

problems in a rural community, the school ground beautification, and other such problems that would apply specifically to the rural school.

10. Yes, we believe there should be a differentiation in apprentice teaching work on the basis of the kinds of schools--rural, city, kindergarten, primary, intermediate, junior high, senior high. We are not sure that we are pursuing the right policy in refining our apprentice teaching opportunities to one-room or two-room schools, although we recognize the difference between responsibilities for one grade or three grades and for one grade or six grades.

11. It is obvious that the teacher in the small rural school must deal with a more complex teaching situation than is found in the graded school. In addition to her work in the school room the teacher is responsible for establishing and maintaining a desirable relationship between the school and the community. All this must be done without the aid of a principal or supervisor.

Considerable attention should be paid to the selection of persons who are to prepare for work in the small rural schools. The preparation for work in the small rural school should include all work required of the students preparing for work in graded school plus additional courses and experiences designed to aid in solving problems and meeting situations peculiar to the rural school and community.

12. The question concerning pre-service training of teachers for rural schools has frequently been raised in the Department and in the colleges. We would be pleased if the colleges could and would offer special courses to provide training for service in one-teacher schools. Heretofore, students attending the teachers' colleges have

been more interested in training for graded school work. Very few of them desire to remain in the one-teacher schools longer than necessary. As a result the enrollment in such courses have been rather limited.

CHAPTER III
NEEDS AS RECOGNIZED BY RURAL TEACHERS

The interviewing of rural teachers was begun in the summer of 1939, and correspondence was carried on with others throughout the entire 1939-40 school term. Few teachers failed to respond to the letters sent them. Altogether, 63 teachers were interviewed and letters were received from 151, making a total of 214 expressing opinions concerning their training.

Table I shows the needs as recognized by the rural teachers. No attempt was made to classify the opinions expressed as to whether the teacher was a beginning teacher or an experienced teacher.

Most frequently mentioned was the need for practice teaching and observation in a typical one-room school situation. Many teachers indicated that they had been handicapped by not having had training in primary work. Other deficiencies in their training have been noted and classified.

Excerpts From Rural Teachers' Letters

It was felt that the actual statements made by the rural teachers would be of interest to those engaged in the training of teachers or any other phase of rural education. The exact wording is quoted.

1. My entire methods course in reading and the language arts was a struggle to keep up with the instructor and her talk of the "grade placement" of a subject. Why can't we learn how to teach first and then get into the more technical "research findings," "grade placements," etc. They're confusing to the beginner.

TABLE I

SUMMARY OF THE NEEDS OF RURAL TEACHERS THAT ARE NOT MET
IN PRE-SERVICE TRAINING AND THE PERCENTAGE OF FREQUENCY
WITH WHICH THESE NEEDS WERE LISTED

RECOGNIZED NEEDS	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Practice teaching in a one-teacher school	189	88.3
Observation in several one-teacher schools	132	61.6
Special primary training	115	53.7
Rural school units in all methods courses	86	40.1
Better and more practical college instruction in specific subjects as:		
Social Science	59	28.0
Reading	52	24.2
Writing	33	15.4
Art	58	28.0
Music	30	14.0
Nature Study	12	5.6
Agriculture	36	16.8
Home Economics	24	11.2
Faculty members who are leaders in rural education	12	5.6
A practical course in "Rural School Libraries"	21	9.3
Better knowledge of the rural community	33	15.4
More practical rural school management course	94	43.7

2. I did all my practice teaching in eighth grade arithmetic. I have no idea of how to teach primary classes.
3. I've never had any primary training and my lower grades show it!
4. I do not know how to take care of the different levels of ability in my school.
5. Every teacher should have one-half her practice teaching in a one-room school. It would even help those who will never teach in a country school.
6. I've taught four years in a one-room school but I'd like to have a chance to do some supervised teaching in a similar school.
7. I went to a country school two years and I teach as I was taught. I've read a lot about "how to teach"--but I can't make it work out.
8. I'd never been in a rural school until I started to teach in one. I think the methods courses we take are like trying to pilot an airplane by an instruction book. It's a dangerous job for both teachers and pupils. I hate my teaching because I've always been able to do everything well--but solving the task of teaching every grade is beyond me.
9. My practice teaching was not complete because I did all my teaching in one grade and one subject. This teaching was done in a city system which made it difficult to apply to a rural school with all eight grades.
10. They should have told me that you can't "teach" a country school. It's just a case of the survival of the toughest. I'm quitting for good after this year.

