Rurality, Social Justice and Education in Sub-Saharan Africa Volume I
Originating in deep rural settings in a developing world economy and educated in rural Christian missionary schools, the coeditors, from an early age, underwent varied educational and work experiences that culminated in venturing into the under-researched niche of the relationship between rurality and access to education and achievement. Later both of us traversed the globe to study, work and live in the metropole and this accorded us the opportunity to interface with the challenges of the disparities between rurality, schooling and higher education in the context of Sub-Saharan Africa. With Alfred having hands-on experience of researching the impact of rurality on teacher education and Amasa’s grounded theory on social justice in education, we decided to brainstorm the intersection of our experiences and imagined bringing our ideas into a two-volume book focusing on African existential circumstances on rurality and social justice education. Through our interaction with the injustices that pervaded our experiences as teachers in schools and lecturers and researchers in higher education, we seek to share these encounters with educational practitioners in schools and higher education institutions. Overwhelmed and intrigued by issues of rural disadvantage, not as a permanent condition but a challenge that could be redressed through education, we solicited insights from a diverse range of scholars and
practitioners in education to contribute to the compilation of the two-volume book to address and explore the knowledge gap that exists in an understanding of theoretical and practical exigencies that surround African educational settings. The two-volume book provides the bedrock in the form of theory and practices that pervade education in both basic and higher education on which researchers and stakeholders can circumnavigate and spring new insights to further contribute to the knowledge resources for educating rural and disadvantaged groups in Africa and the world at large for social justice values of egalitarian and democratic citizenship.

Johannesburg, South Africa
Kimberley, South Africa

Alfred Masinire
Amasa P. Ndofirepi
Writing a co-edited book is more demanding than we ever anticipated; nevertheless more fulfilling than we could have ever envisaged. None of this would have been conceivable without the collaboration of the chapter contributors. We are eternally grateful to the individual chapter contributors for their commitment to submit their ideas for scrutiny and their preparedness to peer-review each other’s work and their readiness to implement suggestions from review comments. We give special honour to the Palgrave Macmillan team of reviewers from the proposal to the final book production. This has ensured the compilation of a unique two-volume book. Our appreciation would be incomplete without crediting our families for sacrificing the priceless family time lost as we went through the rigours of book publication. They deserve a round of applause.
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Introduction

Rurality has recently emerged as a powerful concept embraced by scholars, development advocates, and political activists globally. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the concept rurality has been vigorously contested, largely because of the colonial baggage that persists to weigh heavily on national development policies and social interventions. In development discourse, rurality is synonymous with poverty and underdevelopment. Thus to eradicate poverty is a social justice concern that has to go hand in hand with addressing the problems of the rural areas. Education in its broadest...
sense is identified as the engine for rural development (HSRC 2005) and a weapon for individual advancement (Mandela 2003) with the capacity to leverage rural poverty and enhance the associated social ills. This book is a compilation of theoretical and empirical studies conducted by education researchers committed to an understanding of the diverse conceptions of rurality and their implications for education and social justice in Sub-Saharan Africa. Premised on the close association between social justice, rurality and education, the book sets to illuminate the possibilities and constraints of social justice in diverse educational contexts in Sub-Saharan Africa. Cloke's (2006) exhortation would equally apply to conceptualisations of rurality in diverse educational contexts in Sub-Saharan Africa. Cloke (2006) attests that different theoretical frames of rurality illuminate very different pictures of rurality and indeed steer rural research policy and practice [our emphasis] down very different pathways (p. 19). Of critical concern in this volume are the social (in)justice implications of conceiving rurality in particular ways. Thus, we acknowledge the ambivalent character of certain framings of rurality in education contexts (Corbett 2007) which may implicitly propagate injustice and rural underdevelopment.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the political/colonial antecedent connotes images of rural injustice and marginalisation. This is partly so because colonial structures, including education, were founded on racial inequality and, consequently, injustice. Thus theorising rurality in education remains incomplete without invoking conceptions of justice in the broad sense. The notion of social justice is littered with contestations, as is the concept of human rights. While different schools of thought endeavour to define and delimit social justice, a universal consensus on the all-encompassing definition has not been reached. Human rights, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, have delivered an internationally approved compilation of principles and standards by which to assess and redress inequality. The original documented ideas of social justice pertained exclusively to a particular people or nation with the goal of remedying the influence of classified inequalities and the predominantly inherited inequalities.

From the classical times, Plato (380 BC) suggested that justice was attained when each person obtained goods they merited based on their
Aristotle (384–322 BC) was of the view that justice was a principle that safeguarded social order by controlling the allocation of benefits although he differed with the Platonic view in that for him, equality and justice applied only to individuals who occupied the identical layer of the hierarchical social order. Such a position thus views social justice as underscoring unequal distribution of resources based on what individuals ought to have with respect to their social status or position in society. Conversely, the traditions of some of the world’s great religions, among them Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Buddhism, highlighted universal concepts of justice signifying sharing, equal treatment, not profiting at the cost of underprivileged groups in society and the ills of avarice. In the nineteenth century, Karl Marx argued that the background of injustice is founded in the political-economic structures based on subjugation, discrimination, exploitation and privilege, thereby dismissing the Hobbesian view that human competition, selfishness and aggression cause social injustice. Justice, in this sense, would succeed once individuals obtained what they demanded on the basis of their humanity instead of what they deserved because of their social class, origin or productivity.

Social justice is incontrovertibly founded in order to thwart and discourage conditions that pursue the marginalisation and segregatory practices pervading societies. It is rooted in the ancestry of the Greek theories of justice and the ideas of two prominent Enlightenment philosophers, Kant and Rousseau, that social justice mirrors ideas of equality, which is deemed a necessary condition of democratic participation. Borrowing from the Enlightenment ideals of freedom and equality of all humankind that have become the bedrock of current democratic principles, social justice enjoys a variety of facets that entails the equal redistribution of socioeconomic amenities, as well as the recognition and promotion of difference and cultural diversity. The pluriversal conceptions of social justice enlarge the agenda of such justice, the complexity and multiplicity of which has been an issue of concern throughout modern civilisation (Gewirtz 2002, p. 499).

When counterpoised in relation to rurality, social justice sits uncomfortably in education. In postcolonial African education, the interdict to transform presupposes admission of previous policies and practices of
inequality and injustice. Yet, education transformation and currently decolonisation attends to other categories such as race, gender, disability, and epistemological access but often precludes rurality. If rurality is invoked, issues of difference and diversity are concealed. For example, in this volume, a rural learner in higher education is adjudged successful in as far as he/she has assimilated and embodied urban-university culture and knowledge (Gwavaranda [Chap. 9 Volume 2]; and Ndofirepi and Maringe [Chap. 10, Volume 2]). Anything of rural assemblage has to be expunged from his/her mentality.

There are notable absurdities and overt and covert disparities and inequities between urban and rural communities that continue to invade the provision of and access to resources and social amenities including education. Social justice should thus be appreciated as a humanising process and a rejoinder to human diversity expressing ability, socioeconomic circumstances, choice and rights (Hlalele 2012). It is thus an attempt at taming and remodelling individual and institutional structures embedded in rural deficit models. The notion of social justice has connections and affiliations with notions of human and socioeconomic rights, social inclusion, equity and access to resources and capabilities for human well-being (see Hlalele 2012; Singh 2011, p. 482). It thus reiterates the opportunities function as Wilson-Strydom (2014) observes that, “When we consider issues of justice or injustice, we cannot merely ask whether different people have achieved the same outcome, but rather, whether different people have had the same opportunities to achieve this outcome” (p. 151).

From the foregoing, one can discern common themes that emerge when exploring different views on social justice in both historical and contemporary thinking about the concept. The approaches to social justice reflect an amalgam of ideas with a focus on:

Collective effort to redress systemic/structural poverty, inequality and unfairness
Fair redistribution of resources
Equal access to opportunities and rights
Ability to take up opportunities and exercise rights
Protection of vulnerable and disadvantaged people
At the individual level, social justice involves allowing persons what they deserve in terms of their status by emphasising an individual’s social position as a basis of the portion of resources an individual merits. It also invokes moral responsibility on the part of the individual in terms of the behaviour of those who are poor, excluded or disadvantaged. Social justice equally calls for a recognition of human value and well-being beyond status and economic productivity just as it takes cognisance of individual capability with an eye on the personal characteristics that enable people to take advantage of opportunities available to them.

We can thus identify a just society as one that understands and values human rights and the dignity of all human beings. Social justice can thus be defined as a normative concept revolving around the principles of fairness, equality, equity, rights and participation. Equality is a fundamental principle of social justice as it allows all fair access to resources and entitles all people, regardless of their gender, race, age, class, language, religion, or occupation to benefit from society’s public goods. Hence social justice and human rights converge as they both advocate and enforce an even distribution of resources in the world. Social justice, which encompasses a concern for both joint and individual rights and obligations, plays a crucial role in protecting people with limited capacity to claim their human rights. The equity principle of social justice arises from an appreciation that equal or uniform distribution is not always fair, and thus it implies appropriate treatment in line with the principles of fairness and equal opportunity for all. It foregrounds the endeavour to eliminate or defeat the impediments that hamper certain individuals and groups from fulfilling their potential, by augmenting their chances for development. The rights principle of social justice encompasses legal rights and moral rights, including basic human rights, liberties and entitlements. Participation in the realm of social justice means including people in the decisions that govern their lives and also ensuring their full participation in political and cultural life in order to ensure better distributive outcomes and consolidate democracy. Jost and Kay summarise that,

Social Justice is a state of affairs (either actual or ideal) in which (a) benefits and burdens in society are dispersed in accordance with some allocation
principle (or set of principles); (b) procedures, norms and rules that govern political and other forms of decision-making preserve the basic rights, liberties, and entitlements of individuals and groups; and (c) human beings are treated with dignity and respect not only by authorities but also by other relevant social actors, including fellow citizens. (Kay and Jost 2010, p. 1122)

The institutionalisation of impediments that hinder the participation of some members as full partners in social interaction is the concern of Nancy Fraser's theory of social justice. For her, the recognition of all members of society is a matter of justice (the right) rather than axiology (the good) because certain forms of misrecognition deny persons “the status of full partners in social interaction simply as a consequence of institutionalised patterns of cultural value in whose construction they have not equally participated” (Fraser 2009). Hence, considering recognition as a matter of justice means treating it as an issue of social status in which actors can either be social peers with mutual relations of equality, or they suffer from status subordination via misrecognition. Fraser's three-dimensional view of social justice, viz. justice-economic redistribution, recognition and representation is therefore fundamental in the provision of insights challenging and troubling the social structures that enable material inequality. A conceptualisation of rural social justice in education in Africa as constructive provides a broader agenda as it also encompasses the notion of collective human agency, signposting human emancipation as closely intertwined with individual liberation. By escalating the theory to education in Africa, the book attempts to address the puzzle: how can we defend a socially just education system that necessitates the observance and prizing of diversity, accommodation and tolerance of all learners, creation of equal opportunities and the promotion of the capabilities of all learners?

Multiple perspectives of rurality and social justice are foregrounded in the 22 chapters that comprise this two-volume book. The editors did not wish to be prescriptive in conceptualisation of rurality and social justice but rather accepted divergent conceptions of the social justice and rurality in multiple education contexts as reflected in the chapters included in the two volumes. The editors solicited chapters from scholars invested in

Volume 1 is titled ‘Rurality, Social Justice and Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Theory and Practice in Schools’ and has 11 chapters with a focus on theoretical and practical perspectives on rurality and social justice in school contexts in Sub-Saharan Africa. Volume 2, titled ‘Rurality, Social Justice and Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Theory and Practice in Higher Education’ has 11 chapters made up of theoretical and empirical studies conducted by education researchers committed to understanding diverse conceptions of rurality and their implications for higher education and social justice in Sub-Saharan Africa. Premised on the close association between social justice, rurality and education, the two volumes are set to illuminate the possibilities and constraints of rural social justice in diverse educational contexts in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Synopsis of the Different Chapters in Volume 1

Alfred Masinire and Amasa P. Ndofirepi’s Chap. 1, titled ‘Rurality and Social Justice in Africa: Encoding Key Debates’, unpacks the question: What is distinctive about rurality and social justice in education in Africa? While rurality is a global geographical feature and social justice a universal value as enshrined in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, in Africa they argue that colonialism and the current postcolonial moment provide a unique texture of rurality and social justice in educational settings. The violent inauguration of western modernity in most African countries created opportunities for social advancement for those who resided in urban areas while at the same time opening up large pockets of poverty and underdevelopment in rural areas (Mngomezulu and Mngomezulu, Chap. 3 in this volume). Current rural development interventions grapple with how to make even the enduring social, economic and educational inequalities that permeate rural communities. There are multiple and divergent conceptions of rurality that steer development
agendas, research and even education provision in different directions. Education is deeply implicated in social justice and rural development because of the assumed social benefits that derive therefrom. The authors discuss and highlight the multiple and divergent meanings of rurality and social justice in education with a particular focus on Africa, while concluding that many conceptions of rurality are driven by deficit notions of rurality resulting in marginalisation of learners, parents and teachers. Through a systematic literature review, the authors also draw on the main arguments presented in each of the chapters below in order to understand how the concepts have been applied in some countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Alfred Masinire, in Chap. 2, titled ‘The Historical Burden of Rural Education: Reflections of Colonial Legacy on Current Rural Education in South Africa’, argues that colonial/apartheid education policy continues to afflict rural education provision in South Africa. The colonial/apartheid neglect in provisioning of material, financial, infrastructure and human capital resources continue to reflect the challenges that rural schools experience. The author maintains that despite successive curriculum reforms post-1994, the burden of rural schools continues to increase with no signs of an immediate end. How then do we account for the persistence of an unjust rural education system? In many attempts to account for the rural education dilemma, a huge blame is apportioned partly to the conservatism and traditionalism of rural communities, lack of agency of individual learners and also current corrupt institutions. In this chapter, the author argues that an adequate and informed understanding of the burden of rural education requires us to reflect historically on the antecedents of colonial education policies and practices. This historical reflection becomes crucial in the wake of a dominant colonising discourse which has sought to explain the rural problem as purely ahistorical. Through an analysis of rural education policy documents, supplemented by meta-review of rural education literature, this chapter traces the establishment and development of colonial rural/Black education policy. It proceeds to highlight the current rural education problem and identify its colonial foundations, analyse some of the accounts proffered to explain the current rural education problem and, finally, postulate a colonial/historical account of the rural education problem.
Bheki R. Mngomezulu and Tholisihe Y. B. Mngomezulu, in Chap. 3, titled ‘The Link Between Education and Social Upward Mobility: Some Theoretical Perspectives on Rurality’, raise the issues of race, place and apartheid to explain the marginalisation of Blacks during the colonial period. They argue that since the introduction of Western education in Africa, there has been a correlation between people’s education level and their social upward mobility. For example, those Africans who attended mission schools elevated their social status. Some went on to serve the colonial state as clerks and interpreters. Conversely, those who remained uneducated did not have access to those jobs; their social status remained the same. The juxtapositioning of the educated and the uneducated makes it easier to determine who will rank higher in the social stratification between the two groups. What is often neglected in the discussion is the polarisation of the urban and rural communities. It is an undeniable fact that those who live in the urban centres have better opportunities to move up the social ladder compared to their rural counterparts. This is due in part to the availability of resources or the absence thereof. Against this backdrop, in this chapter the authors aim to draw evidence from different African countries and dwell on some theoretical perspectives which demonstrate how education contributes to social upward mobility. Within that context, they also aim to draw parallels between rural and urban dwellers in terms of their prospects for accessing education and thus improving their social status by discussing these themes within the colonial and apartheid contexts to give relevant meaning.

The extent to which the representations of social justice are visible (or not) in rural education and schools in the context of the reforms and their implementation is explored by Snodia Magudu in Chap. 4, titled ‘Configuring the Key Social Justice Concerns in Rural Education in Zimbabwe’. The author acknowledges how the Zimbabwean government, after attaining independence in 1980, introduced several reforms that were meant to make education a basic human right for all and ensure equality and social justice through the removal of impediments that had made education inaccessible to the majority of blacks during colonial rule. The curricula reforms were premised on the understanding that education is a major agent of social justice and instrumental in alleviating social inequalities. The developments in education in the country have
been hailed as a success story on the African continent and beyond. Some of the achievements that have been highlighted in literature are the expansion in education which presupposes increased access to education for the black majority and the high standard of education in the country as compared to other countries on the continent. The chapter first explores the concept of social justice and its different paradigms before focusing on the education policy framework in Zimbabwe. It also highlights the limitations of the promotion of educational/social justice in rural schools. The chapter ends by evaluating the responses to the various concerns by various stakeholders and their effectiveness, and proffers holistic and context-specific approaches to addressing the concerns.

Roland Ndille, in Chap. 5, entitled ‘Where You Went to School Matters: A Social Justice Perspective of Rurality and Education in Cameroon 1922–2019’, examines the notion of ruralisation as one of its key educational policies using the case of Cameroon since independence in 1961. The aim of the policy was to guarantee educational access to the vast majority of the population which stood at over 90% rural just as it ensured that the contents of the school system, especially at the elementary levels, should be adapted to the needs of a rural economy. School was thus to be a sort of training ground to provide some kind of gainful employment for those living in the rural areas. It was also to contain rural exodus and unemployment which by the end of the first decade of independence was already alarming in the urban centres. Roland Ndille discusses attempts at the implementation of this policy through (1) The Institute for a Rurally Applied Pedagogy (IPAR) and (2) the opening of secondary schools in most villages. The chapter argues that, while the policy has received support from local and international partners, social injustice implications significantly account for the unworkability of rurality as an educational theory where there is the existence of options which do not fall within the same policy framework. The study is a critical historical analysis and has relied on policy documents, communications between authorities and working papers regarding ruralisation at the national archives in Cameroon. These, in addition to some focus group discussions and one on one interviews, have been used to establish this account.
Rurality, access, participation and achievement lie at the heart of inclusivity in education. In Chap. 6, titled ‘Working on the Margins in Zimbabwe: The Challenges and Opportunities of Inclusive Rural Education’, Martin Musengi and Esther Musengi set out to explore the ways in which teachers and learners may make meaning of and respond to diversity in rural schools. Rural schools and the communities that they serve have often been overlooked by researchers of inclusive education. This is despite the observation that the educational landscape may be very differently experienced in rural areas compared to urban areas and that there is a large proportion of learners attending rural schools. On one hand, they may be perceived as having constraints to inclusive education due to rurality; on the other hand, rural areas may be perceived as having stronger community ties of *Ubuntu* than urban areas. In this light, rural communities may have unexplored, in-built strengths that can be utilised for inclusive educational practices. This chapter investigates how the particularities of rural communities can be considered in order to utilise indigenous knowledge to overcome perceived limitations by appropriately responding to diversity in rural schools. The chapter adopts understandings of rurality that recognise it as multi-faceted, complex and fluid. It discusses cleavages of disadvantages of urban and rural schools as well as those that exist within rural schools. The chapter utilises the social location of disability to analyse how its intersection with rurality can provide different educational biographies. Analysis is preceded by tracing the development of inclusive education from its special education beginnings in rural Zimbabwe to its current, broader concern with diversity in mainstream and special schools.

In Chap. 7, titled ‘The Meaning of Social Justice for Rural Education: Access, Participation and Achievement’, Gloria Erima debates the social justice issue that has undeniably permeated many rural schools in many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa for an extensive period of time. The chapter is grounded in Nancy Fraser’s social justice framework and Sen’s capability approach, based on empirical data drawn from doctoral research on epistemological access in flood-prone schools in Kenya. A significant number of children in rural schools remain the most vulnerable due to issues related to social justice. Vast discrepancies and/or inequalities between better-resourced urban schools and neglected rural
ones impact on the provision of and access to quality education. Research suggests that learners from rural/poor socioeconomic backgrounds persistently underperform compared to those from urban/more privileged backgrounds. The author shows how, as a result, learners in these areas tend to underperform in public examinations, show reduced tendencies to progress beyond compulsory education and contribute more to wastage indicators, such as dropping out of school. This negatively impacts on education as a space for social transformation, advancement and inclusion. The more the wide range of barriers to learning is not overcome or reduced, the more children in rural schools may not benefit from education, which might generate lifelong failure. Using case studies from Kenyan rural schools, Gloria Erima explores how rural schools commit to delivering a socially-just educational experience and comparable learning outcomes. The chapter explores the realities of rural education and how schools confront serious challenges in delivering access to education to learners.

Despite the raft of post-apartheid efforts to redress the injustices of the apartheid era in South Africa, much remains to be done in most rural schools across the country to bring about meaningful change in those schools that during apartheid existed on the periphery of development and progress. In Chap. 8, titled ‘Reclaiming Hope: De-normalising Rural Parents and Learners’ by Hlamulo Mbhiza offers accounts on how a group of schools in the Mpumalanga Province of South Africa survive irrespective of the lack of basic educational resources including textbooks and good quality classrooms. While noting that the past 25 years of democracy have focused on reforming the country’s education system through curricula reform, the author identifies how in the erroneous assumptions about the homogeneity of poverty in South Africa, the post-apartheid project of promoting social justice and equity has failed to reach the most deprived rural communities in the country. Of importance to note is that it is not only the learners who are disadvantaged, but the schools that are not prepared to support their needs. While some challenges that confront rural schools are also prevalent in urban contexts and schools, the intensity of the challenges in the latter are less distinct as compared to rural contexts and schools. Arguing from a deficit perspective of rurality, the author identifies how the challenges rural schools face is the primary
reason for the continuing poor academic performance in those schools. Equally, the author acknowledges that in these schools there are active human beings who have knowledge and skills that can be used to configure and implement strategies for improving the standard of education in those schools and in turn improve learners’ academic performance.

In Chap. 9, titled ‘Gender, Rurality and Education: A Critical Perspective on Kenya’s Education System,’ Beatrice Akala demonstrates that despite legal guarantees (Kenyan Constitution 2010) of education reforms in the past decade, the country still grapples with persistent marginalisation, emanating from gender and rurality across the education sector. The author vividly describes the specific conditions of rurality in Kenya as diverse, not generalisable, and thus experienced differently. The rural diversity and operational connotations of rurality are drawn from a wide spectrum of factors that encapsulate poverty, underdevelopment, disease, unavailability of crucial social services and amenities like a tap with running water, connection to the national electricity grid, impassable roads, poorly resourced schools and hospitals (Mulongo 2011). Rurality is also intricately linked to discourses of traditionalism, historicity, colonialism, anticolonialism, postcolonialism, ethnicity and geographical positioning (Omuteche 2010). The author argues that the complexity of navigating rural places and spaces imposes a myriad of challenges on their (girls’/women’s) educational trajectories (Onsongo 2009; Sifuna 2006; Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) 2012). The challenges alluded to demonstrate a high probability of rurality and gendering obstructing the general progression, attainment and success of students and learners, especially girls and women from rural areas. To fully understand and appreciate the challenges of rural girls, the author suggests the need to critically engage with theories of rurality and social justice to advance debates that will impact meaningfully on the educational achievements of rural girls. This is in line with theories of justice that encapsulate the principles of equality and equity that provide for special measures to be considered in cases where formal equality does not suffice (Rawls 2009; Young 2000).

In Chap. 10, titled ‘Can Social Justice Be Achieved Through Decolonisation?’, Zvisinei Moyo critically reflects on the extent of equality, equity and fairness in rural postcolonial Zimbabwe with a specific
focus on women leading schools. The author appropriates social justice to postcolonial developments in Zimbabwe to enhance understanding of the heterogeneity of rurality, paving possible ways of balancing gender relations. In the process, the chapter unmasks the complexity of the decolonisation process in rural areas in Zimbabwe. To further this effort, the desktop inquiry drew from the literature on Zimbabwean women leading education and rural development. The findings of the study speak to serious material deprivation in rural communities. The unprecedented hyperinflation which has since become perennial gave birth to untold suffering to the rural inhabitants, with women bearing the full adverse effects. The author attributes the root causes to the whole package of Mugabeism ideology which served the minority elite groups mostly located in urban areas. She notes how women leading schools vary across societies, depending on the severity of systemic contextual challenges. Moreover, the Zimbabwean society continues to legitimise the subordination of women residing and working in rural areas by reinforcing colonial and postcolonial discourses that bolster patriarchal relations. Decolonisation, which was supposed to bring development, culminated in a patronage system that is benefitting the chosen few while the rest of the population sink into unprecedented poverty levels. Actually, what was presented and celebrated as decolonisation has become recolonisation. The author recommends that policy, research and practice should engage women living and leading schools in rural areas in working out possible solutions for genuine decolonisation processes.

In Chap. 11, entitled ‘Preparation for the Fourth Industrial Revolution in Rural Areas: The Case of Students with Disabilities Before Higher Learning in South Africa’, Sibonokuhle Ndlovu explores the preparation of students with disabilities in rural areas for the Fourth Industrial Revolution before higher education in the South African context. Little is known about the preparation of students with disabilities for the Fourth Industrial Revolution in rural areas in the context of Africa broadly and in South Africa specifically. Data were collected through scanning South African literature on poorly resourced rural contexts of schooling, prior to higher learning. Selected texts were synthesised and analysed to understand preparation for the Fourth Industrial Revolution. The findings of the study showed that though the Fourth Industrial Revolution has the
potential to disrupt rural environments and enable students with disabilities to access technology, students with disabilities from rural areas are not prepared for the Fourth Industrial Revolution before embarking higher learning because of complex contextual factors which result in social and economic challenges. These include extreme poverty, perpetual poor service delivery, lack of resources and materials, poor infrastructure, large classes, mental health issues, poor nutrition, unemployment, out of school experiences, all contributing to vulnerability and lack of preparedness for the Fourth Industrial Revolution before higher education. The chapter contributes to the complex debate on the applicability of the Fourth Industrial Revolution in rural African countries. The author concludes that though the Fourth Industrial Revolution can empower students with disabilities through technology, rural contexts are still limited in terms of supporting those students to acquire the knowledge of technology before accessing higher education.

