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UNIVERSITÀ DI MACERATA

l'umanesimo che innova



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24 nov. 2015

*Le metodologie della ricerca. La didattica nelle piccole scuole
(pluriclasse, montagna, isola)*

Research on the rural and the local school....



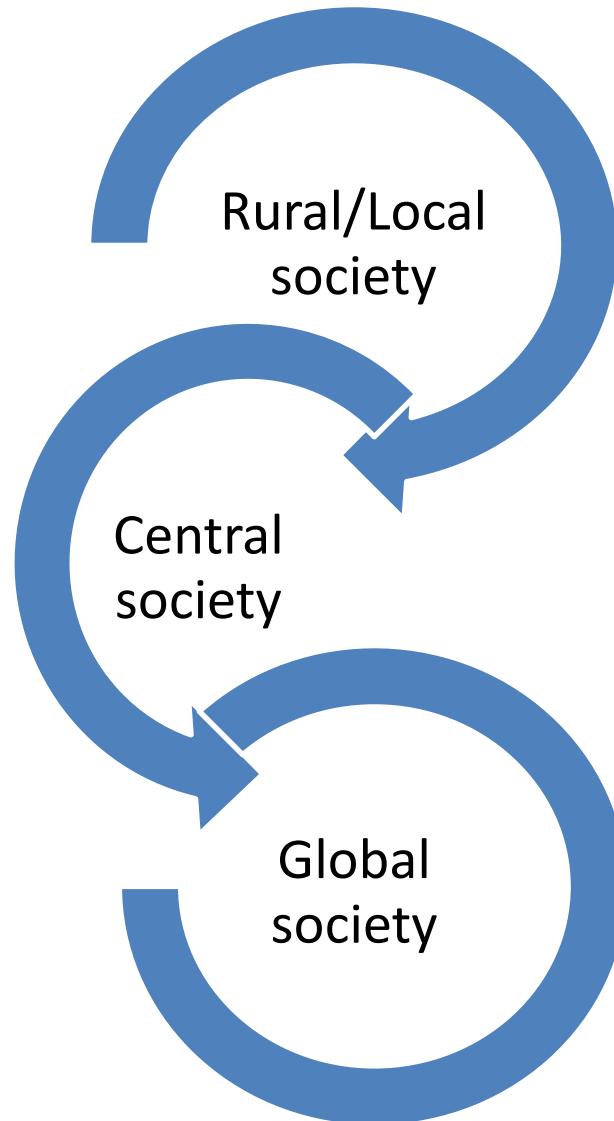
Research problem; Schools under threat of closure! What can we learn?

Changing society – new demands

A: In Europe the Agral Society lost ground as THE common WAY of living with the rise of Industrialization

B: Centralisation of both people, resources, and production increased with Industrialization
Dicotomi: Central – Peripheral

C: Globalisation adds a new challenges to the **Central-Rural/Local dimension**.
Globalization pushes for economic progress, *manifold* through competition as well as efficiency

