

## Rural and Urban Teachers: Differences in Attitudes and Self Concepts

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This study investigated the differences in self concept scores and job-related attitude scores of rural and urban teachers. A stratified random sample of rural teachers ( $N=339$ ) and urban teachers ( $N=245$ ) in a southern state took both the TENNESSEE SELF CONCEPT SCALE (TSCS) and the PURDUE TEACHER OPINIONNAIRE (PTO). Discriminant analysis was used to determine which sub-test scores from the two instruments were significant in differentiating the two groups. Results indicated that the two groups of teachers were significantly different on four sub-scores of the PTO including Curriculum Issues, Rapport Among Teachers, Teacher Salary, and Teacher Load. Rural teachers were more satisfied with Rapport and Load, while urban teachers were more satisfied with Curriculum and Salary. In terms of TSCS sub-scores, rural teachers had significantly higher scores on Moral-Ethical Self, while urban teachers had significantly higher scores on Self-Criticism and Social Self.

The literature is full of descriptions of the relative advantages and disadvantages of rural schools vs. urban schools. Most of the literature speaks to the disadvantages of rural schools and teaching. It appears that one generally makes more money and has more equipment and fewer preparations in a city district [4; 6]. The literature also tells us that cities have more cultural and educational opportunities and that social and professional relationships are more difficult in rural areas, especially for those teachers who did not grow up in rural areas.

Why then does anyone teach in a rural school except from necessity? Even more important, how do those who teach in rural areas feel about themselves and their jobs? Do they differ from teachers in the more "desirable" urban areas?

Muse and Stonehocker [6] found much support for the idea that persons from all sorts of backgrounds can and do teach in rural areas, and, furthermore, they like it well enough to stay.

Trentham and Blackburn [9], in an informal interview survey of rural and urban teachers, found all of their participants fairly satisfied with their jobs and very satisfied with their locations. They also found some evidence that rural and urban teachers expectations and attitudes relative to work differ. Rural teachers seemed to draw more satisfaction from their students and peers. Urban teachers, on the other hand, were happy to have good facilities and the opportunities for social/cultural development offered in the urban setting.

Haughey and Murphy [3] investigated rural teachers' satisfaction levels in four areas: working conditions, teaching related matters, student related matters and occupation related matters. In their study, as in the Trentham and Blackburn study, the major areas of satisfaction were student and peer associations. Facilities, com-

munity attitudes and opportunities for professional growth were areas of considerable dissatisfaction.

Rottier, Kelly and Tomhave [7] found that many teachers in rural schools experience personal teaching dissatisfaction. Specific concerns were related to unhappiness with (1) the community, (2) administration and (3) expectations for teachers.

A variety of studies on urban teachers' problems and stresses indicate that their areas of dissatisfaction are more often related to: physical harrassment, large classes, and lack of close relationships with students [1; 2; 5].

Most of the studies which have investigated teachers' attitudes about their work and its relationship to them as individuals have been based on relatively informal (non-standardized) data. This study was designed to investigate formally the relationships among rural and urban teachers' self concepts as measured by the TENNESSEE SELF CONCEPT SCALE (TSCS) and job related attitudes as measured by the PURDUE TEACHER OPINIONNAIRE (PTO).

### METHOD

#### *Subjects*

Participants in this study were teachers in 17 Alabama public school districts. Districts were selected using stratified random sampling so that the participating districts proportionately represented the population distribution of the state in terms of regions and city vs. county districts. Once the districts were selected, a 30% sample of classroom teachers in each district was selected to participate in the study. Districts and teachers were assured confidentiality.

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TABLE 1

Rural/Urban Group Data on Significant Variables

Variable	Stan. Disc. Coef.	Rural Mean	Urban Mean	F <sup>1</sup>
Curriculum Issues	0.728	15.18	16.19	10.54**
Rapport Among Teachers	-0.527	47.03	46.46	1.26
Self-Criticism	0.422	33.51	35.02	8.17**
Teacher Salary	0.469	18.79	19.85	7.90**
Teacher Load	-0.390	36.34	35.59	2.83
Moral-Ethical Self	-0.520	77.04	75.61	5.09*
Social Self	0.40	72.88	73.12	0.24

<sup>1</sup>Degrees of freedom for all univariate tests are 1, 582.