Synopsis of the Different Chapters in Volume 2

Due to colonialism, African communities have been bifurcated into privileged-urban and marginalised-rural. In Chap. 1, titled ‘Accessing, Participation, Achievement and Rurality in Higher Education’, Simon Nenji and Amasa P. Ndofirepi explore how, in the sphere of education, the rural-based learners are expected to compete and match their privileged urbanites yet the divide is so marked in underdeveloped Africa where rurality is associated with impoverishment, reification and essentialisation. The chapter surveys the plight of higher education learners who hail from rural areas in Africa by considering the challenges encountered by individuals from a disadvantaged rural background when they enter university education. Burdened with a lot of assumptions made regarding their state of preparedness and readiness for the challenges associated with a technology-driven education system, the authors discuss the responsiveness of many institutions of higher learning to the plight of such cases. The authors also reflect on possible ameliorative measures to ensure safe landing into higher education by students from culturally, materially and technologically disadvantaged settings. The chapter also
considers mitigatory measures where rural feeder institutions are adequately funded and properly resourced to match the technological demands characterising higher education. It is also argued here that higher education has to reflect not homogeneity but heterogeneity, given the diverse backgrounds of its potential and actual clientele base to ensure tendencies bent on perpetuating social inequalities are crowded out. The authors thus proffer recognition as a matter of justice; implying treating it as an issue of social status in which actors can either be social peers with mutual relations of equality or they suffer from status subordination via misrecognition. It is thus concluded that engaging in social justice debates mindful of the plight of the rural-based learners can be an effective agent for a transformative higher education for the realisation of global social justice.

Elizabeth S. Ndofirepi and Felix Maringe’s Chap. 2 titled ‘Relational Spaces: A Possibility for Enhancing First-Year Undergraduate Rural Student Experiences on Campus’, traces how post-1994 South African higher education is mandated by the government to redress the injustices brought about by the apartheid regime. While the opening of university doors to students from previously disadvantaged communities like rural areas is one of such mandates, the authors demonstrate the complex scope of higher education owing to the diverse nature of the current student body entering the universities, and hence the need to look into issues of space and student experiences. The authors observe how students from rural areas, among other disadvantaged groups, are victims of circumstances and problems they face upon entry into university are discussed. These include, among others, the inadequacy of the school system in preparing them for university life, the complex challenges posed by the university social academic demands and students’ lack of familiarity with the modus operandi within the learning spaces. The authors argue that it is no longer just a consideration of the physical spaces that students occupy but relational spaces as well. To survive and thrive on campus, undergraduate students, especially first-years from rural areas, resort to the creation of relational space—patterns of peer support, the building of shared goals and mutual respect that emerge through some distinct configurations of networking. Because of this, some students enter into ‘mute space’—a situation where silence takes precedence over the interaction between the
students and some members of academic staff. In this case, issues of pedagogic distance, teacher immediacy, transactional distance, social presence and social exclusion depict sources and dimensions of the ‘mute spaces’ that are evident from the students’ narratives about their experiences on campus. The peer formation and networking demonstrate the applicability of social capital concepts of bonding, bridging and linking, while the mute space is indicative of less—or absence of—students linking with the people in power or with the required resources to address their needs and enhance the student experience. Based on vignettes of student experiences at a particular university in South Africa and existing literature, this chapter concludes that enhancing the bond, the bridge and the link for student relational spaces go a long way in improving rural student experiences on campus.

In Chap. 3, entitled ‘The Ruzevha/Ekhaya Coloniality Neologisms and Access to Higher Education in Zimbabwe Universities’, Joseph Hungwe discusses how, on the basis of rurality stereotypes, students from rural areas have to socially negotiate access in the urban-located higher education institutions in Zimbabwe. Generally, people from urban areas are assumed to be clever and culturally ‘civilised’. In juxtapose, people from rural areas are stereotypically considered as less clever, primitive and culturally conservative. Stereotypes such as High Rural Background (HRB), ruzevha (rurality), and vele khaya (VK) (literally ‘of rural origin’) are some of the negative portrayals and orientations encountered by rural students in higher education. Besides the nascent Lupane State University, all other public and private higher education institutions in Zimbabwe are either located in or on the outskirts of urban areas. Subsequently, upon completion of secondary school level education, rural students have to socially and physically ‘migrate’ into urban areas to access higher education. Within the urban-located higher education institutions, rural students are negatively stereotyped by both ‘urban’ students and staff. The central contribution of this chapter is the proposition that the notion of access to higher education should be broadened to take into account rurality stereotypes as possible impediments to higher education.

Contrary to the view that African rurality presents disadvantages and challenges to rural students in African university education, in Chap. 4, titled ‘African Rurality and African Epistemology: Lessons for African
Universities’, Ephraim T. Gwaravanda argues that African rurality can provide important epistemic lessons for African universities in three related ways. Firstly, the communitarian mode of knowing which is found in African rurality can be used to critique individualism in analytic epistemology that African universities rely upon in the production of knowledge. The analytic model of epistemology is not only foreign to African universities but it also presents problems in teaching and learning since student experience is sidelined and ignored knowledge validation. In many ways, the analytic model of knowledge alienates many rural and African students. Secondly, African universities can borrow the relational model of knowledge from African rurality to construct forms of knowledge that are consistent with the communities in which African universities are found. Epistemically, human beings depend on each other for knowledge acquisition; knowledge is gained through others and the purpose of knowledge is to improve the standard of living in communities. Thirdly, African universities can learn the place of values in knowledge production from African rurality. The author posits that indigenous communities in African rural areas have shown that the epistemic analysis cannot be adequately understood if separated from the ethical analysis. The chapter thus presents theoretical evidence to support the view that knowledge comes through engagement with others and this demands individuals to be fair, respectful and responsible in knowledge production.

Bheki Richard Mngomezulu’s Chap. 5, which he titled ‘The Rural Graduate and Endemic Challenges: Responses by African Universities’, portrays universities as having multiple identities ranging from local, regional, continental through to international institutions. For him, these institutions have to speak to multiple audiences with conflicting interests as to what the purpose of a university should be. This balancing act is not always easy to maintain. Rurality is irrefutably one of the characteristic features of the African continent, with some academic institutions physically located in rural or semirural areas. One of the challenges facing African universities is that they rely on international funding agencies or donors whose mandate and agendas do not always resonate with the African needs. As such, the author finds an African university satisfying international sponsors at the expense of the local development priorities. In the same vein, graduates from rural areas suffer from an identity crisis.
The author asserts that while on the one hand graduates want to retain their rural identity; on the other hand, they have to move with the flow and deal with issues of global significance at the expense of their own immediate environment, thereby placing the rural graduate between the rock and the hard surface. The chapter discusses these challenges that the rural graduate has to negotiate. In so doing, it proffers some proposals for African universities to address this conundrum. The author recommends curriculum reforms, research focus, resource mobilisation as well as public/private partnership. The chapter concludes that African universities have a major role to play in assisting rural graduates to deal with endemic challenges.

In Helen Agumba’s Chap. 6, *The Rural gaze: Access, participation, and success in higher education*, the impact of rurality in accessing and succeeding in higher education is illuminated. The author challenges the traditional interpretation of Bourdieu’s cultural capital thus shifting the research lens from a deficit view of the rural students succeeding in higher education. Although the concept of rurality has recently gained momentum, limited studies have exclusively addressed the experiences of rural students at university. The author argues that rurality and students from rural backgrounds in higher education have been marginalised and that institutions are not prepared to support the needs of rural students; however this does not mean that students from rural areas are academically less successful. Available books and articles written on the subject were scrutinised. Based on the findings, the author argues that in spite of the many constraints, an increasing number of misrecognised rural students have been surprisingly resilient and extremely successful in their undergraduate studies. Rural students come from backgrounds underpinned by values and sociocultural systems that are very different from those privileged in higher education. Drawing from their background and practices in their rural areas, rural students develop effective coping and survival strategies in the different areas of their lives. Bourdieu’s (1986) social reproduction theory helps us understand rural students’ subjectivities and practices as they transition through university. His theory illuminates the central role that education systems play in maintaining and reproducing social inequalities. Drawing upon Yosso (2005), the author explains how navigational, familial and social capital have enlightened
her understanding of the experiences of rural students as they transition into and through university. And how much enlightenment can help develop a platform for facilitating epistemic and pedagogical recognition, thus enabling not only access but success at university?

In post-apartheid South Africa, curriculum reforms were designed for all schools, irrespective of the context, and the training of teachers shifted from teacher colleges to universities, attempting to change teachers’ mode of teaching. While teacher education is always central to the transformation of the South African education system (Islam et al. 2011), Buthelezi (2004) argues that gaps in teacher education, in part, contribute to rural school shortcomings because courses do not address teachers’ contextual issues. Deacon and Parker (1993) contend that rural teachers and learners have received an alien curriculum and teacher preparation that has an urban bias. Notwithstanding this, the education and curriculum reforms meant that universities needed to rethink the way they train pre-service teachers and reskill in-service teachers, particularly teachers in rural schools because fundamental pedagogies left them with a legacy of docility and a set of approaches that blocked and hindered the development of critical and innovative teaching strategies (Chisholm 1993). Of concern in the first 22 years of democratic South Africa is the slow and seemingly reluctant change in teacher training institutions to consider rurality and rural schools when preparing pre-service teachers. Institutions of higher learning, and specifically teacher training institutions, have been criticised by the government for not preparing pre-service teachers to teach in rural communities and schools. Thabisile Nkambule in Chap. 7, Student teacher preparation for rural education: an issue of social justice in a post-apartheid South Africa positions and interrogates the nature of initial teacher education curriculum. The chapter focuses on the importance of context while preparing teachers of the twenty-first century within the different courses without necessarily promoting a homogenised rural curriculum.

Decentralisation, as a strategic approach to education reform, has become an emergent issue in South Africa. Presented as a form of devolution, it facilitates students to learn from and experience local variance and relevant community structures. In Chap. 8, Parallels and Divergences in Decentralised Training Approaches: Reflecting on the experiences of two
schools in a South African university, Ntsiki Mapukata, Alfred Masinire and Thabisile Nkambule reflect on the parallels and divergences in the rural placement of education and health sciences students in rural schools and in a rural hospital respectively in Mpumalanga province. Twenty years post-apartheid, the persistent maldistribution of resources and inequitable provision of services that tend to marginalise rural communities remains a growing concern for policymakers and educators alike. The schools of Clinical Medicine and Education at the University of the Witwatersrand explored the net value of adopting a decentralised training approach as a means to achieve transformation. The authors reviewed programme approaches to training in two schools and noted similarities in the rationale, student preparation and assessment of learning. However, divergence was in the student placement, the actual experience and the duration of their placement. Pedagogically, the collective experiences of the students reflected disparities in the conceptualisation of teaching and learning as a collaborative learning methodology. Rural placement of students as an outcome of a decentralised training approach is one initiative that seeks to address issues of access and equity for rural communities.

The authors conclude that (1) for curriculum planning, it is the students themselves who must appreciate the inherent benefits of social learning and construct their own experiences in a community setting and (2) supervisors must be trained to be objective assessors. Based on this comparative review, decentralisation is proposed as a collaborative training approach that would assist students not only to graduate as astute professionals but also to respond in the future as socially responsible citizens.

The subject of higher education transformation and the related aspect of decolonisation has received widespread attention from various epistemological and pedagogical angles. It remains no secret that rurality has received little or no attention in all the contemporary transformation and decolonisation debates and practices. Drawing from formal and informal conversations as well as observations within a South African university located within a rural setting, Phefumula Nyoni in Chap. 9, University lecturers as agents of change and social justice within a rural South African context, explores the diverse ways in which university lecturers are crucial agents of change and social justice within a rural higher education context. Drawing on the works of Freire, particularly in relation to the theory
of critical pedagogy, the chapter reveals how beyond the general common understanding of a rational individual as agent lies the complex interdependence of individual agency and social contexts. The chapter further highlights that at the centre of the interaction between lecturers and students within the context of transformative change and social justice lies a complexity of multiple voices and practices that point to agency not as something that people can have or possess but as people’s actions and achievements. Since the lecturers are at the centre of ensuring social justice within universities, the chapter highlights that the personal and professional baggage that lecturers bring into the professional spaces need to be reshaped. The chapter further argues that any effective change ought to place the interests of the student at the centre, especially through initiatives that would aim at transforming rural academics into good teachers who can ensure that empowering and emancipating pedagogies are promoted.

Amasa P. Ndofirepi and Alfred Masinire, in the last chapter, *Rurality and Social justice in multiple contexts: deliberations revisited*, highlight the concerns of inclusion, social justice and rurality in multiple educational contexts. This covers issues of the nature of knowledge, diversity, disability, gender, and language as it affects the equalisation of education between rural communities and urban/periurban settings. Based on the conclusions of each chapter, this chapter seeks to proffer some recommendations for equal education for all in twenty-first century Africa from basic education to tertiary education.

**References**


Part I

Rurality, Colonialism, and Education
Introduction

South African rural schools are often depicted as historically disadvantaged (du Plessis and Mestry 2019; Lubesa 2009) or particularly deprived (Maringe et al. 2015). This is in contrast to urban schools which are portrayed as historically advantaged. In fact, ‘historically disadvantaged rural’ and ‘historically advantaged urban’ has become an accepted marker of difference between urban and rural schools.

The disadvantage continues to manifest in gross inequalities in terms opportunities for and provisions of teaching and learning in the two types of schools. One would assume that more than a quarter of a century into democracy the inequalities between the two schooling systems would be diminished. While the rural disadvantage is acknowledged as

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A. Masinire (✉)
Wits School of Education, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa
e-mail: Alfred.Masinire@wits.ac.za
historical, the analysis of the problem lacks a historical perspective. For example, Lubesa (2009) argues that rural school challenges emanate from poverty and physical barriers which compound teacher transference and redeployment due to being overstaffed, owing to an exodus of learners to historically advantaged schools. In addition, Mulkeen (2005) offers an ahistorical analysis of rural education quality, citing among other things, what he calls demand and supply factors (pp. 3–4), low opportunity cost, low education of parents, and shortage of qualified teachers, teacher absenteeism and lack of support services.

The crucial question which begs an answer is why and how have rural schools come into this deplorable condition? We take a cue from Martin Luther King Jr. (1963) in his reminder to his critics while in prison in Alabama, not to rest content with the superficial kind of social analysis that deals with effects and does not grapple with underlying causes. While knowledge of the past may not take us very far in solving the current problems, it may help us to appreciate the conditions under which the current problems arose. A historical approach can best provide insight into the complexity of both past and present (Chisholm 2012). However, we cannot avoid the past if we are in pursuit of social justice for rural schools. We need to confront the bitter and painful past. Chisholm (2012) offers a historical account of education in South Africa, providing a much more nuanced analysis of the continuities and contradictions between the achievements of democracy and the inherited historical legacies and persistent structural inequalities and their impact on education. Chisholm’s historical account does not distinguish between rural and urban/black and white education. In addition, Soreto (1999) offers a historical perspective of Black education in one rural province in South Africa. However, Seroto does not link his historical analysis to the current rural education system. This chapter focuses particularly on the historical legacy of education policy and practice in rural communities. The rural disadvantaged have not been occasioned by sheer whims of fortune. We need to accept that the current circumstances of rural deprivation have their foundation in a well-orchestrated socially and politically engineered system stemming from a belief in racial difference. In an analysis of education transformation in South Africa, Feza (n/d) maintains that it is difficult to measure any kind of progress if the history is not recognised as part of the journey.
This chapter foregrounds colonial/apartheid education policy in an attempt to understand the current challenges facing rural schooling. The colonial/apartheid neglect in provisioning of material, financial, infrastructure and human capital resources continue to reflect the challenges that rural schools experience. Despite successive curriculum reforms post-1994, the burden of rural schools continues to increase, with no signs of an immediate end. How do we account for the persistence of an unjust rural education system? In many attempts to account for the rural education dilemma, a huge blame is apportioned partly to the conservatism and traditionalism of rural communities, lack of agency of individual learners and also current corrupt institutions. In this chapter the author argues that an adequate and informed understanding of the burden of rural education requires us to reflect historically on the antecedents of colonial education policies and practices. This historical reflection becomes crucial in the wake of a dominant colonising discourse which has sought to explain the rural problem as purely ahistorical. Through an analysis of rural education policy documents supplemented by a meta-review of rural education literature, this chapter traces the establishment and development of colonial rural/black education policy; highlights the current rural education problem and identifies its colonial foundations; analyses some of the accounts proffered to explain the current rural education problem and, finally, postulates a colonial/historical account of the rural education problem.

Colonial Policy and Black/Rural Education Practice in South Africa

In South Africa rural descent and urban ascendency, which distinguishes rural and urban spaces today, dates as far back as the early settler/colonial period. This process was politically and socially engineered through legislated racial separate development (Morrow 2007). Colonial education policy and practice was purposefully designed to perpetuate racial and geo-locational difference and exclusion. The foundation of deficit thinking about African education and rural education in particular was
constructed and consolidated by the Afrikaner Nationalist Party in 1948. During this period, normally referred to as the era of Native Education (Jansen 1990), rural education was characterised by a rapid structural deterioration of black schools and segregated curricula. As noted by Masinire (2019), the educational neglect of African schooling was in line with the British colonial education policy which they pursued across their colonial territories in Tropical Africa. The purpose of this colonial policy was to ensure minimum or no financial burden for the imperial master. To offload the financial and administrative burden, the British Secretary of State for Colonies (W. Ormsby-Goref) promulgated a policy,

… where African Education had to be adapted to the mentality, aptitudes, occupations and traditions of various people, conserving as far as possible all sound and healthy elements in the fabric of their social life, adapting them where necessary to the changed circumstances and progressive ideas as an agent of natural growth and evolution. (Education Policy in British Tropical Africa 1925, p. 4)

The Welsh Report (1936) and the Eiselen Report (1951) were derivatives of the above imperial policy on education. The Welsh Report (1936) provided for two separate education systems, one suited for blacks (servants) and one suited for the whites (masters) on the understanding that an equivalent education to the Whites would make the Blacks lazy and unfit for manual work and make him cheeky and less docile as a servant, and it would estrange them from their own people and often lead them to despise their culture. A diluted version of education for the Blacks was justified on the grounds that,

the two social orders for which education is preparing White and Black people are not identical and will for a long time to come remain essentially different, … the education of the White child prepares him for a life in a dominant society and the education of the Black child for a subordinate society.

The relegation of African education to marginal status was sealed by the Eiselen Report (1951) which established the theoretical foundation
and justification for Bantu Education. Separate and different education systems for the racial groups were promoted because,

Attention, however, must be drawn to the fact that much of what is taught and learnt in Bantu schools is never applied in practice, because the economic incentives which should operate when children leave school are either absent or of such a nature as to undo the work of the schools. The reform of these economic conditions cannot be the function of the Department of Education, but the success of the work of the schools is dependent upon the existence of social and economic opportunities for absorbing the products of the schools.

The differences between urban and rural schools were not just a policy matter, but rather manifested themselves materially into gross inequalities in terms of teacher qualifications, teacher-student (Soreto 1999). And more significant, the disparities could be seen in educational outputs. Rural learners still perform dismally in national assessment tests. More than two and half decades after the fall of apartheid the urban-rural educational inequalities still persist in South Africa, if not widening, unaffected by the injection of huge capital inflows from the government.

A damaging consequence of apartheid/colonial education as noted by Morrow (2007) is that,

Apartheid as a form of oppression has disempowered its victims. By persistently treating them as objects of policy, by refusing to see them as wholly and rightfully human, as beings who have moral titles and standing, apartheid has dehumanised its victims; their dignity and self-esteem as persons, and their intellectual and moral confidence and autonomy, have been damagingly undermined. (p. 142)

Similar sentiments about the effect of racial segregationist policies have also echoed by Martin Luther King Jr. (1963): “One of the damaging effects of racial segregatory policies was setting up of an ‘I-it’ relationship thus ending up relegating persons to the status things …all segregation statutes are unjust because segregation distorts the soul and damages the personality.” To assume that such deep psycho-social identities disappeared with the stroke of political freedom and democracy in 1994 would
be an underestimation of the long-term and enduring effects of apartheid. The persistence of apartheid legacy is noted by van der Berg (2005) when he claims, “…the new government inherited a situation of large-scale educational inequality whose effects are likely to remain pervasive for decades” (p. 1).

An equally violent response to colonial oppression epitomised the colonial/colonised relationship, as pointed out by Frantz Fanon in his caricatured maxim, “It is only violence that the colonizer will understate.” Bantu Education policy was contested not only discursively but politically. The zenith of such contestation culminated in the tragic 1976 Soweto student uprising.

With respect to teacher training, the EPBTA mandated,

… the training of teachers for village schools should be carried out under rural conditions, or at least with opportunities of periodical access to such conditions, where those who are trained are in direct contact with the environment in which their work has to be done. (p. 6)

In South Africa rural teacher education colleges were established; their purpose was to churn out back teachers who would fill the posts in rural schools. Their urban counterparts produced teachers for the privileged white community.

Conceptions of Rurality and Rural Schooling in South Africa: Some Problematic Dominant Views

One of the critical problems of rural education is conceptual. The manner in which scholars and the public media articulate the rural education problem is in itself a problem. Constructions of rurality have always been coated with power and control in political, social and educational decisions (Schafft and Jackson 2010). For example, understanding rurality from an urban perspective has been the dominant view which has guided
rural policy and development. Those conceptions of rurality which refer to population size, land use, accessibility, functions, and level of development simplify and homogenise the rural as if it were all the same (Woods 2016). Such conceptions have been considered to constitute a deficit view of rurality (Moletsane 2012). However, rural people might conceive their place differently. According to Woods (2016), rural residents view rurality in a positive sense rather than negatively. For example, the landscape and environment is not just idyllic but rather a place about which residents possess deep knowledge and appreciation. The community and agricultural features of rurality are also understood as empowering and convey meaning and assertive values of everyday rural life. However, binary conceptions of rural-urban are not conceptually useful because there is no concrete border where urbanity disappears and rurality begins (Kule 2008). Kule suggests the notion of rural-urban hybrid because these places are becoming increasingly multidimensional and interaction between them is becoming more and more intense. In South Africa, current education policy adopts a broad brush policy approach (Maringe et al. 2015)—the uniform education policy approach.

Apartheid and colonialism created very inequitable systems of education pre-1994. The rural communities commonly known as homelands or Bantustans were negatively impacted by the policies of racial segregation. Rural education during the pre-1994 period became synonymous with poverty, underfunding, dysfunctionality and black. As noted by Seroto (2012), the deplorable state of rural education pre-1994 was a result of several racially-oriented policies promulgated by the Nationalist Party (p. 77). The new democratic government, led by the National African Congress (ANC), had as part of its mandate to address the glaring unequal educational provision mechanism between white and black communities. The new government was committed to attend to rural education. This commitment was reflected in the draft Paper on Education (Jan 1994) which stated that: In the process of ensuring education and training for all, there shall be special emphasis on the redress of educational inequalities among historically disadvantaged groups such as the youth, the disabled, adults, women, the unemployed and rural communities. (African National Congress 1994)
This commitment guided the implementation of such programmes as the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), The Rural Development Strategies of the Reconstruction and Development Programme and the Growth, Employment and Redistribution Programme (GEAR). Some of the interventions to redress the rural marginalisation included the National School Nutrition Programme which provided a meal to children in poor communities; the abolition of school fees in 20% of the poorest communities, and the bursary schemes for poor families in higher education. While well intended, the [rural] education and social development policies have not managed to close the rural/urban inequalities.

 Persistence of the Colonial Legacy in Rural Education

Often rural education research, especially when it seeks to adopt a historical perspective, falls into the trap of a causal analysis approach. Such an approach attributes the deplorable state of the current rural education to apartheid policies. Is colonialism/apartheid the cause of the poor quality education provision in rural areas? This chapter seeks to identify the continuities and persistence of colonial education policies and practices in rural schools. Such an analysis allows one to understand the continuities and influences of colonial policy rather than the causes. For example, we can note that colonial/apartheid education for blacks in rural schools was characterised by geographical isolation and poverty, racial policies of exclusion, poor funding; lack of suitable educational facilities; unqualified and less experienced teachers (Soreto 1999, p. 142). Besides the physical isolation and material deprivation, Masinire (2019) also notes that rural education also suffered from conceptual poverty, that is, the curriculum was second rate, providing a watered down version of what the other racial group received.