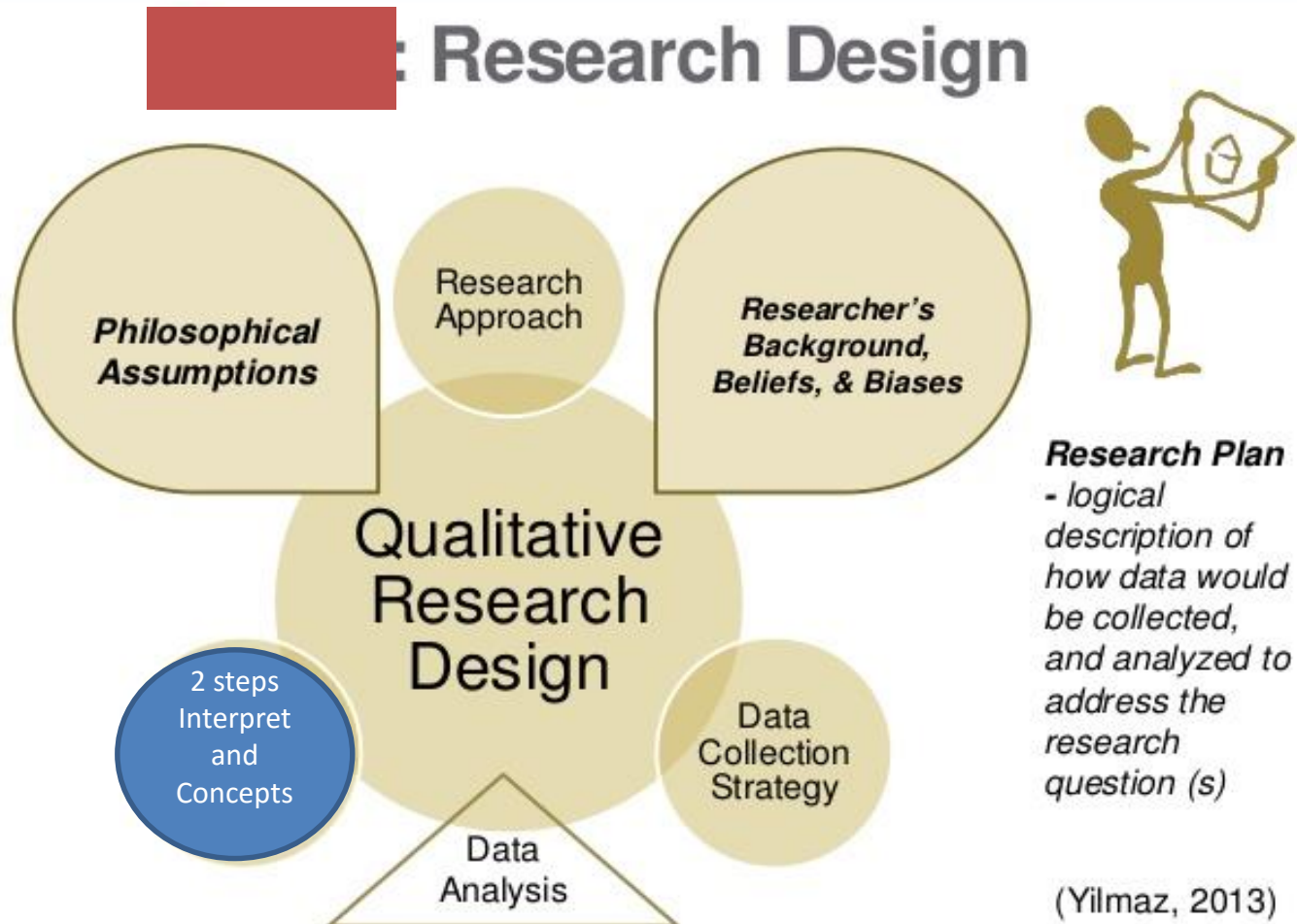


A small school- What does research say?

- Small schools are known for organizing education in multi-grade classes. **Multi grade classes** have a long tradition in educations and can be found in most countries worldwide.
- Multi grade teaching promote self-reliance. Cross over in age gives the pupils' opportunities for social development, cross age learning and cooperation (Johnson et al., 1985; Little, 1995).
- Small schools in rural areas are a source of social capital.
 - the school is a meeting point, a place for collaboration,
 - bonding and for reconstructing local history and culture (Koulouris and Sotiriou, 2006, Berry and West, 2010).
 - interaction promotes identity the school facilitates cooperation across generations which benefit the community as a whole (Nguyen et al., 2007).
- Due to involvement of community there is higher interaction between pupils and extracurricular activities. There is a higher degree of cooperation among teachers (Cotton, 1996; Leithwood and Jantzi, 2009; Slate and Jones, 2005).
- In Norway a small school is any school with less than 100 children.
 - In reality a small school in Norway is a school with 6 – 70 children.
 - During the last 10 year 550 small schools have closed down.

Planning research...

Schools under threat of closure



Beliefs and Background – strategy and method?