11. You'll find all the methods courses, except a two-hour "hash course" on how to teach everything, on the graduate level. I'd like to know how to teach social science to all grades by the unit method. I learned geography and history in college by the fact method--and I can't teach otherwise. It's dull for both the pupils--and me.

12. I'd like to learn how to make attractive reading charts, do manuscript writing, and learn how to teach penmanship to all grades at one time.

13. I can't get everything in on the time I have. The 7th and 8th grades take all my time they need so much help--and the others have to work alone. Generally they just sit.

14. You can't use the same methods in all cases in the country school that you do in town. Practice teaching in the one-room school should be required for every elementary certificate.

15. I found by practice this year that I could not make lesson plans for each subject each day in detail as I had in college. I believe every teacher in the elementary course should have training in rural lesson plans, schedule making, etc.

16. I had much trouble in starting my primary children, because I had no primary training. I seemed to think they had a higher level of understanding than they do have.

17. I think another need of the rural teacher is to learn how to correlate subjects and combine grades, so the teacher may have more time to spend with the children in each class period.

18. I'd like to know how to do group teaching--using units of work and individual instruction. I tried it once--but it was a mess.

19. I think there should be special training for rural teachers. If we had instructors in our colleges who knew something about rural education--ones who were not freaks of some kind, or scared someone would find out they'd ever been in a rural school, we'd have plenty of teachers to take the training.

20. None of the suggested schedules would fit my school situation. I didn't learn how to adapt it in my rural school methods course. My instructor talked of everything but rural schools. I still think he'd never been in one.

21. When I started to teach I found four courses of study to use. I still haven't finished reading them. Why can't we get help during our training period, and learn how to use them.

22. I'd like to see a one-room school taught like you are supposed to teach it.

23. I think every elementary practice teacher should have observation and practice teaching in a one-room school.

24. Actual work in the field is needed instead of so much theory. For example, I had a course in college ^{One} last year that took up the subject, "How to teach arithmetic." It was mainly theory; therefore, this year I had to learn arithmetic all over agin.

25. I think we should use the state-adopted textbooks in our methods courses, with reading or library assignments in others.

26. I don't have the time or ability to make up a nature study course out of the materials I learned in botany, geology, and zoology. It seems to me that nature study is an important subject for the rural school--and training should be given to teach it.

27. We need a course in rural school libraries. The rural teacher should know how to select and buy books for all the grades, and the classifying and care of the books in the rural school.

28. You can't teach art to pupils the way it was taught to me in college. We started our first assignment of the art class with a spot, and worked on that spot all summer. I still get spots before my eyes when I think of it.

29. For those of us in rural schools who have had no previous training in music, there is a need for a better and more practical course than that offered. Perhaps of more benefit to us would be instruction and practice in the phonograph course in public school music.

30. Farm boys and girls need to know more agriculture and home making than the average rural teacher is capable of teaching. A knowledge of these specific subjects, rural economics, rural sociology, and general farm community problems, should be a requirement for rural teaching.

31. I had no idea that country children and their parents were so much different from people in town.

32. How can a teacher be expected to teach agriculture and domestic science to pupils who know more about them than she does?

33. I think every rural teacher needs to know about the care of the school building, equipment and grounds.

34. We need to know how to care for our maladjusted pupils. Promotion and retention is always a problem for the inexperienced teacher.

35. Throughout all my college training I had the feeling that having to teach in a rural school was the same as being sentenced to the chain gang. It was caused by the attitude of most of my college instructors. They stressed city schools, sometimes mentioned consolidation, but never once offered suggestions for improvement of the one-room school as it now stands.