Post-1994 education policy and practice should be understood in light of the above historical context. The White Paper on Education and Training (DoE 1995) sets its terms of reference as, “to build a just and
equitable system which provides good quality education and training to all learners through a single, national non-racial system.” Urban and rural spaces in South Africa have a complicated history. These are often depicted in binary and competitive terms. A common national curriculum was established in all public schools under a single Department of Basic Education (DoE). Primary education was declared free and compulsory. In terms of the curriculum, a completely new policy called Curriculum 2005 was introduced which was underpinned by principles of outcome-based education. Conceptually, Curriculum 2005 provided a huge shift in terms of knowledge organisation, teaching, and assessment as compared to the apartheid period. Implemented in 1998, Curriculum 2005 had a short lifespan. In a concise critique, Jansen (2008) explained why the new education reforms (OBE) would fail. In terms of conceptual evolution during the past twenty-three years Hoadley (2011) outlines the changes as knower, knowing, and knowledge mode. Each conception of knowledge implied particular pedagogical arrangements in the classroom. Presently, the Curriculum Assessment Policy (CAPS) is the guiding framework in schooling practice in South Africa. And yet learners’ performance and educational inequalities present an ugly image despite government rhetoric to the contrary. All these changes applied also to rural schools and educational inequalities have been noted markedly between rural and urban schools. But were these policies effective enough to undo the damage that had been caused by apartheid? Were these policies also matched by political will and financial resources to effect change? Gardiner (2008) is quite critical of the grand and ambitious education reforms, noting:

The Constitution, the South African Schools Act and various education policy documents say that all South African learners should have access to the same quality of learning and teaching, similar facilities and equal educational opportunities. However, this is not yet the case. Many people and their schools, particularly but not only in rural areas, struggle with real difficulties such as the lack of classrooms, poor access to services such as water and electricity, no landline telephones and hence no Internet, very few public or school libraries and the like. (p. 7)
As noted by Tikly (2011), any scholarly engagement with education in a postcolonial country requires recognition of the ongoing implications of the colonial encounter and the postcolonial conditions for education (p. 4). What we note in South Africa’s education policy planning is an aspiration to restore the education damage of apartheid. Thus while forward-looking, the educational vision has been filtered through a fractured past. Much more interesting is the observation made by Jansen (2008) that

students come into the school or university classroom with powerful ideas and constructs about the past, present and future … though they have not lived in that past, that knowledge has profound individual and social consequences for how they live and how they learn (p. 261).

Not only was apartheid an artifact of the past, it was indeed a lived reality for some Afrikaner extremists who expressed it through “knowledge in the blood or even bitter knowledge” (Jansen 2008). Jansen’s observation above alerts us to be very cautious about change, especially change that is intended to transform personal identities, culture and education. Post-1994 curriculum change was designed to disrupt the particular orders, including the apartheid order. Nevertheless, resistance was inevitable; often open and evident contest but sometimes also subtle.

**Conclusion: Does Apartheid Education Impact the Current Rural Education?**

This chapter attempted to highlight the challenges of rural education transformation in post-apartheid South Africa. The quality of rural education in South Africa is extremely low, however in no way is urban education better (Gardiner 2008). Rural education policy and programme interventions remain elusive. It may be unfair or even unproductive to attribute all the challenges of quality rural education to the legacy of apartheid. For example, cases of administrative inefficiency, corruption, and educator incompetence derive from ethical and professional dispositions of individual actors and may not have any links with apartheid.
However, some issues are inherently structural and discursive, thus closely aligned to the legacy of apartheid. Both the historical past and present conditions need a careful balance in any attempt to understand the challenges that continue to plague rural schools. Acknowledging the apartheid legacy and its detrimental effect on rural education does not in any way diminish how the present conditions are also implicated in exacerbating the problems.

References


Introduction

Education is the cornerstone in the sustainability of any society and it has played a pivotal role in uplifting the socioeconomic standard of individuals across the globe (Brown et al. 2013; Arifin 2017). The primary aim of education is to sustain individuals and their social well-being (Turkkahraman 2012), but the inequalities that emerge between rural and urban areas have tainted the noble work of education in realising its goal. While basic education provides the foundation on which all societies build their future, higher education serves as the vehicle and channel...
through which social upward mobility is achieved. Those who have been privileged to access higher education up to university level are in an advantaged position. But unlike their urban counterparts, rural students are at a disadvantage. They experience the scarcity of teaching materials such as books, poor or no technology (which includes Wi-Fi) and a shortage of classrooms. These and many other challenges affect the educational performance of rural learners, resulting in only a small number of students who qualify for higher education. Such situations hinder the social upward mobility of rural students, since education has become the prerequisite of employment and a better life (Shavit and Blossfeld 1993).

The rural/urban dichotomy is at the epicentre of the discussion in this chapter. This duality is predicated on the understanding that while higher education opens the gates for social upward mobility, urban dwellers have better opportunities to access education facilities in general, and higher education facilities in particular, compared to their rural counterparts. Therefore, rurality is an important variable in interpreting and understanding social inequalities across the African continent. In fact, other countries outside Africa face the same predicament of constantly trying to reduce the gap between the urban/rural divide.

In the past, enrolment at education institutions was low because many people were poor and could not afford both basic and higher education. The situation was worse in many rural areas (Torche 2013). This has changed somewhat, but the playing field between urban and rural settings remains uneven. This trend continues even after the students have graduated. For example, South Africa has an uncontrollably high number of unemployed graduates. Here, too, graduates from rural areas have even less chances to find employment due to their location. Graduate unemployment is a global problem as the college graduates of Europe and Asia are faced with the same predicament (Mok 2013). However, this does not alter the fact that African graduate students in general, and rural graduates in particular, are the worst affected.

Globally, it is common practice among employers to ask for the academic qualifications of potential employees before deciding who will be offered a job. The assumption is that someone with a higher education qualification is well positioned to be a better asset to the company compared to someone who either has basic education or no education at all.
Once employed, people are able to earn a decent salary and better their material and financial conditions, thereby improving their social status. This paves the way for social upward mobility. If most of those who have academic qualifications come from urban areas, as is usually the case, they are in an advantaged position compared to those who come from rural areas and therefore have less or no education at all. This is one example where the link between higher education and social upward mobility as well as the link between rural and urban becomes evident. Therefore, any analysis of social upward mobility which ignores these binaries as an analytical tool is bound to be deficient at best and irrelevant at worst.

Those who have little or no education are either left unemployed or do menial jobs just to be able to put bread on the table. They normally live from hand to mouth with fewer prospects to elevate their social status or move up the social ladder. Therefore, they cannot even invest for the future or manage to buy all the basic items that they need in the present. Unlike those who are educated, have better jobs and earn better salaries, their social status either remains stagnant or is significantly lowered. Consequently, they have a low self-esteem. Therefore, education becomes a contributing factor towards social upward mobility. In the same vein, lack or the absence of education limits one’s chances to elevate one’s social standing. Within this trajectory, since rural communities generally have fewer opportunities (including both basic and higher education opportunities) compared to their urban counterparts, the latter are better positioned to move up the social ladder quicker than the former. This distinction is due in part to the availability of financial and material resources in the case of urban dwellers or lack thereof in the case of rural inhabitants (Shavit and Blossfeld 1993).

This is the broader context within which the present chapter is crafted. In it, we argue that there is correlation between access to education, especially higher education, and social upward mobility. We also advance the argument that rural and urban inhabitants are not on a par in terms of benefitting from what education has to offer. Against this backdrop, we draw examples from different African countries and discuss some theoretical perspectives which demonstrate how education contributes to social upward mobility. In our discussion we also draw parallels between rural and urban dwellers regarding their prospects for accessing education.
Using this comparison, we argue that education plays a critical role in improving people’s social status. But we also go further to argue that those who live in urban areas are in a more advantaged position compared to those who reside in rural areas. To illustrate our discussion in this regard, we cite examples from the colonial and apartheid contexts. We aver that this notion of upward social mobility or social stratification was first determined by race (Seekings 2003; Mngomezulu 2010), but when it came to the black population, both the educational level and geographical location (urban or rural) played a contributing role in locating black people on the social hierarchy. In other African countries such as Rwanda, we argue that ethnicity compounded this problem as colonial administrators used ethnicity when providing educational facilities and thus predetermined who would move up the social ladder (Ndikumana 2006). After expounding these arguments, we proffer some ideas on the way forward in terms of dealing with some of the issues raised in the chapter.

History and Context

From time immemorial, Africans have been involved in the education of their children. This activity predates Africa’s encounter with the outside world. During this time, education took different forms and employed different methodologies which resonated with the local context. At times the education process was deliberate and structured, but in other instances it simply happened naturally and unconsciously. African proverbs and idioms captured the essence of life as envisaged and understood by the African people. Through these linguistic capabilities, older members of society were able to teach their youth about a number of things. Oral histories were used as the vehicle and channel through which knowledge was imparted to the younger generation. Added to this method was storytelling. The kinds of stories told to the youth by the elderly were meticulously selected. Each of these stories played an educative role. Among other things, these stories carried powerful messages which were geared towards moulding the character of the youth, warning them against certain practices (including those perceived to be social taboos), triggering
them to think in a cognitive manner, training them to be future leaders, teaching them how to treat other people, instilling respect in them, educating them about culture and custom, introducing them to the religious practices and inculcating pride. This was the utilitarian role of precolonial African education.

Besides teaching the youth as a group, there were also gender-specific education programmes. In this regard, boys spent time with their fathers around the fireplace next to the kraal. Here, boys were taught how to behave as boys and what they would have to do in order to become men. Themes such as hunting and heroism in wars dominated the discussions. In the same vein, elderly women spent time with girls teaching them how to behave as girls and what they would have to do in order to become respectable women later in life. Cooking was not the only subject, as some would like to believe. In addition to this, girls were taught about coming of age and what that entailed as well as what these young girls would have to do when that time came. Respect for husbands also formed part of this curriculum. Initiation schools were also used as education centres for both girls and boys in separate settings.

Therefore, we can confidently argue that education has always been part and parcel of African societies as has been the case in other societies across the globe. However, his kind of education was not meant to promote social upward mobility, since Africans believed in communalism (Njoh 2006). On the contrary, its primary objective was to build African societies, both for the present and for the future. It was meant to instil or impart knowledge to the youth on an equal basis. As Turkkahraman (2012) reminds us, by its nature, education involves all experiences that an individual acquires inside or outside the school premises. The late Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere explicated the nature of African education and distinguished it from Western education (Nyerere 1967). Other sources also contributed in this regard (Republic of Kenya 1965). Some youths were able to grasp this knowledge more quickly than others, thereby earning recognition from the elders. In that sense we could argue that there was an element of social upward mobility but it was not materially based as would be the case later when Western education was brought into the equation, first by missionaries and then by colonial administrators.
While formal education is mostly education which is associated with social upward mobility in communities, informal education also has the ability to improve the well-being of people. In a nutshell, informal education is that kind of education that you obtain through experience (Jeffs and Smith 2005). Since the introduction of Western education in Africa, there has been a direct correlation between people’s education level and their social upward mobility. For example, those Africans who attended mission schools gradually elevated their social status. They served as lay priests or assisted missionaries as their interpreters. They constituted an elite class in society. The late Nigerian author Chinua Achebe captured this theme eloquently in his various novels such as *Things fall apart* (1958); *No longer at ease* (1960); *Arrow of God* (1964); and *A man of the people* (1966). Using Nigeria as the setting, Achebe created imaginary characters to demonstrate the changes that took place among the African people as a result of the advent of Christianity and colonialism. He captured resultant social reconfiguration which was occasioned by this new development. Through education, social inequalities not only increased but also changed form as the youth were wittingly or unwittingly elevated over their parents. Our view is that the centuries-old African social fabric was interrupted.

The colonial state also used education as a divisive tool. Those who had been exposed to Western education were accorded better and higher social status compared to those who did not have that opportunity. They were also drawn closer to the colonial state. Some of them went on to serve the colonial state as clerks and as interpreters. Conversely, those who remained uneducated did not have access to those jobs. In the process, their social status either remained the same or was actually lowered. Unlike in the past when the elderly had higher social status by virtue of their age, the youth suddenly saw their social status elevated above that of their parents and grandparents. This dislocated the African social structure and left families in disarray.

We could conclude that Western education as a determinant for social upward mobility had negative consequences on the African people. It interrupted the social fabric which had kept African nations intact from time immemorial. In that sense, Western education tampered with African social formation (Njoh 2006). This social reconfiguration put the
African continent on a new path which would dictate how Africans were to live their lives henceforth. Gradually, *individualism* (which was a Western phenomenon) replaced *communalism* in this social engineering process. Noticeably, social stratification was redefined using education as the determining factor. In the South African context, both education and race were at the centre of social classification and social stratification (Seekings 2003; Mngomezulu 2010).

We should hastily state that this social reorganisation was not always deliberate. In fact, evidence shows that some elderly people accorded their children higher social status just because they were educated. This happened even if those who were educated did not claim this new identity. These youths could speak the language of the white people and write letters that could reach faraway places. That in itself presented the educated youths as a special class in society. As these youths embraced Western culture, they assumed a different identity from that of their societies. In the process, African societies were redefined.

But while it cannot be denied that some developments happened unconsciously, it is equally true that in other instances the colonial state took a conscious decision to use education as a divisive tool. In Rwanda, for example, the status of the Hutus and the Tutsis was partly determined by access to education, among other things. This was a deliberate decision by the Belgian government which decided to use education as an instrument to sow divisions between the two ethnic groups. The juxtapositioning of the educated Tutsis against the uneducated Hutus predetermined who would rank higher in the social stratification between the two groups and who would have access to better employment opportunities (Ndikumana 2006). While it is true that race (light-skinned versus dark-skinned Rwandees) was used as a divisive tool, the reality is that it was the 1959 Education Policy which stratified the people of Rwanda by invoking one group’s social upward mobility at the expense of another. These divisions were to later transform to cause the 1994 genocide which wiped out a large part of the Rwandan population (about 800,000).

The case of Rwanda is not the only one which explains the correlation between education and social upward mobility in Africa. The policy of *assimilation* used by France in West and North Africa was tied to education. Those Africans who were exposed to French education and French
culture were embraced by French authorities (Brooke 2012; Ladjal and Bensaid 2012). Their social status was elevated at the expense of those who were not exposed to such education and culture. In order to entice more Africans to relinquish their African identity, the French government took a conscious decision to allow educated Africans from Francophone Africa to relocate to France and to even participate in the country’s politics. Age in this regard was not the main factor. What mattered most was education and culture. Young and educated Africans saw their social status elevated.

In Anglophone Africa, as mentioned earlier, educated Africans were firstly attracted to the missionaries and later to the colonial state. Here, too, age was not the main determining factor. What was key was one’s level of education. Even though the type of education that Africans were exposed to was not exactly the same as that of the Europeans, it was still considered a valuable yardstick to determine if one could be ‘upgraded’ or not. In colonial South Africa, especially at the Cape Colony, educated non-whites with a specified amount of property were enfranchised. This was a way of saying that once one had obtained a certain level of education and amassed a certain amount of material wealth, such a person had his status elevated. Even though these non-whites could not be accorded the same status as whites, the mere fact that they were enfranchised elevated their social status. If time and space allowed, we could cite many examples from across the African continent to expound this point. Suffice to say that education boosted one’s social upward mobility. In that sense, there is clear correlation between education and social upward mobility.

Interestingly, while it is true that Western education reconfigured the social landscape of the African people and actually changed the entire social makeup which had kept Africans united, Africans too soon realised that higher education was their ticket to social upward mobility. Gradually, they took a vanguard position in championing the course for access to higher education facilities. The development of higher education in Africa happened within this broader political context (King 1977; Mngomezulu 2004; Lulat 2005; Woldegiorgis and Doevenspeck 2013). On the one hand, the colonial state, especially the British Colonial State, resolved to provide higher education facilities for Africans in order to protect them from potential radicalisation when they travelled abroad for
such levels of education. Institutions such as the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama in the United States of America were frowned upon. Even some European academic institutions could not be trusted by the British government on suspicion that they might contribute to the radicalisation of African students. Therefore, when offering bursaries, the British government instructed those individuals and institutions involved in the selection and placement processes to channel African students to specific institutions which were perceived to be ‘safe’ for Africans. Meanwhile, the process of establishing higher education institutions within Africa began in earnest as a preventative measure.

On their part, Africans, especially the youth, demanded that higher education facilities should be established in Africa. They argued that it was only through higher education that they would be able to truly liberate themselves from colonial oppression. East Africans belonging to organisations such as the Young Baganda Association (YBA) were more vocal in this regard (King 1977; Mngomezulu 2004, 2012). Moreover, some African kings were prepared to sell their cattle so that they could send their children to higher education institutions abroad to pursue higher education. This was a tacit admission that higher education was seen as a tool towards social upward mobility. This is the broader political context within which the link between education and social upward mobility should be appreciated, as we argue in this chapter.

The rural/urban dichotomy should be understood within the broader context outlined above. As urban dwellers had more opportunities to access higher education, their rural counterparts were left behind. Even the higher education institutions demanded by the African youths and supported by the colonial government were located in urban areas. Those who resided in urban areas had easy access to these higher education facilities once they were completed. Rural inhabitants had to find accommodation in the urban centres in order to benefit from these education facilities. Consequently, in the main, rural communities remained at the bottom of the social hierarchy while their urban counterparts climbed up the social ladder. Only a few rural dwellers who managed to find space in the urban areas also benefitted from the newly-established higher education facilities in the form of University Colleges. These University Colleges were linked to European universities such as the University of London.
The context provided thus far provides a clear picture of how the correlation between education and social upward mobility played itself out. But before delving more into the notion of the rural/urban divide alluded to above, it would be useful to explain what we mean by the key concepts used in this chapter. In the section below we shall define four concepts which form the subject of the rural/urban divide. These concepts are: urban, rural, rurality and employability. Implicit in the last concept is the assumption that one’s employability depends in part on one’s geographical location, hence the need to define and explain the other three concepts.

Conceptual Definitions

A conceptual definition should not be seen as an option in any study. On the contrary, it should be viewed as a necessity and an inevitable corollary of using concepts in the first place. This need is occasioned by the fact that as a norm, concepts have no universal meaning. As such, some meanings apply in one instance but not in other instances. Within this context, Shubin (2006) was on point when he argued that rural discourses are constructed over time and through political shifts. By this he actually meant that as times change and as contexts change, so do the meanings attached or ascribed to certain concepts such as ‘rural’. If this argument is anything to go by, it leads to the conclusion that both time and context are critical when it comes to assigning meanings to concepts. This is the rationale behind defining the four concepts used in the present chapter. Our dual aim is to ensure that different meanings are appreciated and that there is no ambiguity in understanding what we mean by each of these concepts.

Urban

According to Demographia world of urban areas, the city has two generic forms: the ‘urban area’ which refers to the physical form and the ‘metropolitan area’ which is the functional or economic form. But from a general perspective, an urban area is defined against the backdrop of a rural
area. This concept has no universal definition. In fact, the call for a specific definition of the terms urban and rural has been going on since the mid-1960s (Ford 1966). To this day, there is still no universal definition of either concept. The definition of the concept ‘urban’ varies from country to country and at times from one area to another within the same country. Generally, an urban area is defined as a human settlement with high population density as well as infrastructure of built environment (www.demographia.com/db-define.pdf).

In the absence of a standard meaning, authors normally resort to identifying what they perceive to be the characteristic features of an urban area as opposed to trying to find a specific and universal definition. One of the criteria used in this exercise is an administrative one or a political boundary. In this context the word ‘urban’ refers to an area within the jurisdiction of a municipality or town. The second criterion is a threshold population size which is said to vary between 200 and 50,000 people. The third one is an economic activity whereby the significant majority of the population is not primarily engaged in agriculture. Here, features of an urban area include paved streets, electric lighting, sewerage, etc.

But while these definitions and characteristic features are useful, they fail to paint a conclusive picture about an urban area. For example, some rural areas in countries like South Africa have paved streets and electric lighting and yet they are not classified as urban areas. Our conception of ‘urban’ in this chapter is that it refers to an area located in an industrial area with a dense population and which has more amenities compared to rural areas.

Rural

At a very shallow and basic level, the word rural is the opposite of urban. But this definition is too simplistic to be useful in any analysis. For example, it leaves out the middle concept ‘periurban’. Secondly, the deficiency of this basic definition is that it defines ‘rural’ through ‘urban’ when the definition of each of the two concepts should be able to stand alone for such definition to be of any value in the analysis. The reality is that the meaning of the term ‘rural’ is not as simple as one would like to believe.
This is because various authors define rural areas from different perspectives even though they claim to have a common understanding which is assumed to be unambiguous (Moseley 1979). Cloke (2006) avers that the meaning of this term has generally been examined using three theoretical lenses. Firstly, it has been thought of and viewed in functional terms. Included in this approach are elements such as land use, population density, as well as behavioural qualities. Secondly, political-economic concepts are understood to “clarify the nature and position of the rural in terms of the social production of existence” (Cloke 2006, p. 20). Thirdly, there are social constructions of rural which tend to invoke postmodern and poststructuralist notions (Taylor and Winquist 2001).

Therefore, it should come as no surprise that rural researchers agree that there is no single best definition of this concept which adequately measures the theoretical construct of rural (Hart et al. 2005; Coladarci 2007). The fact that there is no universal meaning attached to the term ‘rural’ led Stelmach (2011, p. 33) to the conclude that, “Thus, ‘rural’ is conceptually evasive.” He went further to state that lack of consensus around the meaning of this concept poses a number of very serious challenges which make the concept a bit problematic. This view is corroborated by other authors who write about the same concept (Arnold et al. 2007).

Since the mid-1960s, researchers have been calling for a more refined definition of the term ‘rural’, but with no success (Ford 1966). Another view which expounds the one above is that defining ‘rural’ is a topic which deserves more attention because in the absence of a standardised meaning some researchers are not aware of the various definitions (Hawley et al. 2016). After looking at this issue, Isserman (2005, p. 467) warned that, “When we get rural wrong, we reach incorrect research conclusions and fail to reach the people, places, and businesses our governmental programs are meant to serve.” At the core of this view is the implicit call that it is not wise to assume that the meaning of the concept used in a text is understood by all and that it needs no definition, because the results of doing this could be disastrous.

To confirm that there is no standard definition of the concept ‘rural’, authors have since refrained from defining the concept directly. Instead, they have resorted to identifying some of the concept’s characteristic
features. For example, one such source is the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD). It presents the characteristic features of rural as follows:

There are two main rural characteristics. First, rural people usually live on farmsteads or in groups of houses containing perhaps 5 000 – 10 000 persons, separated by farmland, pasture, trees or scrubland. Second, the majority of rural people spend most of their time on farms.

Even country-specific studies tend to move away from providing a specific definition of rural but focus on its characteristic features. In a study which focuses on Sweden, various authors make the point that rural areas have been classified using characteristic traits such as zero public exercise, not well-connected to transportation network, IT network and innovation, low technology for crop and livestock farming, as well as a poor savings culture. While these characteristics are useful, they lack any specificity. As such, many areas across Africa could suit this conceptualisation of ‘rural’. It is within this context that Shadish et al. (2002, p. 65) arrived at the conclusion that operationalising rural is a matter of construct validity, which involves understanding constructs and assessing them. Implied here is the view that one cannot take for granted that the concept ‘rural’ is self-explanatory. That is why Hawley et al. (2016, p. 7) advance the view that “a community’s rural designation in any given study or policy implementation is dependent upon the chosen operational definition of rural rather than representing an immutable truth.” Therefore, in our view, unlike an urban area, a rural area is generally sparsely populated and does not have an abundance of amenities such as those found in urban areas.

Rurality

The term ‘rurality’ is related to its sister concept ‘rural’ as defined above. However, their meanings are not exactly the same. Even from a linguistic perspective, rurality refers to the state of being rural. What is common between these two concepts is the fact that there is general consensus in
the literature that they have no unanimously acceptable definitions. Each meaning is time and context specific. Rurality is deemed an ambiguous concept which needs to be accorded meaning whenever and wherever it is used (Abdulwakeel 2017; Rousseau 1995). Jordan and Hargrove (1987, p. 15) concede that the “operationalization of rurality has been a nagging problem.” But while all these submissions have validity and credence, they should not be misinterpreted to mean that the term ‘rurality’ is useless from an analytical perspective. It is for this reason, therefore, that we still use the term in this chapter and consider at least some of the definitions associated with it even if they are not conclusive, standard or universal.

Abdulwakeel (2017, p. 3) gives us his definition of this concept. He opines, “From what I have discussed so far one could say that rurality is the term describing a location where farm activities are more pronounced with low population density, remoteness and a bit of nonfarm activities.” Other authors are unable to provide an explicit definition of this term. However, they list some characteristic features of rurality as a way of explaining it, just like the other two concepts discussed earlier.

Therefore, simply put, our view is that rurality refers to the setting in which more rural activities take place; it is the state of being rural.

**Employability**

In simple terms, the last concept, ‘employability’, means the state of being able or ready for employment. It is predicated on the understanding that the prospective employee has the requisite skills and knowledge about the work he applies for but only needs a chance or opportunity to apply the acquired skills. Authors who define this concept in the context of graduates state that it refers to both the competencies and abilities that graduates need in order to enhance their employment opportunities in the labour market, as well as the economic and social development of the country (Phago and Thwala 2015; Jeswani 2016). While this definition paints an optimistic picture about the prospective employee, other authors sound a warning in this regard. They argue that employability on its own does not guarantee that education equals employment. On the
contrary, their view is that it only enhances one’s employment chances or prospects (Lourens 2016; Paterson 2017).

This leads us to the conclusion that one has to have a full understanding of employability from an analytical perspective so as to be able to apply it in any discussion. Understanding employability issues is critical in the sense that it provides individuals with a better opportunity to be aware of their potential, skills, attitudes and knowledge so that they can become effective citizens and workers (Hooley 2017). For this concept to be applied efficiently, all those affected by it need to have a holistic understanding of what it is and how it is applied in real life situations. For example, if we talk about the employability of graduates, this means that the graduates, employers and society at large should know exactly what we are talking about. This would assist in addressing or even averting any potential ambiguities.

Rurality, Education and Social Upward Mobility

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, there is a direct link between rurality, education and social upward mobility. The concept of employability has been the subject of many studies but still needs further investigation (Hooley 2017). In the African context, while it is true that during colonialism and apartheid social upward mobility was predominantly built on race, it is equally true that rural and urban Africans experienced (as they still do) education differently. Those Africans who reside in urban centres have better access to higher education facilities compared to their rural-based Africans counterparts (Arifin 2017; Shavit and Blossfeld 1993). Assuming that education leads to social upward mobility, it goes without saying that urban-based Africans are likely to have higher social status compared to those who reside in rural areas. There are many obvious reasons for this, some of which are discussed below.