- Reserachers background, belief`s and biases?
- MACRO: Learn more on *the topic of local schools* in regards to earlier research results on «*The Nordic model of Education*»
 - MICRO: Local schools under threath of closure – what can we learn?
- Data collection strategy: What to choose? What are the terms?
 - MICRO: Explore social system, institution, human cooperation, culture

COMPARISON OF QUANTITATIVE & QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

PARAMETERS	QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH	QUALITATIVE RESEARCH
GENERAL NATURE	Objective approach to seek precise measurement in numerical form	Subjective approach to seek in-depth description in narrative form
KNOWLEDGE OF STUDY VARIABLE	Variables are clearly understood & defined in advance by the researcher	Researcher may have only rough idea about variables in advance.

- **Focusgroup studies**
- social systems, institutions,
- sociological and philosophical issues;
- culture,
- human cooperation,
- modern society and critique

MACRO: What are the features in in the Nordic model of Education

Researcher`s beliefs and biases

- 1) After Second World war; Free Education – secure democracy
- 2) The compulsory school; no division – age 16. equal opportunities; solidarity; democratic participation, socialization of pupils
- 3) Locally anchored – culture, socialization, identity
- 4) IDEA: build democratic society from underneath: Local community`s contribution to equality + fostering democratic citizens

Researcher`s beliefs and biases:

Research on the rural indicate: manifold decreases with economic efficiency –
Local schools are being closed down

Researchers Question: Regarding manifold MACRO and MICRO level

The Nordic modell: what of the local schools contribution to culture , sozialization
and identity (cultural variation)



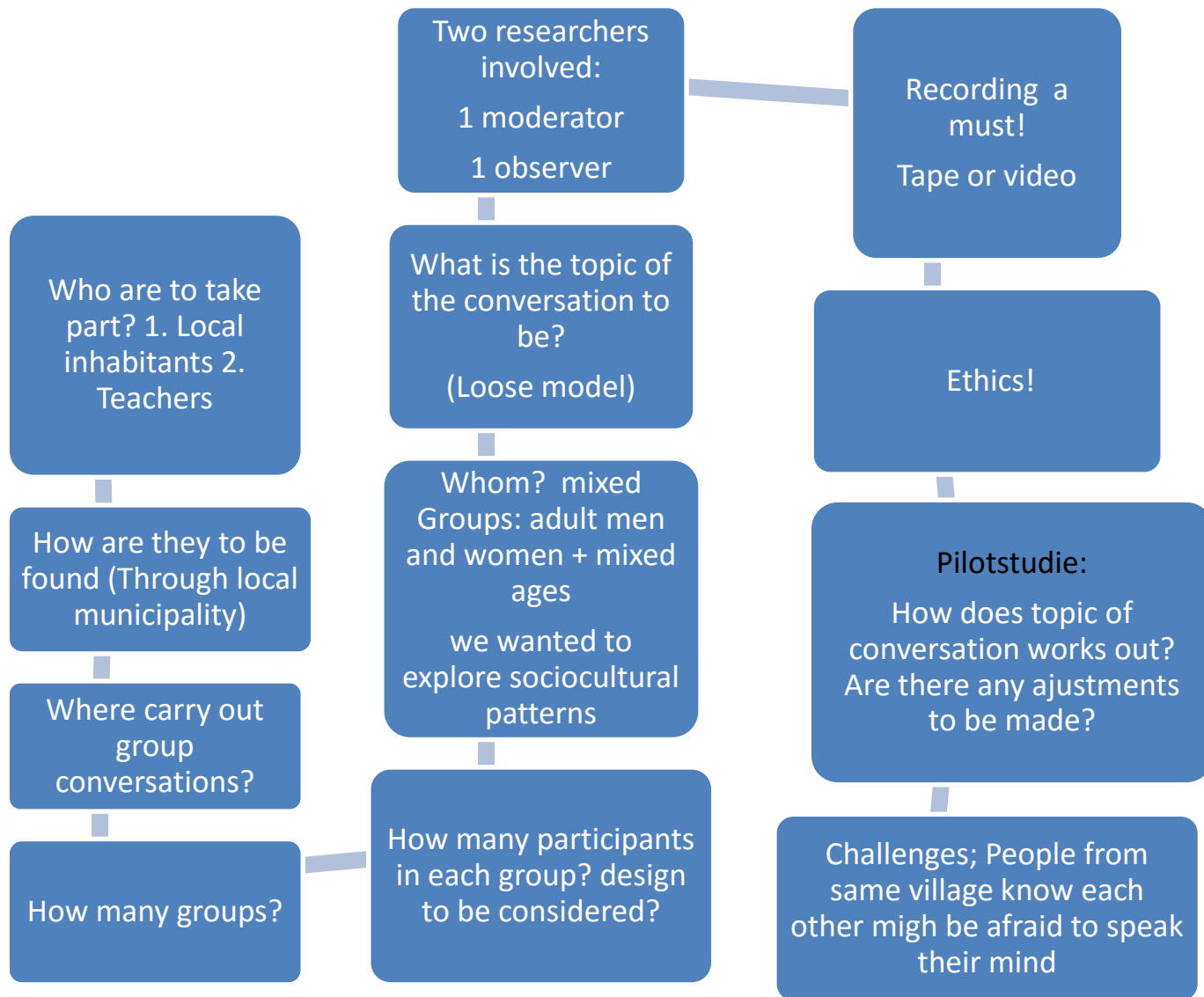
- **My own involvement; What underlying values do I need to make clear to the reader?**
- Changes in the Nordic model of education –challenges?
 - What is my understanding of the rural and local
 - LOCAL; contribution to culture, socialization, identity - challenges?
 - How do I understand the value of equality – macro – micro - democracy?
 - Earlier reserach contribution – ?