36. "She's just a country school teacher" is heard often, and I believe it is the fault of those in the faculty in many colleges. I've never yet had a college teacher who was in sympathy with our problems. This attitude during our training causes most of us to leave the country at the first opportunity.

37. It's doubtful whether a special rural training program would attract many student teachers, because of the present low salary in the rural school. However, I believe every elementary course should have at least one-third emphasize the rural school situation, although most of the present education faculty would not be prepared to do this.

38. My work in college has not prepared me to cope with the actual situations as they arise in my school. It seems to me that teaching should be a laboratory course and that we should have the responsibility of teaching children in the kind of school where we will teach.

39. My course in child psychology gave me nothing except some new technical sounding words. You can't learn to know children by text books alone. We need a more practical course--and some children to try our knowledge out on.

40. I read an article that stated all elementary teachers in Australia were first trained as rural teachers. This seems to me as the best solution offered for training in our state. As long as teachers feel that teaching in town is a promotion they should be willing to do extra work toward it.

CHAPTER IV

COURSES IN RURAL EDUCATION OFFERED IN OKLAHOMA COLLEGES

No differentiation is made in the elementary certificate requirements in Oklahoma, except that the holder of a one-year state certificate must have a two-hour credit in rural school problems. This course is not required for a life certificate.

The composite major for rural teachers as offered in some of the schools is merely a new arrangement of old offerings. The student may choose between a two-hour course in primary reading or industrial arts. He may have two hours of practice teaching in the secondary school, but no mention is made of observation or practice in the type of school for which he is preparing. Other courses are those offered for the regular elementary degree.

Only one school in Oklahoma, at the present time, is offering the student teacher an opportunity to do actual teaching in a practical one-room school situation.

The Dean of Education of one state school said in reply to a question regarding teacher training,

We have a one-room school on our campus and provide rural teachers with excellent opportunities to teach in this school. These young teachers take three semesters of practice teaching in this school.

Another wrote,

This year we have the over-flow pupils from grades 3, 4 and 5 in a separate room under a supervisor trained in rural problems.

Teachers interested in rural school work do their practice teaching in this room. This is as near as we come to a rural school situation.

Still another said,

This college does provide student-teachers an opportunity to do practice teaching work in one-teacher schools relatively near to this Institution. We arrange for them to drive out to these schools for a six weeks period during their senior year.

It is doubtful whether two of the situations described could be classed as the ideal rural school set-up. Certainly not the one with only three grades.

Only three schools indicated that students were given an opportunity to observe teaching in a one-teacher school. One educator said students observed in a rural school once during their training. The other two did not specify the number of observations.

The catalog of one college listed several undergraduate courses in rural education. Among them were Supervision in Rural Schools, Rural School Administration, Methods and Materials in 4-H Club Work, Rural School Management, and Rural School Curriculum. This is, perhaps, the most extensive effort to provide for the rural teacher. This school does not, however, offer rural practice teaching.

From the wide range of complaints by the rural teachers, it is evident that most of the Rural School Problems courses are failing to give practical help to the teacher.

CHAPTER V
GENERAL SUMMARY

Teachers in one-teacher schools and educators responsible for teacher training in state colleges cooperated in this study. The major purpose of the investigation was to show the needs of the rural teacher that are not met in pre-service training. An attempt was made to show the implications of the findings for the training of rural teachers.

Data was obtained by:

1. Correspondence with presidents or others responsible for teacher training in all state colleges.
2. Correspondence and interviews with teachers in one-teacher schools in all sections of Oklahoma.

The returns were classified under major headings and excerpts from correspondence included to show the actual trends of thought regarding pre-service training.

This chapter gives a brief summary of the findings.

Findings

Returns from eleven teacher training institutions and 214 teachers in one-room schools showed a wide range in the attitude of the two groups regarding training for rural work.

(a) The educator said, "Rural teachers need a course in management of the rural school." The teacher said, "We need a more practical course under faculty members who know the rural school."

(b) 189 teachers indicated the need for practice teaching in a one-teacher school. Only two college educators saw this need.

(c) 132 teachers recognized the need for extensive observation in the one-teacher school. Compared with this was the recognition by two college educators.