Firstly, rural areas have fewer schools compared to urban areas. This is due in part to the fact that most rural areas are sparsely populated as per the definitions provided above. Even the few schools that are there are
not well resourced. Moreover, they are not easily accessible to the majority of the rural children (Shavit and Blossfeld 1993). This means that rural children are forced to spend significant amounts of time at home growing up before they are sent to school. This is to allow them the time to have more stamina to sustain them in their long trips to and from schools – sometimes having to cross rivers and climb steep mountains to reach school. In South Africa, provinces such as KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga and Limpopo are among those where rurality is a dominant factor. There are many cases of students (learners) who drown in summer on their way to school, as well as girls who are raped as they cross thick bushes. While all of this is happening, students in urban centres take taxis and buses to go to school or simply walk to school for only a few minutes. Obviously, the scales are skewed in favour of urban students.

When it comes to higher education facilities, the situation is even more dire. There are very few or even no higher education facilities in most rural areas. Therefore, rural children have two options: they can either relocate to urban centres in order to access higher education facilities or resort to pursuing options other than enrolling in higher education programme. In the process, chances of rural children accessing higher education facilities and improving their social status are significantly minimised. Sadly, this situation is beyond their control. It is not surprising that most of the affluent Africans either have an urban background or had to relocate from rural areas to urban areas in order for them to be where they are today.

The link between education (especially higher education) and upward social mobility has been long-established by many studies. In a study focusing on perceptions of factors which affect employability among final-year students in a rural university in South Africa, Harry, Chinyamurindi and Mjoli (2018) confirmed this link. They identified six factors which either positively or negatively influence employability. These were:

1. Poor socioeconomic status
2. A poor education system
3. Curriculum issues
4. The choice of higher education institutions
5. Perceptions around the higher education institution, and

While it is true that these factors affect both rural and urban areas, we can undoubtedly submit that rural communities are affected even more. As a general norm, the socioeconomic status of rural communities is excessively poor compared to that of urbanites. Education is a national issue. However, rural communities benefit less in the sense that there is an evident shortage of teaching and learning materials (Torche 2013). Teachers are forced to improvise. This makes the already poor education system less beneficial to the rural students. They imagine a microscope because they either have no laboratory or if one exists there is no equipment and no chemicals to be used to conduct experiments. When these students finish school, they cannot compete or be on a par with their counterparts from urban areas. Already the prospects of their social upward mobility are greatly reduced.

In the case of South Africa, the fact that the country is a unitary state means that the same curriculum is used across the country. But such a curriculum lacks local content. As such, rural students cannot relate to the curriculum content to which they are exposed. Where urban students grasp what is contained in the curriculum because they see the things mentioned in it before and after school, rural students have no clue and can only imagine those things. When it comes to employment after school, rural students are adversely disadvantaged.

The choice of higher education institutions assumes that these institutions do exist. Rural students have none. They are forced to choose an institution based on its close proximity and costs for an academic programme as opposed to choosing an institution because it responds to their academic needs. Some rural students end up in institutions where they can find cheaper accommodation as opposed to choosing the ones where resources are adequate for them to successfully pursue and complete their academic programmes.

This ties up with factor number five above regarding perceptions around the higher education institution. Driven by their socioeconomic situation, rural students attend less reputable higher education institutions. This
means that even after they have completed their academic qualifications they do not become the first choice for prospective employers. Regrettably, in South Africa, twenty-five years into democracy, Historically White Universities (HWUs) and Historically Black Universities (HBUs) are not accorded the same status by society. HWUs are perceived to be ‘better’ compared to their HBU counterparts. This means an added burden on rural students who attend HBUs even though this situation is not of their own making.

The last factor on social connections is equally important. Given their geographical location, most rural students have very few or no social connections in the urban space; this includes academic institutions and places of work. Where urban students have easy access, rural students have to be introduced through third parties. To make matters worse, some corrupt officials need bribes in order to let these students in. The majority of rural students also lag behind in terms of having access to financial and material resources they could use to pave their way. In the absence of these resources, they are in a disadvantaged position and do not stand a better chance to elevate themselves in the same manner that urban students do.

The view by Chinyamurindi (2012) that higher education offers an opportunity to those individuals who were once excluded in the past to compete in the labour market is relevant and true. However, this is only partly true when it comes to rural communities. Our argument is based on two reasons. The first one is that access to higher education alone is not enough to improve one’s chances to enter the labour market. As mentioned above, perceptions about the institution where such higher education was obtained is one of the contributing factors. Secondly, having higher education that is not accompanied by social connection means that chances of rural graduates getting a job are minimal. Rural students are the victims of this reality more than urban students.

Some employers are reluctant to employ graduates who come straight from higher education institutions with no work experience. They expect these graduates who are their prospective employees to already have some employability skills before they start looking for jobs (Artless et al. 2017). This is unfair since there is no higher education institution which provides experience. Even those institutions that happen to have internship
programmes embedded in their curriculum, not all of them secure spaces for their student interns. Without connections, rural students find it hard to secure internship slots. Sometimes when they do, they find spaces in less reputable organisations or work institutions. This does not help their cause in terms of securing employment and working towards their social upward mobility. In the process, rural students lag behind in terms of improving their chances to move up the social ladder compared to their urban student counterparts.

The decision by the post-apartheid government in South Africa to provide funding in the form of bursaries and student loans to previously disadvantaged students (most of whom come from rural areas) is a commendable one. These students are innocent victims of apartheid policies. They find themselves struggling financially and materially because their parents were denied opportunities to prosper. Due to this funding, student enrolments at South African universities have increased exponentially. While this is a good thing, its negative impact is that there is no correlation between the increase in graduation and employment opportunities.

Therefore, as more students exit the system through graduations, the number of jobs is not meeting the demand. This inevitably leads to these students adding to the already increasing unemployment rate in the country (Edayi 2015; Mncayi 2016). The oversupply of graduates in the labour market compared to job opportunities available is a stark reality (Van Broekhuizen 2016). While this is a common challenge, students from rural areas are the most affected. For them to look for jobs they have to migrate to the urban centres. On arrival, they soon realise that they have no accommodation. If they do find accommodation of one form or another, they still need money for the bus, taxi or train fare to and from the place where they look for work. In the meantime, urban graduates stay at home and most of them are supported by their families, having all the necessities which pose a challenge to rural graduates. In fact, the lucky urban graduates are dropped off by their parents and family relatives in places where they look for jobs and are picked up later. This is not the case with rural graduates.

Another option available to job seekers is to search for jobs from their home base. They do this by either surfing the internet or by reading
newspapers. While this looks simple and straightforward, it comes with its own challenges to rural graduates. Firstly, some rural areas have no access to newspapers. Even in places where newspapers are available, they either arrive a few days after the publishing date, while some newspapers (especially those that have job advertisements) are not found anywhere. In other instances, there are very few newspapers so that by the time rural graduates reach the shops selling the newspapers they find them already sold out. This is unlike urban centres where graduates have different options such as various shops and filling stations or garages where they can buy newspapers.

The internet is a better option. However, in the absence of libraries and/or electricity supply in most rural areas, this option fails to address the needs of these rural graduates. Using cellular telephones to surf the internet and access job websites and some newspapers sounds like a better option, but this option too has its own challenges. Firstly, the internet connection in most rural areas is not reliable. Secondly, since cellular companies charge high prices for data and airtime, some rural graduates cannot afford these costs. Moreover, having no access to printing facilities means that these rural graduates have to stay on the internet much longer and take handwritten notes. Those who have laptops are then able to draft application letters but still have to travel to town to make copies of the required supporting documents and to certify them. They still need extra cash to print, scan and email or fax those documents before taking transport back home. Worse still, the absence of electricity means that rural graduates can go for several days without being able to charge their phones. Meanwhile, urban graduates do not have these challenges. So, the life of a rural graduate is characterised by incessant struggles.

Conclusion

It is clear from our discussion in this chapter that the rural graduate is not in a position to move up the social ladder in the same manner as the urban graduate. We can thus conclude that while it is true that education contributes to social upward mobility, there is a clear distinction between students from rural areas and those from urban areas. Therefore, apart
from education, rurality is a critical factor when discussing the correlation between education and social upward mobility. Perhaps the only consolation rural graduates have is that they possess degrees which give them hope that one day they will get proper jobs and start elevating their social status. However, we have to reiterate that having a degree that does not assist the rural graduate in improving his or her social status might be even more frustrating than not having a degree at all. This is because there is hope for a better life but such hope is dashed by the circumstances outlined above. Meanwhile, success remains a mirage to the rural graduate. Our proposal is that government and business should join hands to address this evident disparity. Their policies should cater for these realities faced by rural graduates. The first step is to improve the infrastructure in rural areas and to build academic institutions.

In conclusion, education has a major role to play in people’s social upward mobility. But while this is true, it would be an exaggeration to argue that education is a panacea to graduates’ social upward mobility. Other factors should be equally considered in the analysis. Importantly, the rural/urban dichotomy means that graduates should not be perceived as a homogeneous group. Their experiences are not always the same. Lastly, how we define the concepts ‘rural’, ‘urban’, ‘rurality’ and ‘employ-ability’ determines the types of conclusions we arrive at and the solutions we propose. Government, business people, researchers and ordinary citizens need to join hands if the current status quo is to change. Our proposals might not address all the challenges, but they are a good start towards addressing the plight of rural graduates.

References


Configuring the Key Social Justice Concerns in Rural Education in Zimbabwe

Snodia Magudu

Introduction

At independence, one of the tasks faced by the black government in Zimbabwe was to redress the inequalities in education and to dismantle the institutionalised obstacles to educational justice which had characterised the colonial period and had marginalised the blacks. The government had inherited an education system that was divided along racial lines and which privileged the white minority. There were inequalities in education in terms of: (a) provision with limited educational opportunities for blacks; and (b) quality, with blacks being given an inferior type of education. Both factors had limited the chances of social mobility and participation in society for blacks. Rural areas had particularly been marginalised in terms of provision of education as there were few schools in these largely black areas. The government then introduced several reforms which were meant to make education a basic human right for all and
ensure social justice through the removal of impediments that had resulted in marginalisation of blacks. The developments in education in the country have been hailed as a success story on the African continent. Some of the achievements that have been highlighted in literature are the expansion in education which presupposes increased access to education for the black majority and the high standard of education in the country as compared to other countries on the continent. The chapter examines the extent to which: (a) the representations of social justice are visible (or not) in rural education and schools in the context of the reforms and their implementation; and (b) the education system and policies that make provision for the promotion of social justice in rural education and are inclusive enough to enable rural children to succeed. The chapter draws on empirical studies and literature on education in independent Zimbabwe as well as personal experiences during the author’s line of duty to provide some insights into the key concerns.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section explores the concept of social justice and its different paradigms. The second section focuses on the education policy framework in Zimbabwe. The third section highlights the social justice concerns in rural education. The chapter ends by evaluating the responses to the various concerns by various stakeholders as well as their effectiveness.

The Concept of Social Justice

Social justice as a concept has a long history and has been associated with ideas of such philosophers as Emmanuel Kant, John Locke and Adam Smith. The concept is complex and contested and has diverse meanings and understandings. The various definitions reflect the notions of different theorists and philosophers about social justice and approaches that can be employed to achieve it. Goldfarb and Grinberg (cited in Hlalele 2012, p. 112) for instance, define social justice as “the exercise of altering institutional and organisational arrangements by actively engaging in reclaiming, appropriating, sustaining, and advancing inherent human rights of equity, and fairness in social, economic, educational and personal dimensions”. Asthana, Halliday and Gibson (2009, p. 204), on the
other hand, define social justice as “the entitlement of individuals and groups to fair and equal rights and participation in the full range of economic, social, political and legal opportunities”.

Although the above definitions reflect different emphases, they highlight the main principles of social justice, namely merit, equity and equality. Smith (2018) considers these principles to be central to the quest for a just world.

Generally, education and schooling are viewed as tools for promoting social justice and key to moderating social inequalities, reducing poverty and promoting social mobility, resulting in a fair and just society. Social justice in the context of education is defined as the extent to which schools demonstrate and pursue commitment to equity and other social justice practices, increased access, and participation for disadvantaged children and groups (Tjabane and Pillay 2011). Hence, social justice is a central concept in education policies and practice.

Several conceptions of social justice have emerged over time but only two models (distributive justice and recognitive justice) are focused on in the chapter to illustrate the social justice dynamics in rural education. The most dominant conception of social justice has been distributive justice. The model is associated with the liberal tradition which views justice as fairness. John Rawls, one of the contemporary proponents of distributive justice, argues for an egalitarian notion of social justice as a way of moderating social inequalities (Rawls, as cited in Gewirtz 2006). This entails equal distribution of materials and social goods (or benefits of society) except where the unequal distribution is to the advantage of those who are less privileged (Rawls, as cited in Wang 2016). From this perspective, social justice is realised when public resources are directed to the socially and economically disadvantaged in society and education is a primary social good to be redistributed. In this model, the state plays a crucial role in guaranteeing the redistribution or in making the goods accessible to all.

The distributive model of social justice has significantly shaped education policy in many countries. However, the model has been criticised for being restrictive and reducing issues of social justice, rights and power to the simple allocation of material goods (Young 2000); not adequately focusing on historical sources of inequalities; and being more concerned
with individual issues than those affect society at large (Gewirtz 2006). Furthermore, it has been noted that proper distribution of benefits and burdens among educational sites is challenging and that it is problematic to apply models based on distribution of material goods to non-material goods such as self-respect, honour and opportunity (Taylor 2013), thus suggesting a need for a wider conception of social justice.

A more radical conception of social justice, recognitive justice, is advanced by Young (2000) and Fraser (1995). The perspective builds on the liberal and conservative notions of social justice. Both theorists regard the concept to be broader than distribution. Young (2000) advocates for a shift from the dominant distributive dimension which she views as being limited to a plural framework of social justice that includes recognition and participation. Recognition in this conception of social justice is defined as an absence of cultural domination, non-recognition and disrespect in interactions among groups and individuals (Gewirtz 2006, p. 74). According to Cuervo (2018, p. 3), the plural justice proposed by Young is ideal “in educational settings in which not all subjectivities are respected and empowered due to individuals or social groups not fitting in with the hegemonic discourse of the school and community”. Fraser (1995), on the other hand, argues for a framework of justice that combines economic redistribution, cultural recognition and parity of participation for tackling injustice or oppression and exclusion. She contends that social justice action in contemporary society demands both distribution and recognition measures. In her view, both these aspects contribute to the creation of inequalities and for that reason remedies for injustice should involve both economic distribution and cultural recognition. The parity of participation dimension is based on the notion that social justice requires the dismantling of deep-rooted obstacles that hinder some people from fully participating on equal footing with others in social dealings and which foster marginalisation and exclusionary practices (Fraser, as cited in Gewirtz 2006). The inclusion of three dimensions in one framework provides a holistic approach to social justice and tackles the various forms of injustice that emanate from lack of cultural recognition, maldistribution of social goods and linguistic/social misrepresentation (Wang 2016). The framework touches on several issues that are relevant to education, for example, inequality, identity, multiculturalism,
and cultural politics and is in this respect consistent with the role of schools in remediating social injustices for the disadvantaged (Cuervo 2018).

The notions of social justice discussed above highlight some of the debates relating to the concept and its application to education. It is generally acknowledged that the application of the concept to education is problematic. The challenges emanate from the fact that there is no consensus about what constitutes social justice (Clark 2006); and that the concept is usually oversimplified in policy documents and assumptions are often made about there being a common understanding of what social justice is. This may lead to the inequalities experienced by different social groups and individuals in schools being disregarded (Cuervo 2012).

**Contextual Background**

Two aspects which are considered to be pertinent in providing a context for the analysis of the key issues are discussed in this section and these are the policy context and rural education in Zimbabwe.

**Policy Context**

The black government at independence proclaimed education a human right and one of the priority areas in redressing the injustices of the colonial era. Consistent with this stance, Zimbabwe ratified human rights instruments and global education policies and conventions that promote human rights and social justice in education such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) of 1966, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) of 1989 and the African Charter on the Rights and the Welfare of the Child (ACRWC). The government additionally committed to such global initiatives as Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of 2000 and their set targets of free and compulsory primary education, achieving universal primary education (UPE) by 2015, eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education (Millennium
Development Goal 2), and ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all (the new Sustainable Development Goal 4); (Spiel, Schwartzman, Busemeyer et al. 2008). Such commitment is manifest in the Zimbabwe Constitution (2013) and Education Act (1987). Section 75 of 2013 Constitution provides for every citizen’s right to basic state-funded education. Along the same lines, the Education Act (1987) Section 4 (1) states that every child in Zimbabwe shall have a right to education and provides for free and compulsory primary education (but secondary education was not made free), removal of age restrictions and automatic progression from primary to secondary school (which was meant to ensure equality of opportunity). The Act was subsequently amended several times, for example in 1991 and 2006, the latest amendment being in 2019. The 1991 amended Act reintroduced tuition fees at primary school for urban schools but education remained free for rural children perhaps as acknowledgement that these areas were disadvantaged. But at the same time, the amended 1991 Education Act “transferred responsibility for the provision of education away from government, to parents who are legally obligated to send their children to primary school, regardless of their personal financial situation” (Drury 2013). The implication of this stipulation was a compromise on the right to education particularly for communities which still experience poverty. The amended 2006 Education Act mainly focused on the regulation of the fees system in schools. The 2019 amended Act, among other things, seeks to ensure adequate school infrastructure. Other related policies such as the Language in Education Policy and the National Gender Policy (2004) suggest some concerns for recognition and parity in education. On the whole, indications are that human rights and social justice are the underlying principles of education policy in independent Zimbabwe.

**Rural Education in Zimbabwe**

The notion of rurality varies from place to place, but the term is usually defined in geographical, demographic, economic and socio-cultural terms (Cuervo 2012). In the African context, the rural areas are
characterised by underdevelopment and extreme poverty, hunger, malnutrition, out-of-school children, squalid conditions, high infant mortality and low life expectancy (Adedeji and Olaniyan 2011). Some of these maladies are also features of rural areas in Zimbabwe. There are two main categories of rural areas in the country: communal areas which were a product of the colonial land alienation policies which restricted Africans to unproductive areas of the country; and the resettlement areas which created the Fast Track land resettlement programme after independence to redress the imbalances in landownership. The majority of the country’s population resides in rural areas. The main source of livelihoods in rural areas is peasant farming. The areas are characterised by poverty and some of the most disadvantaged people in the country are to be found here as the colonial legacy of unequal development continues to be a hallmark of these areas. Efforts by the government to redress the problem through the Growth Point concept, for example, have largely been unsuccessful. Poverty in rural areas is higher than in urban areas with about 77% of rural households being classified as poor, compared to 30% in urban areas (ZimStats 2019). These socioeconomic inequalities between urban and rural communities are visible even in the provision of and access to education.

Public education in the country is provided by the government and rural and urban councils. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education’s (MoPSE) 2017 Annual Education Statistics Profile shows that 86% of primary schools and 80% of secondary schools in the country are to be found in the rural areas. Most of the schools (72.2%) are public schools and fall under Rural District Councils (RDCs), with a few others being under the authority of government and missions/churches and private organisations. The public schools in rural areas are in three categories namely: growth point schools; satellite schools in resettlement areas; and traditional communal schools. While conditions in these schools are not generic, they largely share some common traits which make it possible to give them a blanket classification of rural schools most of the time. The satellite schools are mainly found in newly resettled areas and constitute about 30.8% of the secondary schools and 16.4% of the primary schools in rural areas (Zimbabwe Education Blueprint 2015–2022). These are unregistered because they do not meet the criteria
for registration, for example, basic infrastructure and their registration status may disqualify them from getting funding. RDCs, therefore, mostly cater for the economically and socially disadvantaged rural population and they are supposed to subsidise operational costs of schools under their authority, with communities bearing the bulk of the costs of rural education. Most RDCs with their narrow revenue bases lack the capacity to develop and support schools that fall under their responsibility, while the rural communities are generally poor. The relinquishing by government of the provision of rural education to RDCs and rural communities suggests some vestiges of the pre-independence experiences whereby the white regimes were reluctant to assume responsibility for the education of the black majority. Even RDCs in some parts of the country are exploring possibilities of handing over responsibility of some schools under their authority to church organisations. These developments have created what Drury (2013) calls opportunities for exclusion and marginalisation. A common feature of rural schools, therefore, is the challenges experienced in providing educational services among the rural poor and this makes social justice central to this discussion on rural education (Cuervo 2012).

Social Justice Concerns in Rural Education

The main social justice concerns in rural education centre around three related issues namely: access to education, equality of opportunity and equity. Focus is on the extent to which the three aspects are addressed in rural education.

Access to Education

Access to education implies that education must be available for and inclusive of all children. The main indicators against which access can be evaluated are enrolment, attendance and completion rates (Lewin 2009). These elements collectively provide a more holistic picture of the extent
to which access to education has been achieved, unlike the traditional focus on enrolments as the main proxy of access.

In the first decade of independence focus was on affording access to the previously excluded and disadvantaged black majority. One of the measures taken to enhance access was construction of schools particularly in rural areas and priority was given to construction of rural day secondary schools in each district. The early period was characterised by a phenomenal increase in enrolments and expansion in education in general which has been hailed as a success story on the African continent. Despite the expansion in the education sector, access to education in rural areas has remained limited due to several factors. For instance, indications are that provisioning of education especially in rural areas is still inadequate. The country is reported to have a deficit of 2000 schools and the rural areas are the most affected, with an estimated shortfall of 1425 schools and with a significant deficit in resettlement areas (*The Herald*, 19 September 2019; *Sunday News*, 21 October 2018; *The Herald*, 29 June 2014). Children in these areas have to travel prohibitive distances to the nearest schools (as much as 15 km in some cases). Distance in this respect is a major obstacle to access and participation in education and, in addition, partly creates two other problems that are features of rural education, namely irregular attendance and school dropout.

A major barrier to access to education is poverty or the economic disadvantage of rural areas which again often results in irregular attendance and high dropout rates among the rural learners. The latter is estimated to be as high as 50% in some disadvantaged areas of the country (Education Coalition of Zimbabwe, cited in Maravanyika 2018). Poverty amongst most rural parents, as noted earlier, makes it difficult for them to meet such costs as tuition and examination fees and levies that are required by schools. Schools, on the other hand, have limited resource bases and generally depend on tuition fees and levies to fund their operations. Hence, although official policy stipulates that no child should be excluded from schools for non-payment of fees, and that schools and parents or guardians should come to some arrangement about the payment of the fees, many schools do not adhere to the policy and barring learners from school for non-payment of the various fees and levies is common in rural schools. The magnitude and impact of the exclusions is
described by two newly qualified teachers in a study by Magudu (2014) respectively as follows:

When pupils are sent away, I am left with 6, 9 or 12 pupils [out of a class of over 50]. I won’t stop teaching and when they return I will be done with a topic and it becomes a problem to assist them to make up for the lost time … some pupils may disappear when fees are demanded and only resurface at the end of the term for tests.

I have a Grade 2 pupil who just stopped coming to school … if pupils are regularly excluded from class for non-payment of fees they cease to appreciate the value of education. But is it proper for a child to drop out of school at Grade 2?

The periodic exclusion of significant numbers of learners from school for non-payment of fees results in loss of learning and in some cases children dropping out quite early in their school career and not completing Grade 7 or the primary school cycle. The children usually leave school without basic skills to enable them to function in society, for example, literacy skills. Besides learners who do not complete the primary school cycle, indications are that 20% of learners in the country do not proceed from Grade 7 to Form 1 or lower secondary school which is considered to be part of basic education that all children are entitled to. In some disadvantaged areas the problem is more profound. For instance, a transition rate from Grade 7 to Form 1 of 48.6% has been cited in one district of the country (MoPSE 2018). These developments reflect some challenges with realisation of the MDGs of universal education. Furthermore, they contradict the goals of education policy, for instance, automatic promotion whose aim was to expand access and promote equality of opportunity. They suggest a regression into the bottlenecks that had characterised the colonial education system and education reforms which focus on what Fraser (2001, p. 82) calls affirmative remedies that are “aimed at correcting inequitable outcomes of social arrangements without disturbing the underlying framework that generates them”. The inadequate attention to structurally entrenched inequalities, therefore, has been an obstacle to long term solutions to the problems of rural education.
Access to education in rural areas has further been limited by the political instability that the country has experienced most notably since 2008. The political violence and other related activities which usually occur during election time affects school attendance and in some rural provinces teachers have often been targets of political attacks and intimidation. In 2009 for instance, the effects of political violence included some teachers being forced to relocate, failure by some schools to attract qualified teachers, and the closure of schools in the affected areas (Ndlovu 2013; UNICEF 2018). In a nutshell, the overall impact of political violence has been the weakening of provision (implying marginalisation), loss of learning opportunities and a decline in quality of education in these areas.

Generally, access to education in rural Zimbabwe is limited as education is poorly delivered and unfairly distributed. Poverty seems to be at the centre of the different forms of exclusions that characterise rural education.