What are the norms that I relate to in my scientific inquiry (related to my choice)?

- Ontological values – our beeing in the world, a society is built on a network of relations, culture exist through praxis
- Not a set of rules but seeing the world from a certain point of view, concepts on social practise and culture
- In which field of reserach do I position myself?

Focusgroup conversations

Research design: The rural as *the local*



Empiri- Material

- From talk to text gives you *representation of data*:
 - Focusgroup generates many hours of transcribing; from *tape to text* (example 1 groupconversation/1hour 14-20 pages of text (times new roman 12, 1.0 distance))
 - Observations and written notes contribute regarding body language, emotions, laughs, irritations, humming
 - The moderator or the observer will have to transcribe material since it is hard to hear *who is who* if one haven't attended



- **Interpret** ! We always understand from somewhere....
- Understanding require imaginative elaboration (turn things on it`s head)
- Reflective understanding takes into account participants unreflective understanding (why are they talking about this?)
- The reserachers experience of digging deep contains orientation towards new experience
- What is similar – what is different?
- **Interpret!** The grouping or the categorization of material gives the researcher an overview of the material
- Not anything goes (relativism)! we belong to tradition history and language; what prejudgments, what practices, what traditions.....
- **Concepts contribute in the second face** – for example Bourieu - habitus and social capital

And then....

- **Validity**

- Have I investigated what I set out to do? (local citizens, teachers in local schools, sociocultural patterns)
 - What theoretical definitions have I presented?
 - What methodological tools in regards to defined choices? (What are the constitutive norms of my scientific inquiry)
 - Bringing the material and findings back to to focusgroup for a second opinion

- **Reliability**

- Making ones departure, ones method, and working with data transparent (writing, working systematically all the way)
- Earlier reserach does it match up to ones findings?

A Nordic example schools under threat of closure From Macro to Micro

Cultural variation



Macro

Education and efficiency

International influence

1980-1990's: Nordic State Decentralisation policy:

- OECD influence on national politics; new language of education; skills, best practise, pisatests, efficiency
- International guidelines «improve efficiancy» «enhance diversity (manifold)»
- New economic system i the Nordic countries – economic responsibilities pressure municipalities
- we see result of Increased centralisation & closure of schools

Macro

Nordic values in Education under pressure

- School closure – locals overrun by municipality/economy - no democratic influence (pressures democracy and equality)
- Not state to secure *the local school* in the building of democracy (political change in responsibility from state to municipality 1990th)
- Economic rational solutions ahead of manifold and diversity with the closing of locals schools?
 - How can we understand Cultural variation, (based on an understanding of diversity manifold)?