(d) Only one college educator felt that the rural teacher should have special primary training. 115 teachers, representing 53.7% of those participating in the study, were firm in their belief that primary training is essential to the rural teacher.

(e) A large number of teachers indicated that all methods courses should contain units devoted to the instruction in rural one-teacher schools.

(f) The lack of positive faculty leadership in rural education was recognized by 5.6% of the teachers.

(g) From 5.6% to 28% of the teachers mentioned the need for better and more practical college instruction in specific subjects.

The subjects in order of descending frequency were:

Subject	Number of times mentioned
Social Science	59
Art	59
Reading	52
Agriculture	36
Writing	33
Music	30
Home Economics	24
Nature Study	12

Conclusions and Recommendations for Teacher Training And Certification

While many state educators are apparently aware that the present system of teacher training in Oklahoma does not provide for the needs of the rural teacher, little has been done to remedy this defect. Over 76,000 children are deprived of the services of well qualified teachers through an apathy on the part of educational leaders to recognize the existence of the one-teacher school. "The trend to consolidate," is often spoken of by our leaders, but the fact remains that this remote possibility does not justify present neglect.

The following recommendations are made on the basis of the facts presented in this study:

1. It is suggested that every teacher certified for elementary teaching be required to complete certain basic courses in rural education. This would eliminate the prevailing practice of making rural schools training grounds for city teachers who have no knowledge of rural education.
2. It is suggested that at least one-third of the practice teaching period be given in a one-teacher school under actual rural conditions.
3. It is suggested that student teachers be required to observe teaching in several one-teacher schools.
4. It is suggested that every elementary teacher be required to complete a special laboratory course in primary reading, numbers, etc. This is an absolute essential for the rural teacher, and all other elementary teachers should have this preparation for a better

knowledge of their field.

5. It is suggested that all methods courses contain special units applicable to the one-teacher school.

6. It is suggested that a course pertaining to all phases of the rural school library be required.

7. It is suggested that the course in Rural School Management be given by an instructor thoroughly familiar with the rural school through actual experience and professional preparation.

8. It is suggested that teacher-training institutions awaken public interest to the possibilities of rural education through better trained rural teachers. A well-informed, sympathetic faculty is one of the greatest needs.

9. It is suggested that all student teachers be given training in making out a program for their own community.

These suggestions would not work hardships on either the institutions or the students training for elementary teaching positions.

An enriched curriculum, such as the one suggested, would make for a better understanding between the rural and urban communities and would be a great step forward in the equalization of educational opportunity.

AUG 6 1940

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anderson, C. J. and Simpson, I. Jewell, The Supervision of Rural Schools, D. Appleton and Co., New York, 1932
- Barr, A. S., and Rudisill, Mabel, "Inexperienced Teachers Who Fail And Why," The Nation's Schools, Vol. 5, No. 2 (February 1930) pp. 30-34.
- Carney, Mabel, "The Pre-Service Preparation of Rural Teachers," Teachers College Record, Vol. 34 (November 1932), p. 110.
- Charters, W. W., and Waples, Douglas, The Commonwealth Teacher-Training Study, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1929.
- Cook, Katherine M. and Others, Professional Preparation of Teachers for Rural Schools, Bulletin No. 6, 1928, United States Office of Education (Department of the Interior), Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C.
- Heyl, Helen Hay, "Redirecting the Training Program for Teachers of Rural Children," Proceedings of the National Education Association, 1935, p. 413
- Lowth, Frank J., Everyday Problems of the Country Teacher, Revised Edition, Macmillan, New York, 1936.
- McGuffey, Verne, Differences in the Activities of Teachers in Rural One-Teacher Schools and of Grade Teachers in Cities, Contributions to Education, No. 346, (Teachers College, Columbia University, 1929).
- Moore, Eoline Wallace, Difficulties Recognized By Elementary Teachers And their Implications For Supervision, Bulletin No. 6, 1934, Birmingham-Southern College, Birmingham, Alabama.

LIBRARY
 A & M COLLEGE
 STILLWATER OKLA

Typist:
Geraldine Brett
Education Office