**Equality of Opportunity**

The provision of educational opportunity is vital to the promotion of social justice. Equality of opportunity refers to “all having the similar life chances to secure an advantaged position in spite of their initial conditions” (Smith 2018, p. 10) or circumstances into which they are born. Opportunity is manifested by access to education, experience within it and outcomes from it (Spiel et al. 2008). Some of the conditions necessary for realisation of equality of opportunity in education are: the broadening of access to educational materials, improvement of infrastructure, funding, staffing and the provision of a comprehensive curriculum for rural students just as in urban schools (Lewin 2009) or equality of condition which according to Nieuwenhuis is one of the principles that should benchmark social justice in education. Rural education in Zimbabwe, however, falls short in several of these aspects.

As alluded to earlier, the state no longer plays a central role in the provision of education and in funding education in general (except payment of salaries, with 93% of the education budget going to payment of
salaries and 7% to operation costs). The education system (i.e. the provision of education and development of rural schools) is now dependent on parental and community support, with parents and guardians contributing 96% of the non-salary costs of education (Global Partnership for Education 2018). The dependency of the school system on availability of local resources for funding is not ideal for two reasons. Malhoit (2005, p. 7) points out that wealth disparities among communities imply generation of varying amounts of funding which results in some students losing out and receiving fewer opportunities and resources. Again, such dependency results in underfunding of rural education since most local communities lack the capacity to generate the requisite financial resources. This becomes apparent with the shortages of learning materials and physical and human resources that characterise rural schools. For instance, the shortages of basic teaching and learning resources such textbooks, exercise books and pens mean that some children are excluded from participation in learning though they attend school as they might go for whole month without doing any written work (Kurebwa and Mabhanda 2015).

The underfunding of rural education is further evidenced by lack of basic infrastructure and facilities such as classroom space and laboratories, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools, sporting facilities and accommodation for teachers. The infrastructure is particularly poor in resettlement schools, where unsafe makeshift pole and dagga structures are used as classrooms and there is no basic furniture for learners. These conditions are not conducive to learning and put rural learners at a disadvantage. While both rural and urban secondary schools are supposedly pursuing a similar academic curriculum, the demands of the curriculum do not correspond with the provision of resources in the former. Most rural schools are poorly equipped and not in a position to offer Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and practical subjects that require specific facilities such as laboratories, equipment and electricity. Consequently, most of these schools are unable to offer all subjects on the school curriculum. The range of subjects that can be studied in rural schools is restricted to such subjects as History and English, and rural children have limited access to high status subjects such as Science and Mathematics that facilitate participation in society (Thrupp and Tomlinson 2005). STEM subjects tend to be the preserve of better
resourced urban schools which can offer science subjects like Biology, Chemistry and Physics separately while rural schools have offered alternatives to pure sciences. Such alternatives include the ‘ZimScience’ curriculum in the 1980s where science kits were provided to rural schools without laboratories and electricity; at another stage, Integrated Science; and currently, Combined Science with UNICEF are providing science kits again. Atweh (2007, p. 13) observes that “where students from poor or marginalised communities are exposed to less rigorous content or a less engaging pedagogical method, the risk of inequality in the opportunity to learn is high”. The question then is whether the alternative science curricula that have been experimented with really level the playing field for the rural children to ensure adequate teaching and learning of the science.

Furthermore, there have been some debates about the new curriculum which was introduced in 2015 and its feasibility in rural schools. An emerging consensus is that the new curriculum marginalises rural children as it requires extensive use of ICT in the classroom and sporting facilities, yet few rural schools have basic infrastructure and resources, as well as textbooks relevant to the new curriculum. On the whole, the limitations alluded to above demonstrate the role that the curriculum can play in producing rural disadvantage and that equal provision and common schooling which Kabeer (2000) views as indicators of equality of opportunity, are not provided for in rural education.

A perennial difficulty for rural schools has been that of staffing. Due to their location and lack of amenities, rural schools experience problems of attracting and retaining qualified and experienced staff and there is a high staff turnover as qualified teachers mostly prefer urban schools to rural schools. The issue of a rural allowance to attract teachers to rural schools has to date not been addressed meaningfully as the allowance has always been a pittance and does not compensate for the economic and social opportunities that teachers posted in rural areas have to forego. Furthermore, there is a general shortage of qualified teachers for such subjects as Mathematics and Science and usually high teacher pupil ratio in science classes. Rural teachers, unlike their urban counterparts, are at times required to teach multiple subjects at secondary school and this implies that many of them often teach subjects they are not qualified to teach. The prevalence of the problem of out-of-field teaching was recently
acknowledged by the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Primary and Secondary:

Government is working hard to … realign misplaced teachers so that no trained teacher should be found teaching any other subject not trained for. In some schools you find teachers teaching up to Advanced Level but not properly qualified to do so. (The Sunday Mail, 8 September 2019)

The problems of staffing and resource constraints in rural schools have resulted in students having access to inferior schools or ineffective schools where little is learned (Lewin 2009) and consequently to poor quality of education. While access to education has generally improved, issues of quality in rural education have not received adequate attention. Yet according to Lupton (2005, p. 581), a concern with social justice for the disadvantaged implies that they should have the same quality of education as their peers. The disparities in the quality of education between rural schools and their urban counterparts are underlined by the gap in achievement in public examinations. Over the years, an emerging pattern has been that of a significant number of rural schools recording zero pass rates in Grade 7 and ‘O’ level examinations. For instance, in 2017, 29 schools out of 590 schools in Matebeleland North, a largely rural province, recorded zero pass rates and only a quarter of students from that region passed Grade 7 examinations (Global Press Journal 2018). In 2018, 68 primary schools and 194 secondary schools across the country recorded zero pass rates in Grade 7 and ‘O’ examinations respectively and the lowest rates were registered in satellite schools, where poor infrastructure and teaching and learning were cited as the causes of the poor performance (The Chronicle, 1 April 2019). Furthermore, high numbers of rural students do not attain the five Ordinary level passes that are a prerequisite for obtaining an Ordinary level certificate and proceeding to further training and higher education. Failures are registered particularly in core subjects such as Mathematics, English Language and Science which are prerequisites not just for further training but even for employment in what could be considered to be a basic job; for example an advertisement for a Class 4 driver requiring applicants to be holders of five ‘O’ levels including English and Mathematics.
The quality of education received in rural schools, therefore, does not allow children to compete with their urban counterparts or provide opportunities to realise their full potential. While urban families might be in a position to enhance their children’s educational experiences, for example through paying for private extra lessons which is now a common feature of education in urban areas, most rural parents, due to poverty and other factors, might not be able to do so and can hardly complement the efforts of schools to afford equality of opportunity. Failure to attain the required ‘O’ level passes represents a dead end and most rural children then are resigned to peasant farming and the treadmill of poverty, just like their parents. Female children who do not enter into early marriages may move into towns to provide cheap labour as housemaids. Rural education in this respect tends to reinforce existing social inequalities and monopolies of social status (Spiel et al. 2008, p. 51) and diminishes the social mobility function of education.

The combination of factors discussed in the above paragraphs suggest further regression into colonial practices of bottlenecks and the stratification of public schools, though this time not along racial lines. The latter has put paid to the idea of a single system of education in the country and for rural students there seems to be a separate school system and access to disadvantaged schools, thus together with other factors, raising concerns about equity in the country’s education system.

Equity

Equity is viewed as one of the proxies of social justice in education. According to Levin (2003), equity is realised when benefits of learning are widely shared and gaps between the most and the least advantaged in such aspects as achievement and participation are minimised (Atweh 2007) and this requires supporting disadvantaged students and schools to move up. Equity also entails ensuring that personal or social circumstances such as gender, ethnic origin or family background do not hinder one from achieving educational potential (fairness) and that all individuals reach at least a basic minimum of skills (inclusion) (OECD 2012).
Several equity gaps are apparent in rural education, some of which have already been alluded to. A persistent gap and one which could be classified as a ‘wicked problem’ (Roberts 2016) of rural education in the country is the gap in terms of resources. Rural schools do not have access to resources that are necessary to effectively serve their learners. Educational reforms have tended to focus on providing a one size fits all educational opportunity which does not take into account the historical disadvantage of rural schools and their need for extra resources. The disparity in access to resources amongst schools is evidenced by their categorisation according to socioeconomic status, i.e. P1, P2, P3 for primary schools and S1, S2 and S3 for secondary schools. Rural schools, which are in categories P3 and S3, have the lowest school incomes while P1 and S1 schools have the highest incomes and access to resources. These disparities in access to resources amongst schools make it difficult to achieve equity and fairness (Maravanyika 2018).

Related to the above is the inequity in quality in rural education. The issue of low quality education in rural schools has not been addressed. Focus has been on ensuring access and in the process quality of education has been compromised, thus inherently producing disparities in learning outcomes.

A third gap in rural education relates to gender equity. This has been a contentious issue in rural education due to cultural and other factors that have limited the participation of girl children in education. In acknowledgement of this concern, in 2004 the government put in place the Gender Policy, one aspect of which sought to address some of the disparities in education for the girl children in general and not just in rural areas. Government efforts in this regard have been complemented by interventions from such programmes as Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED) (which supports rural children at primary and secondary school by paying their tuition fees and other fees and for items such as uniforms and books) and Improving Girls’ Access through Transforming Education (IGATE). These initiatives have resulted in increased access and gender parity in education and a significant reduction in school dropout among marginalised girls in rural schools as well as improved academic performance amongst girls at secondary school in such subjects as English and Mathematics (UNICEF 2018). But a number of barriers
to access still exist for the rural girl child, for instance, the general negative attitudes toward education of the girl child and limited investment in gender sensitive structure in schools which would restrict their participation (Chigodora 2017).

The extent to which issues of ethno-cultural diversity are recognised and receive adequate attention is yet another social justice concern in rural education. Questions of linguistic equity in relation to the use of both English and indigenous languages in education have generated debate among stakeholders. Firstly, the continued use of English as the language of instruction in both primary and secondary schools put rural children at a disadvantage in many ways. Most rural learners are not proficient in English yet, according to Nhongo (2013), English carries the advantage in the country’s education system. Rural learners, however, lack exposure to things like the television which could help in improving proficiency in the language. The lack of proficiency has implications for rural learners’ performance not only in English but also in other subjects which are presented in English as well as public examinations particularly at ‘O’ level.

Secondly, a recurring issue has been that of marginalisation of minority languages such as Tonga, Venda, Kalanga, Shangani and others in schools. The Education Act (1987) and subsequent amendments to the Act provide for the teaching and use of these indigenous minority languages as languages of instruction up to Grade 7. This implies some recognitive justice within the education system. But the minority languages are usually taught together with either Shona or Ndebele, depending on the region of the country. Some scholars view this as cultural domination and an attempt to assimilate minority language speakers into majority language groups (Ndhlovu 2007). The implementation of the Language Policy has generally been problematic and the Education Amendment 2019 acknowledges the unresolved issues relating to ethno-cultural recognition as it still seeks to provide for the right to language and culture, as well as the recognition of the 16 official languages of Zimbabwe almost four decades after independence. Lastly, the question of the extent to which children with religious affiliations different from mainstream religions are catered for in rural education is one that demands further interrogation. This is particularly so in the light of debates about, for example the place of children from the Apostolic sects in schools.
Interventions to Support Rural Education

Various interventions to support disadvantaged rural students and schools and to achieve more equitable distribution of resources have been initiated by the state and NGOs. For instance, the School Improvement Grant (SIG) was put in place to improve equity by providing funding for non-salary resource needs in the most disadvantaged schools. But indications are that most schools that need that grant are not receiving it. For example, in 2015 only 37% of the most disadvantaged schools received SIG funds (UNICEF 2018) and its disbursement is erratic. Where schools receive SIG funds, it has been noted that at times the schools divert the funds to other purposes; thus defeating the goal of infrastructure development. Another government social support programme which attracted attention amongst stakeholders is the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) which was introduced in 2001 to assist vulnerable learners and those from disadvantaged families with payment of school and examination fees, facilitating access to education not just for rural children but also urban learners. However, several limitations have been noted with the administration of the fund and these include: inadequate funds to accommodate all potential beneficiaries; not being accessible to most vulnerable groups in rural areas; lack of transparency in selection of beneficiaries and the process being prone to manipulation; as well as the politicisation of the distribution of the BEAM funds (Save the Children UK 2011). A study by Nyatsanza and Hlatywayo (2014) also found that BEAM at secondary schools limited the number of subjects to be studied by beneficiaries and that the funds from BEAM did not cover some crucial opportunity costs of schooling such as purchasing of kits required by learners studying practical subjects. All this suggests weak redistributive strategies which are not sensitive to spatial distribution of deprivation (Asthana et al. 2009).

NGOs play a significant role in delivery of education in rural Zimbabwe. Some of the NGOs that have supported education in Zimbabwe include UNICEF, SIDA, CARE and World Vision. Most of the interventions of these organisations were aimed at complementing the system in its drive to achieve universal and equitable access to
education for all (UNICEF 2018). To this end, interventions have not only been financial but included capacitation of school administrators for appropriate governance and financial management, as well as training School Development Committees for their role in school management. Other NGO initiatives include distribution of:

- bicycles to school children to address the obstacle of distances to school;
- textbooks for core subjects as well as exercise books by UNICEF to disadvantaged primary and secondary school children in all districts of the country, resulting in an improved pupil to textbook ratio;
- ECD and Science kits at primary school and science kits at secondary school by UNICEF.

These interventions have made some inroads in trying to level the playing field for the rural child, for instance, improved attendance rates in areas where bicycles were distributed. However, issues have been raised for example about the lack of variety in the titles provided by UNICEF and that some subjects still lack relevant books and also that once the donated exercise books are exhausted learners go back to becoming passive during the time for written work. In addition, Drury (2013, p. 4) notes some limitations with the interventions by NGOs which include geographical and funding priorities, availability or duration, and that the interventions are also affected by the changes in the political and economic climate.

Conclusion

Considerable efforts have been made to make education accessible to rural children. But as noted by Grifts (2010), expanded access to public schooling does not imply equitable outcomes. Several equity gaps that have undermined the prospects of social justice in rural education have been highlighted in the chapter. The gaps seem to emanate from a lack of acknowledgement of the role that place plays in determining opportunity gaps (Cuervo 2018) and consequently inadequate attention causing rural disadvantage, as well as educational policy not making special provision
for rural education. This has seen a regression into some of the patterns of exclusion that border on those that existed during the colonial era, thus rural students are marginalised and ill-equipped by the education system to participate in the society and economy. Reducing educational inequalities might require revisiting the issue of funding of rural education and use of funding formulae that considers the proportion of disadvantaged of learners in schools (Tikly 2011). Conclusion Attempts have been made to promote social justice in education in the country. However, several configurations and practices that have undermined the prospects of social justice in rural education have emerged in this chapter. These could be attributed to failure by educational policies to take cognizance of broader traits of social equality and to address structurally entrenched inequality, as well as a general lack of attention to social justice obligations in micro-practice in rural education. Such norms and practices suggest a regression into some patterns of exclusion reminiscent of those that existed during the colonial era with most rural students being marginalised and being ill-equipped by the education system to participate in the society and economy and to move up the social ladder. Reduction of such educational inequalities might require paying particular attention to the role that place plays in determining opportunity (Cuervo 2018) and considering the unequal needs of rural students who begin from a position of disadvantage (Nussbaum 2004) in the various ways that have been highlighted.

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Where You Went to School Matters: A Social Justice Perspective of Rurality and Education in Cameroon 1922–2019

Roland Ndille

Introduction

The mother and father get up early in the morning, make a fire of the wood, warm up the remainder of last evening’s meal (ekulee) for breakfast. The mother lifts the basket to her back and the father picks up his cutlass, and the two head off into the forest where the farms are located. They spend virtually all day there and return in the evening to begin preparing the evening meal. While they are gone, the children (who must...
accompany them on weekends and holidays) clean the bowls, feed the fowls, tether the goats and rush off to school. In the afternoon, before their parents return, they rush to the local streams to fetch water and bring the animals into their pens. After the evening meal of pounded cocoyam and soup with some dried ‘bush-meat’, the family settles to a ‘corner-fire’ story-telling session before bedtime. On warmer moonlit nights, kids play outside to ngombe-ngombe mukele.

While some parts of a town life can still meet the above description, it is essentially a reminiscence of a typical rural life in my part of Cameroon. Adult life is, in the main dominated by agriculture, but there are also a few specialised artisans, hunters, traditional healers and fishermen. There may also be a local, often poorly equipped/constructed primary/secondary school that serves three or four surrounding villages. For the most part, there is no electricity, health centre and pipe-born water (except for those with either a powerful cultural and development association in the cities or ‘a son-of-the-soil’ as a top government official).

The roads are muddy and inaccessible in the rainy season and dusty in the dry. Access to the main urban centre is hard; people do it on foot but these days (thanks to China) they can also do it strenuously on a motorbike at an uncomfortable price. Vehicles make it mostly in the dry season, lifting volumes of dust in the air. Cellphones, TVs, computers etc. are a luxury here except for those who can afford electric generators or solar panels and chargers. The local language is in popular use even on the local school campuses – not English or French. Life is peaceful though, but those from these parts who make a rare appearance in town and find it difficult to beat the often embarrassing traffic to cross the road, or switch on the television in their relative’s house are termed ‘bush’ people.

While we recognise that the term ‘rural’ is indeed ambiguous and that there is no exact definition that can encompass every meaning of the term, rural areas in Cameroon are clearly characterised in the most part by the above-mentioned state of things. I have avoided a standard conceptualisation of rural with the understanding that more conceptual and theoretical chapters have explored that extensively. However, for our purpose, it is important to mention that the sum total of these characteristics are embodied in the concept of rurality which in other words may refer to geographical remoteness; and typological features that hinder physical
access such as poor road conditions, mountainous landscapes and fast-flowing rivers without bridges. Rurality is also evidenced by high cost of service delivery, high cost of travel, difficulties in recruiting and retaining social workers like teachers and nurses, higher levels of deprivation than urban areas (schools, hospitals, pipe-born water and electricity), and a great desire for urban life; leading to high youth rural-urban migration.

The above conceptualisation of rurality presents it as a social injustice to those living in rural areas and thus a preoccupying challenge to most governments. With over 75 percent of the world’s poor living in rural areas and with the figures on the rise annually, there has always been a justification for governments to focus on addressing rurality so that the quality of life in the rural areas is relatively conducive if not comparable to that of the urban centres. In Cameroon since the colonial period, the improvement of education in the rural areas has always been seen as one of the major priority areas of addressing rurality. However, different approaches have been adopted at different phases of its history with varying implications. The chapter’s aim is to present a historical evolution of how the various government policies have addressed rural education and their implications to rural education attainment. First I present the theoretical position, followed by a discussion of the colonial and then the postcolonial situations. In all, the discussion is based on the extent to which the principle of social justice is applied to the rural beneficiaries of education in the country.

**Positioning Rurality of Education in the Context of Social Justice Theory**

Social justice is a theoretical perspective grounded in efforts at circumventing provisions that seek to uphold ostracism and exclusionary practices which have permeated societies around the world (Hlalele 2012). In this chapter I emerge from the perspective that vast incongruences and inequalities between better-resourced urban communities in the country and neglected rural areas generally impinge on the provision of and access to education. In doing this, I advocate a distributive paradigm that sees
effective national education policies as those that ensure the proper distribution of education in quantity and quality as a social benefit to all. I argue that the adoption and implementation of national policies of development should not disadvantage a section of the population because they are called to live, study or work in rural areas.

The social justice perspective argues that international conventions, constitutional and policy obligations, and people’s requisite human rights permit individuals and groups to hold governments accountable for the progressive realisation of rights; the failure of which becomes social injustice (Spreen and Vally 2006). In general, theories of social justice advocate mechanisms used to regulate social arrangements in the fairest way for the benefit of all if one understands justice as ‘parity of participation’ (Hlalele 2012) to which I add equalisation or rationalisation of benefit. In this context, overcoming injustice would mean dismantling institutionalised obstacles (through appropriate policies and their effective implementation) that prevent some people from participating (and benefitting) on a par with others as full members of a social system.

While there is evidence of efforts aimed at addressing rural development in Cameroon, not every effort should be seen in the light of social justice. Three main justifications for addressing rurality can be identified: (1) harnessing rural resources for colonial and (after independence) national development; (2) combatting rural exodus; and (3) addressing welfare needs of all citizens – location notwithstanding. Only in the third strand can addressing rurality be seen as a social justice obligation. I attempt an explanation of this.

The first but not often cited reason for addressing rurality is the need to exploit rural resources. Most neo-Marxist and decolonial scholars hold this view. The rural areas carry a substantial percentage of Cameroon’s potentials needed for national development. These resources were the major justifications for colonial penetration into Cameroon’s hinterland and any feasible investments that were made (or not made) therein (Aka 2002). The British talked of “not ignoring the claims of the congested populations of Europe to share in the bounties of nature in the tropics, or … for those who have spent capital and effort in Africa to reap their reward” (Lugard 1965, p. 151). Equally, the French talked of *La Mise en Valeur*; putting into exploitation the rural resources of Cameroon to
counterbalance French commercial deficits and generate revenue for France (Ngoh 1987, p. 102). Today, there is no doubt that the rural sector continues to serve as an important source of government revenue and making rurality part of government’s priority agenda could be seen in these terms and not necessarily for the improvement of rural people’s welfare.

One of the most cited justifications for addressing rurality has been the need to curb rural to urban exodus. Even then, investments made in rural areas cannot entirely be seen through a social justice lens but in terms of limiting the embarrassments that migrants to cities often bring to the government’s image: urban poverty; slum life, crime, congested prisons, unemployment; disillusionment with government; support for the opposition; poor human rights image etc. (Sikod 2001). Before 1960, the rural-urban matrix in Cameroon remained at a low of less than 10–90 percent, despite evidences of rural-urban migration (Nkwi 2016, 2017). Today, the reverse is obtained: 44–66 percent. While the current average global urban population growth rate stands at 1.84 percent annually, Mbouda in Cameroon is the continent’s fastest growing city at 7.8 percent (Muggah and Kilcullen 2016). The government is getting very worried at this blistering rate of expansion, but even more about the effects that this brings to its image.

Addressing rurality as a means of improving rural welfare is the major and rationally feasible explanation for linking rurality to social justice. In Cameroon for instance, the rural-urban distribution of poverty currently stands at 86.5 percent for the rural areas and 23.5 percent for all the urban areas put together (Tah 2016). When this is pitted against the rural-urban divide which used to be 86:14 percent in 1966 and is now 44:66 percent in 2016 (Muggah and Kilcullen 2016; Karmiloff 1989), there is every indication that a cross section of Cameroonians are escaping rural poverty. Research has shown that all things being equal, most rural people would prefer to live in rural communities and small towns. But when they carefully assess the variables which account for a positive adjustment to rural life without excessive compromise to their lives, education (of children) and employment goals (Schenck 2004), they often decide otherwise. Such decisions equally justify urban people’s reluctance/refusal to work or live in rural areas.
By using the social justice perspective, I argue that addressing rurality should not focus on making rural areas more accessible for government socioeconomic exploitation or as a means of limiting the embarrassments that urban poverty brings to the government’s image (Fanbom 2014; Baye 2006). Addressing rurality should guarantee a rational and comparatively affordable life for rural citizens in equal measure to the investments in the urban areas – thus the rationalisation of welfare between the rural and urban settings.

As applied to education in this chapter, social justice is seen in the context of rural Cameroonian receiving their just due in educational provision alongside other social, political and economic benefits that come with educational attainment. This is what Coates (2007) has termed distributive justice wherein a people could receive fairness in the outcomes of the implementation of government policies. When seen as a challenge to governments, social justice implies the need to work to undo socially created and maintained differences in educational conditions of rural people, so as to reduce and ultimately eliminate the perpetuation of the privileging of better educational facilities and opportunities in the urban areas to the disadvantage of those in the rural areas.

By adopting the social justice perspective, I intend to achieve what Calderwood (2003) terms, ‘raising concern about sensibility’ which goes beyond surface empathic concerns and proclamations’ such as ‘government is aware of your plight’ (a popular message to rural people in Cameroon by visiting politicians and state functionaries) to ‘committing to structural and situational analysis of differences in needs, circumstances and allocations and using an activist orientation in concretely seeking redress.


The history of Cameroon is often discussed in phases and sectors. First there was a German colonial phase (1884–1916). This was followed by the 1916 British and French partition and separate administrations of the
German colony as Mandated Territories of the League of Nations (1922–1945) and Trust Territories of the United Nations (1946–1960/1). The third phase is the Independent government phase which spans the last 59–60 years. While the French sphere gained independence on January 1, 1960 as *La Republique du Cameroun*, the southern part of British Cameroons (British Southern Cameroons) became independent on October 1, 1961 after voting in favour of reunification with *La Republique du Cameroun*. The two spheres initially established two states: the Federal Republic of Cameroon (1961–1972) and then a United Republic of Cameroon (1972–1984). The name of the country *Republic of Cameroon* as it is currently, stems from a 1984 presidential decree.

The focus of the German educational policy in Cameroon was to ensure the harnessing of local resources for productivity. One of the principal attractions to the area had been the fertility of the soil. The Germans therefore focused on agricultural education and training. In the five year elementary school programme, a considerable time was spent on agricultural training. Further training in agriculture was available in the Victoria agricultural school. Although words such as adaptation were not used in German colonial education policies, it was clear that the focus on agricultural training was aimed at making learners fit into the agricultural environment of the time. The major economic activity that the Germans had set up was plantation agriculture for which training in agriculture earned Cameroonians jobs above the basic unskilled labourer ranks.