\* $p < 0.03$

\*\* $p < 0.01$

### Procedures

Nine hundred teachers from the 17 districts were mailed materials and asked to complete both the TENNESSEE SELF CONCEPT SCALE (TSCS) and the PURDUE TEACHER OPINIONNAIRE (PTO). Eighty-seven percent (784) of the teachers returned the materials and/or questionnaires. Of those 784 sets of materials, 584 or 64.4% of the originally selected group were usable. The final sample included 245 (42%) city teachers and 339 (58%) rural or county teachers.

### RESULTS

Discriminant analysis with a Wilks solution was used to identify those variables which significantly differentiated rural and urban teachers. Since the TSCS has many interdependent scores, only six [6] TSCS variables which were independent were used in the regression analysis. The TSCS scores used were: Self-criticism, Physical Self, Moral-Ethical Self, Personal Self, Family Self, and Social Self. Variables from the PTO used in the analysis included all sub-scores: Rapport with Principal, Satisfaction with Teaching, Rapport among Teachers, Teacher Salary, Teacher Load, Curriculum Issues, Teacher Status, Community Support of Education, School Facilities and Services, and Community Pressures. The PTO total score was not used in the analysis since it, like the TSCS total, is dependent on sub-scale scores. Thus, a total of 12 independent variables were used in the analysis with teacher location (rural or urban) as the dependent variable.

The overall test of significance for the discriminant analysis yielded a chi-square of 53.39 (7 *df*,  $p < 0.01$ ) using the SPSS-X program "DISCRIMINANT" [8]. Means by group, discriminant coefficients for significant variables and *F* test results are presented in Table 1.

The seven variables listed were significant in combina-

TABLE 2

Multiple Regression Data from Discriminant Analysis

Step	Variable Entered	F	df	p
1	Curriculum Issues	10.54	1, 582	.001
2	Rapport Among Teachers	10.67	2, 581	.001
3	Self-Criticism	10.35	3, 580	.001
4	Teacher Salary	9.49	4, 579	.001
5	Teacher Load	9.19	5, 578	.001
6	Moral-Ethical Self	8.38	6, 577	.001
7	Social Self	7.96	7, 576	.001

tion in differentiating rural and urban groups. Only four of the variables, however, were significant univariate differentiators between groups.

Table 2 presents regression results from the seven steps of the discriminant analysis.

### DISCUSSION

In this day of competency testing and accountability, local districts everywhere are seeking to improve the quality of education for their students. In this effort, the selection and retention of teachers who will be best suited for the instructional needs in a given district are of primary importance. The literature, and our own beliefs and experience, indicate there is a need for 'matching' teachers and districts to promote good teaching and satisfied teachers, students, parents and administrators.

The literature is sparse in terms of identifying teacher characteristics that vary on the basis of location or type of district. This study helps to identify some such characteristics and to define them operationally in terms of standardized measuring devices.

The results of this study suggest, for example, that if one is looking for teachers for a rural district, one should keep in mind that rural teachers generally value rapport among teachers, and the "fit" of the new teacher should be both professional and social with regard to the current teachers. It could well indicate that local district administrators in a rural district might want to include teachers in the selection/interview process.

Rural teachers seem to be somewhat less concerned with teacher load than do urban teachers. This may mean that teachers in rural areas have "lighter" workloads than their urban counterparts; however, the literature fails to support this concept. This probably does not suggest that administrators can simply pile on more work, but it could indicate that scheduling and assignments may be a bit more flexible in rural areas. It could also indicate that rural administrators, particularly at the secondary level, should look for applicants with certification in a variety of areas so that greater flexibility of assignment is possible without staffing classes with unqualified personnel. Rural teachers also seem more satisfied with the moral-

ethical self than are urban teachers.

Finally, rural administrators would do well to note that the general level of satisfaction with salary and curriculum issues is lower in rural districts. Salary changes may well be beyond the control of many rural districts at this point in time. The researchers realize that most administrators are concerned with salary issues but are unable to make substantial changes until outside forces such as the economy and state legislatures change. It is also unknown at this point in time how such issues as merit pay may be involved in or influence teachers' attitudes relative to salaries. Since the curriculum issue was the most important variable in differentiating rural and urban attitudes and since such issues are often under the direct control of local administrators, the results of this study suggest that fresh attention should be given to teacher involvement in curriculum planning.

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