Reserach question diversity and manifold as cultural variation in rural schools

- Look closer upon teachers work in the small school in rural areas and ask;

Which/what kind of cultural variation is expressed in focus group conversations with teachers in small schools in rural areas?

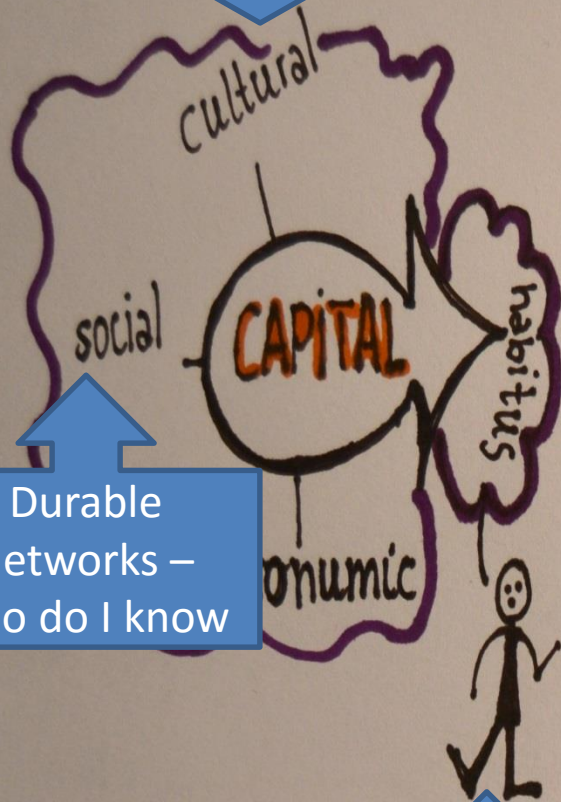
Method

- Four focusgroup interviews
 - Teachers at four different schools in rural Norway - multi grade classrooms
 - One example is presented
- Hermeneutic interpretation of Culture
 - Culture exist in and through praxis, interaction and communicaton.
 - Culture is constituted through actions, dispositions and interpretations (Bourdieu, 1995).
- Analyzed with Bordieus concepts, *Habitus, Capital and Field*

Embodied,
objectified,
institutionalized

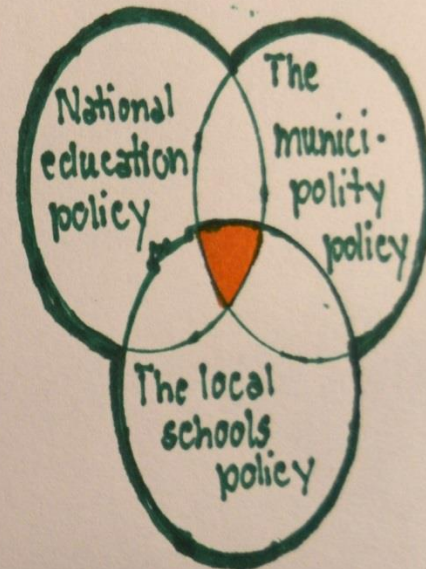
that of social
groups
recognized as
valuable and
in practise
given value.

Durable
networks –
who do I know



Habitus
Dispositions, trained
capacities, think, feel ,
norms guide behaviour and
thinking