Despite the fact that the German policy of education encouraged agriculture, it also encouraged literacy in the Three Rs (Reading and Writing German and Arithmetic). The schools were few and located in developing areas where most plantations and administrations had their headquarters. This encouraged rural exodus and was seen by Britain as not being very relevant to the needs of the society. In 1925, the Resident of the Cameroons wrote that,

*The native product of the former* German schools has become too dependent on his European masters. His ambitions appear to be bounded by the desire to become the salaried clerk, teacher or employee, rather than to win wealth by developing the resources of his people and his country. (Southern Cameroons 1925, p. 57)
Britain, as administering authority, therefore extended the adaptation philosophy to the British Cameroons. The Hussey Plan, (Hussey 1930) designed to ensure the effective implementation of adaptation, categorised schools into rural and urban with rural schools operating four or at best six years of uncertificated junior elementary education. The curriculum emphasised agriculture, arts and craft, and religious studies (Southern Nigeria 1930).

The implications of adaptation were that by the time the British left the territory the state of education could be said to be in a dire situation in the rural areas. In the British Southern Cameroons in 1954, the year the territory gained partial internal self-rule, the school-age population (6–18 years) stood at 1,320,000 and the total school enrolment stood at 37,307 in the primary schools (United Kingdom 1954) constituting a percentage enrolment of only 2.8 percent. Of the total number of schools, only eight provided a complete eight year primary education course where the First School Leaving Certificate Examination (the ticket to further education and employment) could be written. Access to senior primary education and consequently secondary education was therefore a luxury to the children from the remainder of the 350 rural junior schools. In 1954 for example, there were 2954 pupils in standard IV in the British sphere of Cameroon (the highest attainable class in the majority of rural schools). Two years later in 1956 when this class was in the final year of primary school, the enrolments for the class (standard VI) stood at 1753 (United Kingdom 1954, 1956). A total of 1201 pupils (40.7 percent) had dropped out.

By 1961 there were only 882 students enrolled in the four existing mission secondary schools in the territory (West Cameroon 1962). In fact rural areas like Wum and Nkambe, which were far flung from the colonial headquarters, only had their first three candidates admitted to Sasse College in 1949, ten years after the college was established (Aka 2002). It is indisputable that the respective colonial officers who administered Wum and Nkambe divisions were quite aware of the dearth and urgent need for educational facilities in the two divisions, but as Rodney (1982) points out, in any colonial situation the development of economic and social infrastructure in the rural areas was never a humanitarian
undertaking and an end in itself; development was dependent primarily on the economic interest of the Metropole.

In the French administered Cameroon the situation was similar. The French adopted a triple approach to adaptation in education: (1) adaptation to the level of development of the child; (2) adaptation to the character and needs of the country; and (3) adaptation to the intention of the colonial master (France 1921) with three types of schools in view. These were the village schools, the regional schools and the Advanced Primary School *Ecole d’Enseignement Primaire Supérieur et Professionel* in the Capital Yaoundé (Gwei 1975; Fonkeng 2007). Like in the British administered sector of the Cameroon, village schools were mass schools, admitting children between 7 and 12 years for a four year uncertificated course involving rudimentary agriculture, hygiene, animal husbandry, reading and writing basic French. This was to fit the child into the rural environment.

The regional schools were situated in the main towns of each region and were to serve as centres for higher primary education offering the *Certificat d’Etude Primaire*, the French version of the First School Leaving Certificate. Although the village schools were to serve as their feeders, they were significantly disadvantaged. Distance to the regional headquarters limited access. Besides, the focus of the rural schools was not entirely similar to the colonial plans for regional schools. The village schools operated a curriculum in which most of the school day was organised around productive labour on school farms and gardens or in the arts and crafts. The regional schools, on their part, were viewed as centres for professional training to meet colonial junior level manpower demands (Fonkeng 2007; Gwei 1975).

Continuous government reforms in education from the late 1920s to the 1950s saw the development of secondary, technical and other professional schools in the French sector (Fonkeng 2007; Gwei 1975) but the general picture showed that village schools remained adapted to life in the villages. Education beyond the village was thus controlled and limited to the point that by 1958 there were 728 primary schools in the French Cameroons with 103,077 total enrolment. Of this number only 1608 pupils could make it beyond the regional schools into the then five secondary schools in the territory. Like in the British sector, the majority
of the school-going age population was trapped in the villages with a basic uncertificated elementary education.

The British and French desire to make the rural schools serve as training grounds for future village life was inhibitive and negatively affected the rural children, some of whom otherwise could have also excelled in higher education and thus positions of service to the territory. Such a system was continued despite the noticeable limited appeal it had on rural pupils and their parents especially in the Post World War II era.

After the Second World War, there was a significant expansion of the economy and society of Cameroon with development of semi-urban centres. This expansion came with implications of skilled and semi-skilled manpower demands in the administrative, missionary and commercial sectors of the colonial economy (Nkwi 2016; Aka 2002). There was a high demand for white collar jobs and indeed at that time the number of these jobs available to indigenes was to keep expanding for some time to come, considering the post-World War II heightened presence of metropolitan economic interests. These changes and the general effects of the Second World War (nationalism) made many disenchanted with the rural school curriculum for not meeting the demands of social change.

The end of the war had therefore brought a change in the perception of the functional meaning of schools; a means of access to sought after non-manual employment; what Kinsey termed conduit institutions (Ball 1983). To the rural kids, educated people radiated the ‘characteristics of a European’ (Katenga-Kaunda 2015) and education meant enlightenment, success, wealth, power influence and family pride; not agriculture. A primary weakness of the adapted curriculum therefore lay in the failure of its advocates in Cameroon to take into consideration the basis of attraction for the existing colonial schools and the concomitant distribution of the schools, especially in the post-war era (Ball 1983). By not providing a complete and uniform educational development between the rural and urban children and therefore fair competition and the satisfaction of eccentric motives for educational demand, adaptation became a vector for social injustice to the rural child.

By 1959, it was reported that “in the Cameroons, agriculture and handicrafts were the subjects least appreciated by the pupils and their parents” (United Kingdom 1959, p. 85). As Alaezi (1985) has argued,
recommendations for adaptation in themselves lacked elements for effective solution to the rural problems and the colonial office seemed to have superimposed their own values and strategies on those of African people. Relevance would have also meant including into the school curriculum only those problems that really needed solving, which may have led to the awareness that practical skills should not be pursued at the expense of academic skills for both skills were at this time equally important. This was the first dimension of social injustice in the curriculum. The second was that by focusing on rural life skills it kept them locked away from the social, economic and political changes that were taking place in the country. It did not make educational continuity feasible for the majority of rural children through a complete primary education. It tacitly limited secondary education and promoted the notion that it was not necessary for rural people meanwhile the dividends were visible, concrete and attractive.

Besides white collar employment benefits and social status needs, not being certificated rendered rural children useless in terms of actively participating in the winds of change; many of whom a decent education would have propelled to influential heights. It took education for self-determination for granted. This situation accounted for the gross manpower shortages and the near absence of a highly educated political and economic leadership in the country at independence (Ndille 2019). By 1959 there were 1471 posts in the Southern Cameroons public service with only 36 indigenes in the executive category; one that required at least a secondary school leaving certificate. In the French administered sector it was the same scenario. As of 1974, fourteen years after independence and reunification, there were still over 576 Frenchmen in the civil service in Cameroon (Ndille 2015; Ndille and Ramoupi 2017).

**Independent Cameroon: Addressing Rurality of Education Through Ruralisation**

Post-World War II developments and independence had established a marked difference between the rural areas and the urban centres. Urban areas had become very attractive to most youths; completion of primary
education, access to secondary education, white collar employment, social amenities (hospitals, electricity, pipe borne water, etc). These developments led to noticeable imbalances in the demographics of the country.

The first indigenous government reforms had led to a significant expansion of education. In the Southern Cameroons between 1954 and 1961, the indigenous government had engaged in a massive upgrade of 160 rural junior elementary schools to full primary schools in response to challenges of access in the rural areas. The number of schools increased from 358 in 1954 to 499 in 1960 (West Cameroon 1962). In the French Cameroons, initial government policy (1957–1960) had moved from adaptation to African rural environments to preparing pupils for secondary education and employment (France 1956). Primary school numbers offering the full cycle grew from 583 at the end of 1956 to 910 in 1960 (France 1956, 1960). By 1966, the primary school population in Cameroon had grown from 460,000 in 1960–61 to about 670,000 (Njong and Kamguia 2006).

These initial government reforms came with their own price. The upgrade of primary schools was not commensurate to the development of secondary education. Apart from a few other vocational centres, in the French sector of the republic at independence there were only five secondary schools, while in the British sector there were four. It became difficult for the schools to absorb the high number of primary school graduates flooding the towns who desired secondary education. Also, many who had spent years on farms after their initial rural schooling returned to complete their primary education; the majority going back after the age of 20 (Asanji 2010). Having passed the admission age into secondary schools, this group continued to see the towns as places for employment away from the farms. By 1965 the urban population had grown from 10 percent in 1960 to 18 percent. Because the secondary schools were not able to absorb a quarter of primary school leavers, the government was dealing with 90,000 unemployed primary school leavers in the major towns (Kalla and Yembe 1981).

By the mid-1960s, therefore, the independent government was faced with a new challenge; that of dealing with the unemployed primary and secondary school graduates and dropouts scattered in the major cities of the country. The growing urban population, youth urban unemployment
and the inability of the secondary schools to absorb all primary school graduates was blamed on rural exodus and the nature of the curriculum. It was feared that the school system would continue to turn out more graduates than the number of available ‘white collar’ jobs at that level. Meeting the developmental and educational needs of the rural areas became, once again, a major concern for the government.

Technical experts – the majority of whom were expatriates in the UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF country offices and Bilateral Technical Corporations like the German Service for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) were quick to blame this problem on the arbitrary expansion of the primary school system and the adoption of a literary curriculum (IPAR 1977). They called on government to reorient education to the needs of the local environment. Government therefore charged its education authorities with the responsibility of ‘finding ways of enabling children integrate and react better with their environment, adapting themselves to agricultural and artisanal professions.’ Such an approach was to translate learning into action, produce citizens who were not only full of knowledge and wisdom but also of skills and creativity, while not neglecting the acquisition of diplomas (Fomenky 2000). These recommendations were so similar to the adaptation philosophy of the colonial period that parents became apprehensive that the government “was swapping six for half a dozen” (Ndille 2015).

Like adaptation, it was erroneously assumed that ruralisation would “keep the primary school leaver on the land” in order to stop their gravitation to town (Tambo 2000). Convinced therefore, the second five year plan, launched in 1966, made mention that “the purpose of education was that of developing the individual and preparing him to assert his place in the society in which he lives” (Fomenky 2000). As a curriculum policy in Cameroon,

Ruralization, meant that the curriculum of schools, particularly those in rural areas, should be geared to the development needs in rural areas. The curriculum should be designed in a way as to ensure that the children acquire skills, attitudes, knowledge and predispositions that would enable them contribute positively in the task of rural development. (cited in Tambo 2000, p. 156)
By its definition, the policy offered a dual perspective of education and consequently a dual orientation of adult life for rural and urban children. It also meant that there was no problem with the curriculum being dispensed in the urban areas which also contributed to producing the high number of unemployed primary school leavers. Apart from the teachers produced in the conventional training schools, the policy required an appropriately specialized teacher living as a school master in a village … and engaging with his pupils in many of the ordinary village occupations. His/her activities were to be reflected throughout the country-side in matters of his facilitating health, agriculture and minor industries. (Ndille 2014)

This led to the creation of a special teacher training programme oriented towards the rural school setting, *Ecole Normale d’Instituteurs de Plein Exercice a Vocation rurale* (ENIR), in 1967.

Apart from training a special kind of teacher, the policy also required a new curriculum, syllabuses, schemes of work and learning resources adapted to the rural environment. This led to the transformation of ENIR to an Institute of Rurally Applied Education known in French as *Institut de Pedagogie Appliquee a Vocation Rurale* (IPAR) in 1969. This was to serve the Francophone subsystem of Education. The Anglophone subsystem was established in Buea in 1974. IPAR was to serve as a research institute to study the best ways of implementing ruralisation of education. It was given the elaborate mandate to draw up new primary school syllabuses and produce all the instructional materials for both teacher training and primary schools (IPAR 1977).

To complement ruralisation, the government adopted ‘the Green Revolution’; a national policy that made agriculture a major state priority in 1973. A year later the president made it an integral part of the educational policy of the country by emphasising that:

> the school of today … should not concern itself with producing bureaucrats and technocrats for whom outlets are steadily dwindling. It should draw young pupils’ attention to the many opportunities open to them in the rural areas. In an essentially agricultural country, it is important that we must tie intellectual training to manual activities if the environment is to be effectively transformed. (IPAR 1977, p. 7)
Each of the IPAR projects was created with four sections namely: Environmental Studies (also known as the Agricultural Section), Language Section, Mathematics, and Village Technology (otherwise known as Intermediate Technology). The four sections were expected to work out research strategies for the ruralisation of their curriculum contents. The mathematics section proposed a tentative syllabus in which “the Cameroonian child was to acquire a sound mathematics competence based on an involvement with real rural life situations. The English language section suggested the incorporation of adequate local content with appropriate indigenous vocabulary and structures”. The Agricultural studies section aimed at providing the knowledge and techniques to become aware of the problems and changes taking place in one’s environment with a view to improving it. The Village Technology team developed a programme of crafts activities relevant to the needs of individuals and the different communities and regions (IPAR 1977).

Evidently, what came out of the work of IPAR was a complete repeat of the adapted rural school system of the colonial period. No sooner had those appointed to carry out ruralisation settled for work than resistance to the whole reform began to grow from murmuring to open and bound opposition. In fact, as early as 1969 when ENIR was transformed to IPAR Yaoundé, its report for that year noted the apparent hostility to the IPAR project and the scepticism that many people entertained about its possible success (IPAR 1976). The government did not take this seriously but it proved to be an early sign that ruralisation as an educational policy was headed for a rough road for being biased against rural schools.

For the first generation of white collar workers such as civil servants and entrepreneurs who owed their rise to power positions to the fact that they had gone beyond the rural school, few of them were anxious to see their children receive an education different from what they had received back then, and worse still an education which would return their children back to the land from which they themselves had escaped (Kalla and Yembe 1981). Vehement opposition also came from the rural folks who saw in the innovation an attempt to condemn their children to a life of hardship from which they were hoping only the school could save them as it had done to the urban elites. From 1945, bookish education followed by academic secondary and higher education had become the most
desirable type of education for the people because it provided a ladder to an altogether different world of increased financial and enhanced social status. It was felt that ruralisation would not offer such opportunities.

The same opinion reigned within the educational sector itself. Teachers, who constituted the largest part of the elite class in Cameroon, criticised the new role they were expected to play under the IPAR reforms, maintaining that their job called them to serve as classroom actors not agricultural extension workers – the new role the reform aimed to give them. In fact, just barely two years into the programme in Buea, the 1976 Annual report confirmed that there was a relatively low morale among the primary school teachers regarding this project (IPAR 1976).

The resistance to the reform not only demonstrates the futility of a system of education that insists on shaping the life of a sector of its population towards a particular future just because they live in the rural area but also demonstrates the extent to which situational studies and field surveys informed the adoption of policies in Africa. Like IPAR, most of the development policies in Africa were born either out of mere sentimental political sloganeering or forced down the throats of African leaders by their western neo-colonial multi- and bilateral partners. Two studies conducted in the past on the IPAR projects – by Akoulouze (1984) and the National Centre of Education (MINEDUC 1984) – agree that the role the school was called to play in rural development was unrealistic at that time and that the non-utilisation of research in initiating the reform makes for alternative thinking regarding its origin.

Although there was sufficient evidence to justify rural exodus and youth unemployment, there was hardly any convincing empirical data linking these problems to the primary school curriculum. Therefore, in proposing ruralisation as a curriculum option to solve the problem of youth unemployment and urban migration, the government erroneously adopted an educational solution to a geo-economic and sociological problem. A major reason why many primary school leavers ran to the towns was the failure of the government to improve the general welfare of the rural person. Part of it would have meant providing a smooth transition from primary to further education and other types of employment around the rural communities. This was revealed by a field survey undertaken between 1968 and 1972 by K.G. Robinson who was serving in the
Ministry of Primary Education and Social Welfare in the West Cameroon Government. He had observed that:

If it is desirable to slow down the exodus from countryside into the main towns, this should be done by making the country-side near these big towns an attractive place to live in. In this situation priority for any post-primary education and industrial development should be given to the rural areas surrounding these towns. The further away from the towns children live with these facilities the smaller is their attraction to town. (Robinson 1972, p. 10)

When the IPAR project was adopted in Buea in 1974, many of the authorities called to serve there also confirmed Robinson’s findings that farming figured least on the list of job aspirations of most school leavers. Like Robinson, the 1977 IPAR Report emphasised that:

The problem of rural exodus can never be solved by a ruralized curriculum unless government action is taken to tackle wider social problems, notably the need to reduce the discrepancy in public service delivery between the urban and rural areas, and the similarly wide discrepancy in the financial rewards and status obtained by primary school leavers on the one hand and by those who complete secondary and higher education on the other hand. (IPAR 1977, p. 13)

The negative field impressions about a ruralised school system and the heavy opposition to it demonstrated once again the vainness of attempting to determine rural children’s futures through a dual orientation in curriculum development. Gradually, as the 1980s rolled to a close, there were signs that the policy was tacitly being abandoned. Foreign aid dwindled as experts withdrew. IPAR activities continued to be limited to office work, in-service training workshops and seminars. As most rural schools gradually returned to the 1963 literary curriculum (with revisions in 1968) which had all along been sustained in the urban schools, it was evident that ‘ruralization may well have achieved any other objectives except, ‘get the rural youth unto the land,’ its original purpose (Kalla and Yembe 1981; Abangma 1981).
Post-1990 Educational Policy Trends and Implications for Rurality of Education

As the 1980s closed, the government seemed to have come to terms with the resistance of the ruralisation education project and its social injustice outcomes. From the evidence of several research endeavours of that decade (Abangma 1981; Akoulouze 1984; Bude 1985; Alaezi 1985; Tosam 1988) government seems to have come to the realisation that no amount of agricultural, vocational or technical education will make a young African school leaver search for jobs in these fields when young people and their parents know that agricultural and technical jobs will not lead to high income jobs or prestige, or when there are openings in the sectors that offer higher income or more prestigious occupations. Ruralising schools, it was found, could not check rural exodus, create new jobs or change students’ aspirations. Alaezi (1985) even revealed how a significant number of youths who had undergone agricultural and technical training had abandoned the occupations and gone into alternative employment offering better opportunities in terms of pay and prestige.

With the rebirth of multiparty democracy and the challenges of the past decades, there was need for a new appraisal of the state of education. Reports from around the country revealed problems beyond the ruralised curriculum; the educational infrastructure was limited and in a very bad state, there was limited continuity in education in the rural areas due to the absence of rural secondary schools, there was a gross lack of logistic support and means to ensure effective administrative and pedagogic control, there was a dire shortage of teachers due to retirements and abandonments without replacement, and there were insufficient didactic materials (MINEDUC 1994; Fomenky 2000).

In all these dimensions, the rural areas were hardest hit and addressing them meant going beyond reinforcing a unique national curriculum to increasing the number of primary and secondary schools in the rural areas. It also required maintaining the dilapidated school buildings, recruiting more teachers, providing more learning resources and devising new ways of administrative and pedagogic supervision. A National
Education Forum was held in 1995 to deliberate on broader perspectives for education in the country. The forum recognised some of these problems (MINEDUC 1994) and a new law on education was passed in 1998 spelling out the directives for education in the country as a means of solving the problems, but most especially preparing the Cameroonian child to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century (Republic of Cameroon 1998).

The 1998 law, No. 98/004 of 14 April 1998 to Lay down Guidelines for Education in Cameroon, as it is called did not go beyond those prescriptions. Efforts to implement its goals led to the elaboration of a new national syllabus for primary schools and decrees from the Secondary and Higher education ministries on the orientation of education at those levels. Significantly, none of the elaborated programmes did segregate between going to school in the urban and rural areas (MINESEC 2013, 2014; MINESUP 2001).

From the year 2000, in line with government’s efforts to reach the completion point of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC), the government had to fulfil six key conditions which included preparation of a full Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and a satisfactory implementation of at least one year (point 1) and satisfactory implementation of key social reforms, including education (point 7) (African Development Bank 2006). The Education Sector Strategy Paper (ESSP 2005) prepared by the four ministries of education (Basic, Secondary, Higher, and Employment and Vocational Training) established policy directives and implementation strategies for education aimed at ameliorating the educational conditions in the country in line with the general poverty reduction plan that the state was preparing.

ESSP specifically planned to focus on educational development in the rural areas which had a comparatively far higher incidence of poverty. It mentioned the need to ensure access, reduce dropout and achieve universal primary education by opening new schools. School programmes, manuals and teachers’ guides were to be produced and distributed on time and the quality of pedagogic supervision was to be improved. The Paper talked of reducing the pupil-teacher ratio to 40:1 by constructing more classrooms, training and posting more teachers and improving their conditions by constructing 6000 staff houses in rural areas. Generally, the
plan acknowledged the challenges of rural education and hoped that these measures would directly bring changes to the rural sector.

Since the establishment of ESSP, there is evidence of the attainment of some short-term goals. In terms of the expansion of secondary education to the rural areas, in 2012 there were 2879 government secondary schools in the country. As of 2014, the number had grown to 3590 (NIS 2018). With the liberalisation of the entire educational sector, the percentage enrolment for secondary schools has increased from 25.45 percent in 1990 to 58.08 percent in 2015 (Index Mundi 2015). There are currently 18,135 primary schools in the country with an enrolment of 5,322,439 pupils, up from 3,851,661 in 2012 (NIS 2018). From a minimum of 73 percent primary school enrolment rate in 1996 to 87.4 in 2008 (UNICEF 2016), it has moved to 91.99 in 2015 (Index Mundi 2015). Because the policy targeted rural areas, it could be said that there has been a significant number of government schools opened in rural Cameroon and many more rural children are in school. A highly underprivileged region like the Far North, with 98 percent of its population living in rural areas had 85 government primary schools opened in one year alone. This figure is often compared to the mainly urban Littoral region with only six schools established that year (MINEDUB 2008), to show government’s focus on the rural areas.

A major constraint to the enrolment of rural children is the absence of an effective policy in the distribution of new schools. Decisions to set up schools are not always based on a needs assessment but rather on the goodwill of the politicians and senior government functionaries (Transparency International Cameroon 2011). Government uses the opening of new schools to compensate some populations for their allegiance. Rural strongholds of the opposition parties have been hardest hit by such an attitude. By building a significant number of new schools in response to political intervention, rural areas which need schools often do not get them.

Along the Kumba-Buea highway, sparsely populated Bombe is awarded a secondary school. A few years later, it is awarded a technical college. Rational thinking would have suggested one of these schools be opened in one of its more buoyant, densely populated and cosmopolitan neighbouring villages of Mbalangi on one side or Banga on the other. Children
from Banga and Mbalangi trek an average of 20 km daily to and from Bombe to attend school (Perspectives Kamerun 2011). It is not news in the area that Bombe got these schools by being the home of a senior statesman and for her allegiance to the ruling party while Mbalangi is getting its punishment for being an opposition stronghold. For similar reasons, a majority of the 85 new schools opened in the Far North in 2007–8 were reported to have been built in areas of little need (MINEDUB 2008). Generally, when one considers that of the 18,135 primary schools in the country, there are less than 6000 in the rural areas (NIS 2018), one can appreciate the extent to which the urban areas are favoured in national allocations.

Another area of concern highlighted in the post-1990 policy reforms is teacher training. The government adopted a policy of increasing teacher numbers by liberalising the sector and expanding the public system of teacher training from four government teacher training colleges (ENIAET) in the 1990 to 146 in 2014. From training 693 teachers in 1990, the output of Government Teacher Training Colleges (GTTCs) as of 2014 stood at 35,585 primary school teachers a year (NIS 2018; Tchombe 2000). The initial four teacher training colleges were located in the predominantly urban centres of Kumba, Nkongsamba, Yaounde and Garoua. The government’s decision to open the new colleges in divisional headquarters could have been seen as part of its policy of addressing rural teacher demands where constant shortages were reported (MINEDUB 2008).

Looking at changes in the general primary pupil to trained teacher ratio from 89:1 in 1990 to 72.6 in 2016 and that of secondary schools from 75:1 before 1990 to 47:1 in 2016 (Tchombe 2000; UNESCO 2016; GPE 2019), one is tempted to agree that the policy has achieved some results. However, when one looks at actual teacher availability in the rural areas, alternative conclusions are likely to be reached. For example, while there are about two teachers per class in most urban government primary schools, there are less than two government employed teachers in most government primary schools in rural Cameroon (World Bank 2012). In most cases, the only one is usually the government appointed head teacher. Of the 94,328 primary school teachers in the country it is estimated that less than 10,000 are in the rural areas (NIS
A rational distribution of such teachers would stabilise the pupil teacher ratio to the expected standard of 46:1. But in reality this is not the case. In the Far North for example, despite more than 85 new schools having opened in the past 10 years, the pupil teacher ratio currently stands at 104:1 if one considers only state paid teachers. In the urban areas like Douala, the ratio is 41:1 (World Bank 2012; UNESCO 2016).

Like the opening of schools, managing teacher distribution in Cameroon is plagued by policy inconsistencies to the detriment of rural schools. The centralisation of decisions on how to locate teachers across regions remains partly arbitrary and mired in political intervention. Nearly one-third of primary school teacher appointments are unrelated to total enrolment as rural areas with the greatest needs are not often those desired by teachers. Where rural areas are prioritised in teacher postings, less than 15 percent take up the posts and only three out of every ten that do effectively remain in their work station for the whole academic year (Mofortiah 2012; World Bank 2012; Transparency International 2011). In general, an annual average of 85 percent of teachers in rural areas apply for transfer or simply disappear after assuming duty; sometimes with the complicity of hierarchy. Consequently over 30 percent of the teacher distribution decisions (postings and transfers) made at the beginning of the year are changed at various stages in the academic year (Amin & Dubois 1999).

In 2012 in the Northwest Region, a typical rural zone, 500 primary school (regular and contract) teachers requested transfer and 175 transfers were approved. In secondary schools, 190 requested and 125 were approved. In the Far North, 172 requested and 100 were approved (World Bank 2012). The trend is often one way: from a village to a town or from a basically rural region to the more urban centres of the country. The coping mechanism for rural schools has always been to turn to the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) funds to recruit parents, primary school graduates or any educated youths. In such areas it is normal for such an untrained teacher to be responsible for two or more classes. While the ratio of government to PTA teachers is 85:15 in urban centres like Douala, it is 39:61 in rural areas in the Far North. The PTA teachers earn less than 30 percent of the salary of government teachers (NIS 2018).
Thus, the quality of educational provision in the rural areas becomes questionable.

Rural secondary schools seem to be affected in the same way despite the fact that secondary and technical school teacher training colleges have moved from two before 1990 to ten in 2018 (NIS 2018). General student-teacher ratios were 59.8:1 in 2013 and 47.3 in 2016 (GPE 2019). For the rural areas, they are as high as 79–83:1 due to few rural secondary schools and the limited number of teachers who take up duty. The majority prefer to live in the closest urban area and travel to their posts once a week. This makes for the estimated subject coverage of between 60-55 percent in the urban areas to 47-42 percent in rural areas (Mosima 2015). Science students in rural secondary schools suffer doubly. Fewer science teachers make it to the rural areas as they are in high demand in urban areas (Kendemeh 2016). This accounts for the lower syllabus coverage and thus lower quality of teaching.

The majority of rural secondary schools have no laboratories and 95 percent of science students in rural secondary schools write the GCE in science subjects without having been to a laboratory. Most have not seen a microscope (Ewange 2018; Kendemeh 2016). Where some equipment and apparatus have been supplied, they have remained in unopened boxes for many years due to the absence of an established laboratory, no teacher to use them or ignorance on the part of teachers on how to use them. This accounts for the very poor results in science subjects at the end of course examinations. Since 2003, science scores (including Mathematics at the GCE Ordinary level) have been at a low of between 19 and 25 percent but even fall to between 12-07 percent in the rural areas (Babila 2003; Ewange 2018).

These issues confirm the warning that the International Labour Organization gave that addressing teacher shortages in the rural areas by opening more teacher training colleges, producing more teachers and posting them to rural areas was “a narrow, negative deficit discourse” (ILO 2016). The organisation argued that the challenges of recruiting teachers and retaining them in rural areas are complex and recommended that a policy regime is needed for rural areas as a whole that assures teachers’ rights and responsibilities, improves working conditions and increases well-being. This regime, it emphasised, is beyond the educational sector.
Apart from creating new schools and posting teachers, the problem of infrastructure continues to be a crucial one for rural schools. Ninety-five percent of the primary and secondary schools in the rural areas are constructed with semi-permanent materials and learning is regularly interrupted especially during the over six months a year of torrential rains (MINEDUB 2008). The government tendency is to create the schools, appoint a head teacher or principal and leave the rest to the villagers to figure out where the school would be located, how it would be constructed, where the resources would come from and how the teachers would be obtained. At best, within a few years a two classroom block is approved after several complaints. Such contracts are usually poorly executed or abandoned. This accounts for the overcrowding in rural classrooms and determines the quality of instruction received by rural kids.

In terms of resource allocation, since the year 2000 the government has devised a policy of resource provision called Minimum Package, *Paquet Minimum*. Before then, schools used to receive funds from their respective ministries of education in Yaoundé in a trickling down fashion: to the regional delegations, then to the divisional delegations and then sub-divisional inspectorates, then the schools. This went well into the school year causing delays and inconsistencies in pedagogic practice. In order to enable the school to begin instruction as soon as the school year starts, the ministries, by this new policy, distribute a set of basic school supplies before the start of the year. While these resources may have been very helpful in meeting the needs of mostly rural schools, difficulties of access to rural areas delay the timely reach of the resources.

In most cases the resources are in limited supply and because of the bureaucracy in distribution and difficulties of access most rural schools receive their packages well into the year. It was also reported that in 70 percent of the rural schools where authorities accepted that they received the material, there was little or no evidence that the different items they listed were available and used in the schools (World Bank 2012). In the rural areas about 95 percent of the primary school children do not have textbooks. This is because their parents cannot afford them. Teachers therefore spend a lot of time copying texts onto the board (Suiven 2018).

Apart from the above challenges, rural kids are further disadvantaged in many areas of school life either due to the poor implementation of
education policy or the general developmental problems of rural areas. Only 22 of the 18,135 primary schools reported having electricity supply in the country and only 49 boast of portable water in 2014 (NIS 2018). Considering that only 20 percent of rural Cameroon is projected to be electrified by 2020 (ADF 2009), the state of rural schools in the acquisition of such basic needs can be appreciated. Generally rural schools suffer from between zero to two percent provision of toilets, bookstores, and first aid boxes as well as appropriately constructed and diversified sports facilities (other than football and handball pitches) (NIS 2018).

With such a state of affairs, there is no doubt that the quality of rural education in Cameroon would leave a lot to be desired. Besides, the probability of school completion and the level of competitiveness with the urban graduates is lower for the rural child than that the urban one. For instance, the overall primary enrolment in 2016 stood at 87 percent... 55 percent in the urban areas and only 20 percent in the rural areas. The overall survival rate to the last primary grade was 86 percent. For the urban areas it was 57 percent and 35 percent for the rural areas (UNESCO 2016). While there is a 52.2 percent progression into secondary schools in the urban areas, it was only 18 percent in the rural areas (Open Data for Africa 2019). These figures have deteriorated after the 2016 crises in the Anglophone speaking regions in Cameroon where almost all schools in the rural areas and urban peripheries have shut down. For the secondary schools, there was a 44.2 percent participation rate (gross), 48 percent lower secondary completion rate in the urban areas but only 13 percent in the rural areas (GPE 2019).

Furthermore, the general tendency in the country in which most employers prefer graduates from prominent urban government and reputable colonial mission schools puts the rural graduate at a disadvantage; their results notwithstanding. Research demonstrates that while graduates from rural primary and secondary schools have a stronger moral-ethical self, employment preferences for urban school graduates generally include employer satisfaction with curriculum coverage, higher self-criticism and social self, city smartness, better knowledge of ICT, and better communication skills (Trentham and Schaer 1985). These, they argue, are better acquired in urban schools. In fact, rural graduates are often given a poor socioeconomic status; are seen as having gone through
a poorer educational system and curriculum, and are believed to belong to weaker social connections than those from urban schools (Harry et al. 2018). Schools in the rural areas are also significantly less likely to plan for training for employment (Owen et al. 2013).

With the above assessment, government has come to the realisation that the post-1990 policy of improving the educational sector in Cameroon through what Bude (1985) terms “the attractiveness of its system-stabilizing elements” (new schools, more teachers, some resources etc); while generally may have improved quality, access, retention levels and teacher supply, has not significantly addressed the challenges that rurality places on education. The lapses and inconsistencies in implementing this policy approach has kept government thinking of better ways of impacting rural education.

These reflections are also informed by research which has in the past few years suggested a new approach to development planning which is more likely to impact positively on education than previous approaches. In a study of the determinants of access to education in Cameroon, Ndeffo, Tagne, and Makoudem (2014) have shown that access to social amenities such as electricity as a source of light increases the chances of going to school for the urban child by 7 percent; while in the rural areas, the increment is about 10 points higher. Children living in rural areas whose schools are located about 2.5 km away from their house have a 13.5 percent chance of going to school in comparison with children whose school is located less than one km away. As for the city-dwelling children, these long distances do not have any influence on their schooling because of the large number of schools and availability of transport.

Ndeffo and his colleagues also researched household income as a determinant of children’s education. They found that generally an increase in one point of logarithms of incomes leads to an increment of 9 percent of the probability of children being sent to primary school. For the rural areas, this fact makes more impact as an increase of one point in the logarithm of incomes leads to a 22.4 percent increase in the probability of children being sent to school. Similarly, their study also shows that the probability of going to school for children of educated parents is greater than that of those who come from households with parents who are not
educated. These findings on income and level of education in Cameroon have shown that the odds weigh against the rural families.

Just like the above evidence, regional aggregation of poverty research in Cameroon shows strong inequalities among the various regions but most glaringly between rural and urban areas. The poor in the rural areas represent 61 percent of the population, but only 22 percent in the urban areas. Access to safe drinking water in urban areas is 75.6 percent but only 26.7 percent in the rural areas. While access to electricity is 46.02 percent in the urban areas, it is only 4.2 percent in the rural areas (Amin and Dubois 1999). Whether in secondary or primary schools, it is estimated that nine out of every ten children experience school attendance disruptions/interruptions with poverty-related reasons varying from hunger, having to assist on the farms/local markets or staying back to look after siblings (Yafi 2018; Kendemeh 2016). For these reasons, poor rural children are five times more likely to be out of school than children from rich households (UNESCO 2010).

The above findings are not only evidence of a lower quality of life for rural people, but a significantly lower quality of education for their children even where the curriculum dispensed is the same nationwide. It also accounts for the continuous rural to urban migration. The findings also made the government realise that independent ministerial departments would not achieve much if left on their own but that by acting collaboratively, they impact significantly on one another. While they were each called upon to review policies, and adopt implementation strategies that would lead to efficiency, they were required to move towards collaborative and holistic approaches to development as a new possibility in initiating marginal improvements and reforms. This led to the elaboration of seven sectorial frameworks for development, each involving a group of ministries with common interests and areas of functionality. Among the seven sectors identified were rural development, infrastructure and education.

The document (GESP 2010) talks of (1) aligning (each) sector strategies to global specifications (for example the Sustainable Development Goals), (2) enhancing intra-sector coherence, (3) promoting inter-sector coherence, and (4) implementing efficient budgeting strategies. While the infrastructural sector strategy identified as priority the maintenance
of earth roads and priority rural roads, the rural development sector stressed the development of agriculture of all types, improving work settings in rural areas, maintaining of rural roads, amelioration of socioeconomic infrastructure, assistance to community development and community management, sustainable management of natural resources, and strengthening the information and communication system in the rural areas (GESP 2010). The four education ministries which make up this sector outlined 18 programmes of equal importance, amongst which mention was made of universal access, effective teacher distribution, programmes revision, a rational and equitable resources allocation, infrastructural improvements and new supervisory, accountability and management policies. Indicators for achievement and measurement and evaluation tools were also identified.

While confident that each ministry would increase output government, by initiating a holistic approach, has come to the realisation that educational change in the rural areas is beyond the various ministries of education and that it involves other sectors playing their part in making the rural areas attractive for livelihood, just like the urban areas. By addressing such issues as rural infrastructural development, agricultural improvement, social service provision, expansion of information and communication technology, rural electrification, road infrastructure development, healthcare and education, this holistic approach it is believed would not only divert attention from the urban areas but equip the rural pupil with cognitive, effective and hands-on skills at the same level of efficiency as their urban counterparts.

**Conclusion**

Questions relating to the proper distribution of educational resources and infrastructure as well as the rational outcomes of participating in rural education vis-à-vis the urban areas have always posed a challenge for educational policymakers and implementers. It is true that people live in rural areas because they love living there. Others find themselves there because of work or business. However, social justice implies that for whatever reason a person finds himself in such milieu, their decision
should not negatively affect their (or their children’s) attainment of social benefits like education and life goals compared to how they would have been in urban areas. Social justice also requires governments as policy initiators and service delivery institutions to be held accountable for the equitable distribution of resources and benefits. When one part of the population is disadvantaged, social injustice prevails because state responsibilities – whether at local or national levels – should be geared towards undoing differences in material conditions of living.

In my survey of government policy on rurality of education since the colonial days, I have shown how the dual systems of education for rural and urban pupils promoted in policies of adaptation and ruralisation encouraged inequality of access and opportunities and thus a manifestation of injustice. Such a system only helped in reproducing and consolidating the inequalities that already existed in the country between rural and urban areas. I have also shown how the post-1990 policy of improving education in the rural areas through educational infrastructural development, resources allocation, and teacher supply did not significantly impact on the quality and quantity of education dispensed in the rural areas because other variables, not necessarily within the control of the education departments, play a significant role in the attainment of quality education in rural areas.

With such findings, it is possible to conclude that addressing the challenges of rurality of education and by extension rurality of any sector of life goes beyond the confines of that sector and that independent departmental efforts, as in the work of the various ministries of education in Cameroon, should only be seen as part of a general scheme of accelerators whose impact can be meaningful only if taken in conjunction with the other expected changes in the rural society which should enhance its general transformation. As with Vision 2035, rational and inter-sector balanced government policies and their implementation in rural areas are central to social justice and in this case a rational benefit of national educational provision for rural and urban children alike. This also takes into consideration the fact that various levels of government (from national to municipal to village management committees) are involved in policy implementation. At whatever level of government, the holistic approach promises a better future for education in rural Cameroon.
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Part II

Rurality, Inclusion and Access
Conceptions of Rurality, Diversity and Inclusion

Rurality may be conceived of in two different ways. Halfacree (2006) and Cloke (2006) posit physical and representational understandings of rurality. In the physical perspective, rurality is viewed as specific locations with low population densities and which rely on natural resource economies (Cloke 2006). According to Brann-Barrett (2015) this view is limited by its reliance on an urban-rural dichotomy in which the urban is typically placed at the centre with the rural as ‘the other’. She cites Corbett and White (2014) who also point out that this ignores the interconnectedness of rural and urban spaces. For example, technological connections enable rural relationships with urban and even global spaces. On the other hand, the representational rural is the imagined which Tuters (2014) says can be
used to signal deficiency and backwardness or to designate communitarianism, nature and tradition. Pini, Carrington and Adie (2014) indicate that these imaginations of the rural often prescribe what the rural must be, while preventing it from speaking back. They argue for adopting understandings of \( 0 \) that recognise it as multifaceted, complex and fluid. Overly deterministic and unidimensional representations of the rural are informed by Western Cartesian binary thinking which also informs the scientific determinism on which the medical model of Special Needs Education is grounded.

In Special Needs Education, the medical model relies on binaries as a way of defining and identifying human characteristics (Baglieri and Knopf 2004). Such thinking is informed by the construction of the biological ideal of the ‘normal’ privileging the normal body and mind over ‘abnormality’. This gives rise to a deficit approach to education. According to Engelbrecht and Ekin (2017), a deficit approach to educating children with disabilities was rooted in the belief that their differences were not only predictive of learning difficulties, but to be expected. They point out that the legacy of separate educational provision that emphasised individual difficulties or special educational need for children with disabilities originated in countries of the North and was transferred to countries of the South. This supports Devlieger’s (1998) finding that the practice of grouping people together in a recognisable category as ‘disabled’ can be traced back to the histories and cultural contexts of specific Western societies. He pointed out that a term such as ‘disability’ does not have ready equivalents even in some European languages such as French. Disability is a social construct, not an objective condition (Armstrong and Barton 1999; Trent 1994) which implies that the social context helps define disability and related concepts. Chimedza (2008) cited Tugstad and White (1995) as pointing out that anyone attempting to universalise the category ‘disability’ runs into conceptual problems, because such definitions take into account the social and cultural contexts.

The individualistic medical approach to disability is rooted in the work of sociologist Talcott Parsons and his discussion of sickness and sickness-related behaviour (Barnes 1998; Barnes and Mercer 2005). Parsons is reported to have argued that the ‘normal’ state of being in Western society is good health, and therefore sickness, and by implication any
impairments, are deviations from ‘normality’. Foucault said that medicine dictates what constitutes normal, thereby identifying a whole class of deviant individuals.

This institutionalisation of the norm, which Foucault called normalisation, indicates the pervasive standards that structure and define social meaning (Feder 2013). The medical model embodies what Parsons called the ‘sick role’ which is a view of clients as patients exempt from normal social roles as they are not responsible for their condition. In this view people with disabilities are defined as pathological and in need of cure. The International Classification of Disease ICD-10-CM (WHO 2014) and the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (APA 2013) provide common terminology for medicine and psychiatry respectively, and so a comparable taxonomy of disability was deemed necessary to systematise documentation. The International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps (ICDH) (WHO 1980, 2002) are documents published to accompany the ICD to document the consequences of disease and injury. Central to the ICDH classification is the understanding that impairment denotes any loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological or anatomical structure or function, while disability is any restriction or lack (resulting from impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being. In this thinking, handicap is a disadvantage for any person resulting from impairment or disability that limits or prevents the fulfilment of a role that is normal for that person depending on age, sex, social and cultural factors. This means that disease can lead to impairment which can lead to disability which in turn can lead to handicap.

Views on difficulties in learning that are associated with the ‘impairment-to-disability-to-handicap’ process as described above have been challenged by international developments. These developments include the start of the normalisation movement in Scandinavian countries (Engelbrecht and Ekin 2017). Developed by Nirje and Wolfensberger in the 1960s and 1970s, normalisation is a principle that aims for people with disabilities to experience normal patterns of everyday life. Initially interpretations of this principle resulted in the practice of deinstitutionalising learners with disabilities from special schools and integrating them into mainstream schools (Kumar 2012). Integration usually took one of
several forms which all sought to fit the child with disability into existing mainstream education. The focus of individually remediating a learner to fit into existing education was a hallmark of integrated education regardless of whether the child was full-time in a separate special class or part-time in a special class at a mainstream school. As a result of this individual, deficit focus, integrated education was viewed as based on a medical model that tried to fix the learner to fit an unchanging and unchangeable school system. The medical model was deemed to be inadequate as it did not pay enough attention to environmental barriers to learning. The model was criticised as imperialistic and hegemonic as it sought to erase individual differences and can therefore be viewed as a force for marginalisation.

An alternative perspective which took into account environmental barriers gave rise to the social model of disability. Engelbrecht and Ekin (2017) aver that the social model emphasises the removal of all forms of institutional and physical barriers to full participation in society in order to have equal participation for all through inclusive education. Aligned to Bronfenbrenner’s (1992) bio-ecological perspective, the social model strives to understand the complexity of the influences, interactions and interrelationships between the individual learner and multiple other systems that are connected to the learner. Bronfenbrenner’s perspective suggests that there are layers of interacting systems resulting in change, growth and development of systems and individuals within the systems (Swart and Pettipher 2011). According to Swart and Pettipher (2011), the perspective helps to remind us why the general challenges of development cannot be separated from the more specific challenges of addressing social issues and barriers to learning. They argue that it also helps to identify the protective factors that can contribute to resilience on one hand and the risk factors and barriers to learning on the other hand.

The upshot of Bronfenbrenner’s (1992) perspective is that education is grounded in a range of systems which need to be understood. Understanding of these systems would result in proper management which fosters inclusive education. Inclusive education entails changing the school to accommodate the needs of all learners. Instead of attempting to change the learners to suit the school, as is the thrust under integrated education, inclusive education focuses on changing the school.
The system of education changes (e.g. mainstream schools change approaches) and individuals are developed (e.g. teachers acquire additional skills or improve attitudes) in order to accommodate the diversity of learners. Under the social model, therefore, there is a clear shift from focusing on changing the learners to fit existing systems.

In addition, the social model implies that inclusive education no longer focuses solely on those with disabilities but on the whole range of diversities that exist in classrooms. This is because the focus is no longer just on innate inabilities but on environmental barriers to learning. Environmental barriers to learning can be structural, physical, social or economic. Structural barriers could be buildings that are put up without considering the ability of all to access them. Physical barriers relate to natural terrain which may be difficult to negotiate. Social barriers may relate to attitudes and beliefs that are not conducive to learning. According to Prinsloo (2011), socioeconomic barriers to learning are, for instance, in the form of poverty, disintegration of family life and abuse of children or language and cultural differences. Inclusive education therefore covers the whole diversity range in the school population and how they interface with local environments. In addition, inclusive education recognises that the interface between this range of diversities and local environments does not necessarily have to result in barriers to learning. This is because more often than not the environment has assets which can be used to support learning.

It is however important to note that environmental assets are not deployed indiscriminately for all diversities as some diversities may be deemed inappropriate depending on local norms, values, beliefs, political and legal systems. This means that particular cultures and contexts determine what to include or exclude by determining whether specific aspects of diversity are acceptable for support or not. As Dyson (1999) and Chimedza (2008) assert, inclusion is not a monolithic concept because the various contexts determine different constructions of the theory and practice of inclusive education. For example South Africa, which is viewed by Engelbrecht and Ekin (2017) as taking inclusive education within a wider equity agenda for all students based on a rights-based framework, is one of the few African nations which recognises homosexuality as a legitimate aspect of diversity. The special educational needs
of gays, lesbians and transgender learners are therefore recognised in the South African context. However, in much of the rest of Africa, including Zimbabwe, homosexuality is illegal and therefore educational programming cannot legitimately accommodate any needs arising without violating the law. Similarly, unlike in many Western countries, polygamous marriages are legal and legitimate in many parts of Africa. In African countries, therefore, the educational needs of children from polygamous unions are legitimate aspects of diversity that need to be accommodated. These illustrations support Engelbrecht and Ekin’s (2017) observation that there are a variety of inclusions that depend on the cultural-historical context and developmental phase of a country. Far from focusing only on disability, inclusive education now deals with diversities as generally accepted within specific societies. Generally therefore, this foregrounding of society has resulted in a global shift to the social model of diversities, disabilities and inclusive education. This social model focus resonates with Afro-centric, Ubuntu-based models of inclusivity.

Ubuntu and Inclusivity

There is a relatively unexplored relationship between Ubuntu and inclusive education. Ubuntu is the African philosophy of life which has precolonial foundations. Mukuni and Tlou (2018) explain that the word ‘ubuntu’ is derived from the African word ‘muntu’ which means human being and so ubuntu means qualities of humanness that promote harmony among people. Mbiti’s seminal work (1970, p. 141) sums up the African view of the person espoused in ubuntu thus: “I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am.” Menkiti (2000, p. 197) explains this as implying that

… it is in rootedness in an ongoing human community that the individual comes to see himself as man, and it is by first knowing this community as a stubborn perduring fact of the psychophysical world that the individual also comes to know himself as a durable, more or less permanent, fact of this world.
This is a fundamental belief of *ubuntu* which is captured as “*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*” (a person can only be a person through others) (Mbigi and Maree 1995). Edwards, Makunga, Ngcobo, and Dhlomo (2004) explain that *Ubuntu* in essence means being honest, accommodative, sharing, saving life at all costs and respecting young and old. Nussbaum (2003) adds that *Ubuntu* is the capacity to express compassion, reciprocity, dignity, harmony and humanity in the interests of building and maintaining community. These key tenets of *ubuntu* which emphasise that one must respect the dignity of the diversity of fellow human beings are foundational for inclusive education.

The *ubuntu* philosophy of life advocates embracing others through whom one sees oneself and it fosters unconditional acceptance of diverse people, including those with disabilities. Menkiti (2000, p. 173) opines that

… whereas most Western views of man abstract this or that feature of the lone individual and then proceed to make it the defining or essential characteristic which entities aspiring to the description ‘man’ must have, the African view of man denies that persons can be defined by focusing on this or that physical or psychological characteristic of the lone individual. Rather, man is defined by reference to the environing community.

Implied in this sentiment is the key issue of not focusing and privileging any innate features of the individual but rather placing emphasis on the social rites of incorporation in communities. It is these *ubuntu*-based rites of incorporation which are the bedrock of inclusive education. *Ubuntu* is the foundation of many rural African cultures where inclusive education started in Africa. The next section uses Zimbabwe as a case to explore inclusive education’s rural beginnings, how inclusion was taken to urban centres and how its rural-based, *ubuntu* ideals are currently being marginalised.
The precolonial tenets of communalism and egalitarian team-spirit espoused in *Ubuntu* are arguably better preserved in rural rather than urban Africa. This idyllic and romantic view of rurality as relatively communitarian, natural and traditional (Tuters 2014) is contestable, but logical. It is logical because in Africa modernisation and industrialisation have been associated largely with urban areas and migration to these areas which has resulted in breakdown of the traditional, extended family unit and its values of *Ubuntu* in urban areas. The dangers stereotypically associated with urban areas such as a violent drug culture, high crime, failing school systems and difficulties trying to ensure children are safe (Brann-Barrett 2015) have not penetrated rural areas as easily. In Zimbabwe, it is in rural areas that inclusive education for learners with disabilities had its formal, humble beginnings as special education in separate, special institutions.

Prior to colonisation in 1890, education was largely informal and based on the principles of *ubuntu* in Zimbabwe. Inclusivity was attained through the rites of incorporation such as those of initiation at puberty, before becoming a full person in the eyes of the community. This precolonial harmony that existed between diverse members of the community was disrupted by colonisation. Devlieger (1998) supports this position through his finding that specific Western societies grouping people together into a recognisable category as disabled brought colonial languages that introduced the term ‘disability’ to African languages which then took their term for physical disability and generalised it to various impairments. Many impairments are unlikely to have been considered disabilities as the members could contribute economically in precolonial, agricultural society. Therefore, colonisation not only disrupted the harmony that existed among diverse members but also ignored the benefits of communal education alongside one’s peers. Colonial disruption created dual systems of formal education.