SYMBOLIC CAPITAL



Power

fields

School D, 4 teachers, 23 Pupils, grade 1-7

- You notice how important a school is in a small community. It goes to show when you are organizing something like when we bring the pupils reindeer hunting in the autumn; Yes, the school gets to shoot a reindeer each year.
 - We stay overnite in a *lavvå* and all that goes with staying overnite outside. And so we shoot a reindeer. We take it with us to get slaughtered – afterwards we arrange an evening with reindeer dinner (in the period after christmas.)
 - Over hundred persons from the local community come and eat the food. We think that it is a ingenious way to teach the children a whole lot of different traditions. In the period after the events we look closer upon where we get our food from now and the history of food from way back.
 - The school is a gathering place for the entire village. Here the local group of tradition and history get together for their meetings. The local music group also uses the school
 - Next week we go in to the mountains with class 5 and 6 and fish with nets in mountain lakes and fishing rod. It's an important task. We help limiting the amount of fish in the mountain lakes. Here we get the practical in to the subject and science as well – in addition to practical mathematics. We measure fish, write it up, calculate the average length, weight of the fishes caught. It is an incredibly great educational project.
- This is a village with parents who hunt and fish and things that are directly linked to the mountains and the activities going on there. And it has to do with the tradition – the traditional knowledge that you might not find in a school in a town but will find in the countryside with hunting, recreation tied to the mountain, fishing and all that.
-

The second face: After interpreting, grouping and categorizing: using Bordieus concepts

- Habitus
- Social capital
- Cultural capital
- Symbolic capital

The local habitus and the school

dispositions, trained capacities, thinking, feeling norms that guide behaviour

- Village with parents who *live close to nature*, who *transfer traditions*, farming, baking local bread, knitting, spinning, hunt and fish. People are by tradition linked to nature, mountains and the activities going on there.
- *School engages in the traditional knowledge* that you might not find in a school in a town but will find in the countryside with handicraft, hunting, outdoors/recreation tied to the mountain, fishing and all that is part of the countryside culture –
Mutual responsibility
 - important reconstruction of knowledge for the next coming generation

Social capital

Durable networks – who do I know, relationships, mutual acquaintencies and recognition

- The teacher has one of the chairs on the board for tending wild live stocks in the mouantinarea.
- Mutual relations between school and village are built in at network across and through generations. An investment to secure material and symbolic profit.
 - Mutual relations upheld through practise and and symbolic capital – holds the village together
 - Example: Hunting and fishing are recognized as important investments in the tradition of the village. The village secure both material and symbolic profit. They are able to secure knowledge related to curriculum (natural science, mathematics, history, geografi) and also the network of «hunters» and «fishers» for the next generation where the *village profit from being known to have good hunters and fishers in their province.*

Symbolic capital: that of social group recognized as valuable in practise

Cultural capital

Embodied, objectified, institutionalized

- The school is located in an area with mountain, farming, livestock and traditional local household
 - Hunting fishing, knowing the mountains is part of the village culture (*habitus*)
 - The local village inhabitants have *knowledge* and *equipment* for staying outdoors in the mountains
 - The village has inhabitants who own and have license for guns
- The teachers at the school and the local network have knowledge on how to hunt and how to survive in the mountains.
 - Knowledge and cultural capital is constituted through *embodiment*; a practise carried over cross generations through body and mind.
 - It is *objectified* through hunting geer and huntingcabins, fishinggear as well as curriculum books related to several curriculum fields.
 - Thus the cultural capital is also *institutionalized* through the local school, curriculum, local hunting and fishing organisations.

Local rural schools- Cultural variation – what can we learn - questions to be asked?

- It seems from the results here that disappearance of local schools in rural areas in the long run might decrease manifold and diversity related to culture of certain kind (based on story told).
 - Are there other values than cultural variation to be taken in to account regarding school closure in rural areas and if so what values would that be?
- Earlier research point out there is a tight connection between the local school and the local society
 - what will happen with the transference of the social capital (durable networks – mutual acquaintencies) if there no longer is a younger generation in a rural areas to carry the tradition of durable networks forward?
- I suggest from the result cultural variation lies right in line with the features in the Nordic model of Education! The locally anchored schools contributes to culture, socialization and identity and thus equal opportunities for citizens is upheld.
- It also seems that the idea in the Nordic model of Education of building a democratic society from underneath is a reality in the rural community and schools visited.
 - Earlier research find the Local Community supports fostering across generations . They carry knowledge and tradition forward and thus the manifold and diversity (locals, multiclasss with the crossover in agegroups) of local rural schools contributes to the survival of diversity beneficial to the whole of a nation (Nguyen et al., 2007).