For example, for almost a century up to independence in 1980, a dual system of education existed in colonial Zimbabwe, one for Blacks and the
other for Whites (Nziramasanga 1999). These two systems derived from the socio-political philosophy of racial discrimination which was legally and rigorously enforced. Education for Blacks was provided by Christian churches in mission schools. This scenario in general education has parallels in the development of education for children with disabilities who were educated in schools separate from those of non-disabled peers in Zimbabwe. Formal education of children with disabilities in Zimbabwe, which was traditionally called Special Education and is now called Special Needs Education, has had a long rural history stretching from the establishment of the pioneer special schools at mission stations.

A special school for the blind was founded at the Dutch Reformed Church’s Chivi Mission in 1927 near Masvingo (at that time Fort Victoria). The manner in which this first school was founded could cast some light on the treatment of children with disabilities in the period leading up to colonisation in 1890 and beyond. Addison (1986) told the story of how, during a drought in 1915, a woman was driven away from home for her refusal to obey her husband’s orders to drown their blind child in a nearby river because the boy was viewed as a burden. She took refuge at Chivi Mission with her nine-year-old blind son, Dzingisai (literally meaning ‘chase away’). Although the reverend’s wife had no expertise to teach the blind child Braille, she responded to her husband’s suggestion that she should teach Dzingisai by saying she would try. “I will try” became the motto of that first special school which was subsequently named after her. This story of the opening of the Margaretha Hugo special school for the blind would seem to suggest that in the not-too-distant past in Zimbabwe, conditions for children with disabilities resembled those that the international literature calls the era of extermination (Hallahan 1986; Scheer and Groce 1988). It shows that not all rural communities were uniformly informed by ubuntu in their relations with people with disabilities. It is also clear that the colonial establishment of a special school was based on Christian charity. The pattern of charity repeated itself in the subsequent establishment of the later residential special schools (Peresuh and Barcham 1998) with a special school for the deaf established at Loreto Mission in 1927 (Hlatywayo 2018) and another at Pamushana Mission in 1947 (Musengi 2014).
The Dominican Sisters (Roman Catholic) established the first special school for the deaf in 1927 at Loreto Mission in rural Kwekwe but relocated to the suburb of Emerald Hill in Harare in 1979 to escape the guerrilla war of liberation. The school was renamed after the suburb of this city. The Dutch Reformed Church established the Henry Murray School for the deaf initially at Pamushana mission in rural Bikita but later it was relocated to Morgenster Mission near Masvingo urban for logistical reasons. Special schools were founded in mission stations, whose thrust was to alleviate poverty in the rural areas. In development discourse, rurality is synonymous with poverty (Masinire and Ndofirepi, this volume). Similarly, disability has traditionally been associated with poverty. According to Kabzems and Chimedza (2002), the missionaries had a charitable link that provided the school with personnel, funding and equipment that served as an alternative source of attitudes towards children with disabilities. Churches and missionary societies traded on their charitable service as services to individuals were provided in exchange for adopting Christianity (Kabzems and Chimedza 2002).

Charitable service provision was based on the perception that the individuals with disabilities were deficient, poor and therefore deserving of Christian charity. Such a perception resulted in service provision within missionary institutions which focused on individuals and how to assist them overcome their shortcomings. This resulted in practices based on what has variously been called an individualistic medical, pathological or deficiency model in separate special schools at mission schools. These institutions largely ignored the assets that could be derived from the surrounding local cultures which they considered as pagan or heathen.

Educational service provision in mission schools filtered its understanding of disability through the pathologic model, believing that disability is a condition characterised by deficit. The condition of deafness illustrates this aptly. For example, Reagan (1995) stated that many believe that deaf people are, at least in a physiological sense, inferior to hearing people. Missionary teachers who believe this are likely to pity and patronise their deaf pupils whom they view as having a hearing loss or hearing impairment. They will naturally try to remediate the deficits, for example through teaching speech, speech-reading as well as using hearing aids. These programmes are followed so that the hearing impairment does not
result in a communication disability and handicap in a largely hearing and speaking world. In addition, such teachers are more likely to believe deaf people to be socially isolated, intellectually weak, behaviourally impulsive, and emotionally immature (Lane 1999). They assume that deaf people’s behavioural deviance coupled with the communication disability would result in the disadvantage of not being accorded appropriate social and economic roles. Such a handicap is especially possible in a society dominated by hearing and speaking. This personal tragedy approach (Oliver 2009) is characterised by perceptions of the dependence of disabled people and stereotypes which evoke pity, fear and patronising attitudes. In this approach the focus was on specialists identifying individual weaknesses and trying to treat them.

The understanding of disability as pathology migrated with the mission special schools into the urban areas where the schools relocated to escape the guerrilla war of liberation and for logistical reasons. However, as a result of the global observation that separate education did not appear to be producing the desired result, there was a paradigm shift to a more social focus dealing with barriers that all learners face in school in order to improve educational outcomes. This movement from remediating individual deficits towards a social model focused on enriching learners’ environments in order to enable firstly integrated then inclusive education. The higher population densities in urban areas allowed the special schools to start serving as resource centres for the integration of learners with disabilities into neighbouring mainstream schools. Exotic specialist resources that were in the special schools were viewed as essential for facilitating the inclusive education of children with disabilities in ordinary schools. As a result, since such resources were more easily available in urban rather than in rural schools, the urban mainstream schools were perceived as more inclusive than rural schools. This is because rural schools were perceived as largely underresourced and therefore facing many more challenges for inclusive education than urban schools, as is discussed in the following sections.
Challenges of Rural Inclusive Education

Upon gaining independence in 1980, Zimbabwe had to address the imbalances of the colonial, apartheid system of education. Despite spirited efforts to transform the educational landscape throughout the nation, rural schools still face more resource-related challenges than urban schools. These rural challenges are especially magnified in severely under-resourced ‘satellite schools’ in former Whites-only commercial farming areas on which African families have been resettled. The educational landscape is therefore very differently experienced in rural areas compared to urban areas.

Children living in rural areas may be disadvantaged in terms of accessing preschool activities because of the relatively long distances to the nearest schools. As a result of the low population densities that are characteristic of rural areas, preschool sites may be as far as six to ten kilometres apart. Children as young as four to six years of age cannot be expected to walk such long distances to access formal early childhood learning. This challenge is particularly pronounced in situations where the children have mobility-related disabilities such as visual or physical impairments. The young learners may therefore start to access formal education at a later age than urban peers. The terrain in rural areas is usually rugged and therefore impassible for wheelchair users and others with mobility challenges.

Even when children with disabilities do get to school, there is usually little or no accessibility support within the rural schools. Zimbabwean studies found that shortage of resources was an impediment to the implementation of inclusive education for children with disabilities (Mpofu 2000; Peresuh 2000; Mpofu et al. 2007; Chimedza 2008; Chireshe 2011; Mavundukure and Nyamande 2012; Musengi and Chireshe 2012; Chireshe 2013; Nyanga and Nyanga 2013; Chimhenga 2016). Other studies in Zimbabwe found that expenditure on special needs education is given low priority (Mushoriwa 2001; Mpofu 2000).

A range of resources, for example, teaching materials, special equipment, personnel and new teaching approaches were reported to be supportive and essential in the task of learning (Chimhenga 2016).
Particularly illustrative of how resource shortages impede inclusive education are research studies by Mpofu (1999) and Chimedza (2001). According to Chimedza (2001), parents of children with disabilities usually had problems carrying their children on their backs to school daily especially when the children grew older and heavier. Mpofu (1999) found that learners with physical disabilities attended general education without accessibility support such as adapted desks, classroom and toilet entrances.

In addition to these challenges, accessing out-of-school activities that promote twenty-first century literacies, skills and competencies may not be easy for rural learners because of underresourced rural environments. There may be no community halls, tuckshops, internet cafes, or sports fields for such sports as cricket, gymnastics, swimming, athletics, soccer, tennis and netball. In many cases there is an uneasy relationship between the community life and school education. Cloke, Milbourne and Widdowfield (2002) reported that poverty may be invisible when rurality is imagined as purified and unspoilt. In reality many villagers usually eke a living from subsistence farming and may fetch water for domestic use from rivers, springs and shallow wells. They may also use firewood for cooking, warming and lighting their huts after sunset. Some may have pit toilets, while others may not have any toilets at all. Many rural Zimbabwean children therefore grow up in poor homes and poor environments which impact on their learning in schools. Life at home is usually in contrast to life in the village school where scientific commercial agriculture is taught from early childhood education and where water from protected sources is used and toilets are mandatory. This contradicts what Hargreaves, Kvaslund and Galton (2009) call the modern myth of the assumed closeness of the rural school-community partnership. However, even within the rural schools, facilities for such things as menstrual hygiene may be inaccessible. Overall, the accessibility of some of the modern amenities available in the village school cannot be taken for granted for learners with physical and motor impairments.

In addition, the stability of staffing in rural schools should also not be taken for granted. There is usually a higher staff turnover in rural than urban schools. The primary factor for this has been cited as low teacher motivation and morale because of unsuccessful urban to rural transitions.
by new teachers, poor social amenities, heavier workloads and general working conditions. Mafa and Chaminuka (2012) confirmed the personnel issue when they established that there is a high teacher to pupil ratio in many rural Zimbabwean schools, which worsens the lack of resources. Therefore, to compound the amenities challenge in rural schools, there may also be poorer attitudinal problems towards inclusive education than urban schools. Mpofu (1999) found that learners with physical disabilities who attended general education had lower teacher and peer social acceptance.

Many rural teachers may be young, inexperienced and therefore unable to cope with diversity. Diversity among learners calls for skilled and sensitive teachers who will respond to children’s special needs (Avramidis et al. 2000; Cassady 2011). Many new teachers are concerned about having to work unassisted with children with disabilities, for example, in New York (Skipper 2006), Britain (Watson and Mccathern 2009; Odom 2000), and Hong Kong (Yuen and Westwood 2002). What may be largely unreported however is the possible marginalisation of children migrating from urban schools to rural schools. This phenomenon is akin to what Pini, Price and McDonald (2010) found, as teachers in a rural Australian school marginalised children from non-farming backgrounds because they coupled rurality agriculture and morality. The first author experienced similar marginalisation by rural schoolmates upon transferring from an urban to a rural school as the rural learners coupled a rural accent with morality.

African literature confirms the decisive role of the attitudes of society generally in influencing the inclusion of learners with disabilities. For example, the prevailing negative attitudes towards disability contribute to general bewilderment about inclusion in schools in South Africa (Engelbrecht and Green 2001), in Nigeria (Okuyibo 2006; Mba 1995) and in Kenya (Mwangi and Orodho 2014). As explained by Okeke (2010), these negative attitudes may be caused by considering as taboo, for example, having an individual with hearing impairment ascending the throne as Igwe (king) over his kinsmen. Mwangi and Orodho (2014) agree that the greatest obstacles to inclusive education are caused by society in the form of prejudices and negative attitudes towards those with disabilities.
African society’s generally negative attitudes and prejudices are also reflected in various stakeholders’ attitudes. In South Africa, a study by Engelbrecht and Green (2001) revealed that attitudes of South African teachers towards educating learners with disabilities have been put forward as a decisive factor for making schools more or less inclusive. Teachers’ negative attitudes towards including learners with disabilities may result from lack of knowledge and competences in pedagogy as well as managing challenging behaviour (Mulinge 2016), both of which Mukhopadhyay (2013) explains as lack of confidence. This literature above reveals that inadequate knowledge and skills by providers of inclusive education was a contributing factor to negative attitudes by the providers of inclusive education.

Zimbabwean studies revealed that most teachers had negative attitudes and therefore would not accept learners with disabilities in their classrooms. For example, more than 64 percent of teachers would not accept students with intellectual disabilities in their classrooms due to negative attitudes by the teachers (Barnatt and Kabzems 1992; Mpofu 2000; Charema 2005; Mafa 2012; Nyanga and Nyanga 2013; Deluca et al. 2014; Majoko 2016). According to Mpofu et al. (2007), the majority of studies on inclusive education in Zimbabwe have focused on the attitudes of school personnel towards learners with disabilities who attend ordinary schools. Such studies include Barnatt and Kabzems (1992), Hungwe (2005) and Maunganidze and Kasayira (2002). Fewer studies have considered the attitudes of the learners themselves (e.g. Mpofu 2003, Zingoni 2004) or the attitudes of families of learners with disabilities (e.g. Zingoni 2004). This is despite the observation that the modern Zimbabwean family is encountering many new influences which were not part of its traditional existence.

New influences which were not part of local existence result from globalisation. The global-local context affects inclusive education in rural areas as the rural areas have globalised in several ways. Pini, Carrington and Adie (2014) point out that rural areas have been profoundly reshaped as a result of globalising factors such as trade liberalisation, in-migration and use of migrant labour. In Zimbabwe, shifts in flows of labour have affected rural areas greatly. Firstly, this has resulted in absentee parents who work in more industrialised areas. These more industrialised areas
may be urban areas in the same country or even foreign countries. In many cases, working parents leave their young children in rural areas which are perceived as more affordable and secure. The resultant latch-key children may however not have enough guidance from caretakers or elderly grandparents.

Material or physical understandings of rurality may be perceived as having constraints to inclusive education due to rurality. While many such perceptions cannot be denied, it is important to note that many of them may not be accurate. This is because many of us view the material conditions in rural areas using urban-centric lenses and therefore see only deficiencies and liabilities where there may be strengths and assets. These strengths and assets are discussed as opportunities for rural inclusive education in the following section.

**Opportunities for Rural Inclusive Education**

Many of the opportunities with regards to inclusive rural education should emanate from indigenous knowledge systems such as the perceived stronger community ties of *Ubuntu* in rural areas. This is because each of the four concepts associated with inclusive education are central components of *ubuntu*. The four concepts are acceptance, participation, achievement and presence in school. These inclusive education concepts are central in that *Ubuntu* they are qualities of humanness that promote harmony among people. The *Ubuntu* dictum “I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am” implies rootedness in an ongoing human community, in this case, the school community. It is through being accepted, participating in and achieving in the school community that the learner with a disability comes to see himself as human. School communities therefore need to develop their capacity to express compassion, reciprocity, dignity, harmony and humanity in the interests of building and maintaining all learners.

Rather than abstracting this or that feature of the individual learner and then proceeding to make it the defining or essential characteristic for learning, the African view of man denies that persons can be defined by focusing on this or that physical or psychological characteristic of the
lone individual. Presence, acceptance, participation and achievement in learning should therefore be defined by reference to the environing community rather than any specific feature of the individual learner. This is because isolating, focusing on and privileging any innate features of the individual learner go against the indigenous knowledge espoused in Ubuntu. Indigenous Ubuntu knowledge manifests in proverbs that have a profound influence on views of teaching learners with disabilities. Kisanji (1995) explains that proverbs generalise a community’s experience, and Devlieger (1999) says they are containers of meaning on disability. Two disability-related proverbs are utilised here to illustrate and illuminate the more generalised understanding of disability in African culture. The first proverb is Seka hurema wafa (Laugh at disability after you are dead—implying that one should never laugh at disability as one can get disabled even in old age). Devlieger (1999) stated that this proverb reflects the existential insecurity of laughing at someone with a disability as anyone could become disabled one day. This proverb illustrates how Ubuntu places emphasis on the social rites of incorporation in school communities. Incorporation which entails making school communities accessible physically and epistemologically is discussed here.

The first level of incorporation relates to physical or formal access to schools. Children with disabilities need to be present in schools in order to be incorporated into the school community. Since anyone can become disabled at any time, all should therefore be catered for so that they can access schools. No one should be excluded by the way in which infrastructure is put up. Ubuntu therefore offers opportunities to utilise universal design strategies that allow all to use the school infrastructure. For instance, schools could put up ramps instead of stairs in order allow both physically disabled and non-disabled members of the school community to access buildings. The advantage is that most rural school buildings are single storey and so flights of stairs may be unnecessary. Designing buildings with all learners in mind obviates the need for making alterations to accommodate learners with physical disabilities as alterations to buildings are likely to be perceived as too expensive. To enhance formal access to schools, the regulatory framework should not focus on innate characteristics of learners as qualifications for access. Once children with
disabilities are present in schools, then the environment can be made accepting.

Acceptance of children with disabilities in schools usually relates to positive attitudes that acknowledge that they are different, but not placing a value judgment on the difference. Each learner is accepted irrespective of any difference that they bring to school. Rather than viewing individual differences among learners as problems, Ubuntu in rural schools provides opportunities for those differences to be used as resources. An Ubuntu-based proverb, Chirema ndochine zano, chinotamba chakasendama kumadziro (A deformed person is clever, he supports himself against a wall when dancing) demonstrates that people with physical disabilities are clever at finding solutions for activities that would seem difficult or impossible. The solutions that people with disabilities devise should be used as resources to solve related problems. This is particularly important in resource-constrained rural environments where creativity is essential in order to resolve problems. The important thing is that the people with disabilities need to actively participate in resolving problems.

Participation of each individual in learning is important for inclusive education. All learners need to be actively engaged in two ways. Firstly, each learner contributes what he or she can in both individual activity and collective or collaborative work. Secondly, each learner is actively engaged with information and no one is expected to just passively absorb information. TheseUbuntu-based ideas have firm support in constructivist approaches to teaching and learning on which inclusive education is heavily grounded. The underlying idea is an acknowledgement that learners interpret information and ideas through the experiences and theories that they bring to school. Urban-centric curricula would therefore appear to be inappropriate in rural schools. At the very least, the starting point for any meaningful teaching ought to be the rural experiences that the diverse children bring to school. Meaningful teaching and learning would enable effectiveness and achievement in rural schools.

Achievement within inclusive education entails supporting each learner so that they can achieve according to their potential. Support for each learner involves using Bronfenbrenner’s model to identify individual strengths and shortcomings as well as environmental assets and barriers. Once these have been identified, focus is on supporting through
maximising the potential for strengths and assets as well as ameliorating the shortcomings and barriers. In rural areas, environmental assets usually include a supportive extended family system. The assets of the extended family system need to be brought to bear on the barriers to academic and social development of learners.

**Conclusion**

This chapter explored how the particularities of rural communities can be considered in order to utilise meaningful indigenous knowledge to overcome perceived limitations by appropriately responding to diversity in rural schools. The chapter adopted understandings of rurality that recognise it as multifaceted, complex and fluid. The challenges of rural inclusive education were identified as revolving around the presence of children with disabilities in school. However, since the physical presence of children in school is only one of four concepts that are central to inclusive education, there are therefore many more opportunities than challenges for rural inclusive education. In this light, rural communities have many more unexplored, in-built strengths and assets that can be utilised for inclusive educational practices.

**References**


Okeke, B. A. (2010). They have dignity and worth and therefore need restoration. Enugu: University of Nigeria Press.


The Meaning of Social justice for Rural Education: Access, Participation and Achievement

Introduction and Background

A significant number of children in rural schools remain the most vulnerable due to issues related to social justice. Vast discrepancies and/or inequalities between better-resourced urban schools and neglected rural ones impact on the provision of and access to education. Research suggests that learners from rural/poor socioeconomic backgrounds persistently underperform compared to those from urban/more privileged backgrounds (Erima 2017). As a result, learners in these areas tend to underperform in public examinations, show reduced tendencies to progress beyond compulsory education cycles and contribute more to wastage indicators, such as dropping out of school. This negatively impacts on education as a space for social transformation. There is no question that physical access to schools is not as easy in rural areas. It worsens when the situation is compounded by the flooding phenomenon. The more these barriers to learning are not overcome or reduced, the less children in rural

G. Erima (✉)
University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg, South Africa
schools may benefit from education, which might generate lifelong failure (Pendlebury 2008/9).

I draw data from a doctoral study conducted in five rural and flood-prone schools of Budalang’i division in western Kenya. The study principally aimed at exploring the conditions which mitigate the achievement of epistemological access (EA). Being both flood-prone and rural, the study investigated the challenges these schools encounter, how they confront them and how they commit to delivering access to education to learners. The study utilised a convergent mixed methodological approach, based on 23 in-depth interviews, a questionnaire and focus group discussions (FGDs). Fifteen of these interviews were with parents and senior school managers at the level of principal and senior teachers from the five flood-prone primary schools. Eight other interviews were conducted with representatives of the sub-county education office, public health, disaster management, and the county government departments. A questionnaire survey was also completed by a total of 191 Standard Eight pupils from the five primary schools, in addition to FGDs consisting of ten pupils from each school under study.

The study confirmed nine core indicators that provide the essential rationale for EA: time-on-task, resources, teacher motivation, pedagogy, instructional leadership, parental involvement, school communities, the community/environment, and culture. Each category of respondents narrated captivating stories about their experiences in rural and flood-prone schools. In my analysis, I did not focus more on these narratives as my methodology. It has come to my realisation that there is rich data on the experiences of the respondents that can be presented to explain the meaning of social justice for rural education.

**Research Objective**

In this chapter, I present unfolding events that share the experiences of principals as leaders of rural and flood-prone schools in the schools under study. My interest in principals is that firstly, they were key informants in my research. Secondly, principals, it is believed, require the ability to manage and distribute leadership including empowering and motivating
Selection of Schools

Out of the six locations of Bunyala Sub-county, I chose two: Bunyala East and Bunyala Central, comprising six sub-locations, from which I preselected five sublocations. After careful screening, I selected four sublocations out of the five because they had all the categories of schools that I wanted, were in close proximity and were accessible. These would save me on cost and time without sacrificing the accuracy of the research. From the four sublocations, I selected five schools as follows:

A preliminary analysis of performance in these rural and flood-prone schools suggested that some schools perform well and the performance of others is average. There were other schools whose performance fluctuates and others who perform consistently poorly. Some schools are mildly affected by floods while others are severely affected. Each category was represented in my sampling frame, which spread across four locations, as displayed in Table 7.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Status about floods</th>
<th>Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School A</td>
<td>Slightly affected by floods</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School B</td>
<td>Affected by floods</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School C</td>
<td>Affected by floods</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School D</td>
<td>Affected by floods</td>
<td>Fluctuates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School E</td>
<td>Severely affected</td>
<td>Very low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Principals

Below is the bio-demographic information of principals, followed by their experiences as leaders of rural and flood-prone schools (Table 7.2). All five principals were male in the age bracket 48–50 years. They all had 25–28 years’ teaching experience and experience in leadership positions of between 6–15 years. (Bio-demographic information is only for descriptive purposes.)

Before I present the events of the narratives, I define the narrative approach to relate it to theoretical perspectives. Narratives are stories that portray personal accounts of experiences, with a beginning, a middle and an end. Narrative intentions are to share an interest in making sense of experience, of constructing and communicating meaning to others (Merriam 2002). They provide opportunities to reflect on emotions, contexts, influences and significant events related to people’s experiences. Stories offer ways to construct and reconstruct a sense of self over a period of time as they reflect a way of experiencing our lives (Botha 2014). The narratives I present below tell a story of principals’ leadership practices in rural and flood-prone schools.

Stories

Principal A in School A was a 50-year-old male with 25 years’ teaching experience, 12 of which were in school leadership experience and 3 years in rural and flood-prone schools. He was fairly new in the school, only served for 1 year. The number of learners in his school were 973, 481 boys and 492 girls. There were 23 teachers in the school, 18 trained and 5 untrained. This was a 59-year-old rural school mildly affected by floods.

Table 7.2 Principals’ bio-demographic information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age bracket</th>
<th>48–50 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>All male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching experience</td>
<td>25–28 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience in a leadership position</td>
<td>6–15 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience as leaders in flood-prone schools</td>
<td>3–15 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The principal agreed that though not flood-prone and partially rural, rurality did have an impact on learning in his school.

Well, the situation as you know has not been very good. At times children from these other rural areas are completely displaced from their schools. When they are displaced, they are relocated to nearby schools that are least or not affected and my school hosts such children. The challenges here are overstretched physical facilities, shortage of sanitary facilities, overcrowding in classrooms and overworking teachers. (Principal, School A)

Principal B in school B was a 48-year-old male with 27 years’ teaching experience, eight of which were in school leadership experience and five years in rural and flood-prone schools. He had been head in the school for five years. This 51-year-old rural school, affected by floods, had 18 teachers—all of whom were trained—and hosted 750 pupils (394 boys and 356 girls). The principal cited difficult access to schools and absent-mindedness of leaners, due to psychological effects.

It is difficult for children in rural schools to access school due to distance and family dynamics. It becomes worse when floods occur because it is very difficult to access schools and at times we are even forced to use boats to access schools given the low economic status of people. Being a rural school, the schools on high lands are used as camps for affected families. The difficulty in accessing school is aggravated because of these home shifts where parents temporarily settle their children. The kids then decide to stay with their parents in those schools as it is easier to stay than wade in the water to come to school. This affects the kids in so many ways and even psychologically. While at school, kids lack concentration, the pupil becomes absent-minded, they can’t even answer the simplest questions that you were discussing in class. Their minds are thinking of the difficult experiences and how their parents are surviving back at home, perhaps if there will be food at home etc.

Principal C in School C was a 50-year-old male with 26 years’ teaching experience, 15 of which was in school leadership experience and 15 years in rural and flood-prone schools. He has headed the 41-year-old rural
school for nine years. This school, also affected by floods, had 785 pupils (389 boys and 396 girls) with 16 teachers (12 trained and 4 untrained).

Principal D in School D was 50-year-old male with 28 years’ teaching experience, 10 of which were in school leadership experience, all spent leading rural and flood-prone schools. He had headed the 65-year-old rural school for nine years. This school, also affected by floods, had 446 pupils—215 boys and 231 girls—with eight teachers, all trained.

Principal E in School E was a 52-year-old male with 25 years’ teaching experience, six of which were in school leadership experience, of which four are in rural and flood-prone schools. He had been head in the school for four years. This was a 52-year-old rural school severely affected by floods, with 345 learners (180 boys and 166 girls) and was managed by 14 trained teachers.

**Time-on-Task**

Principal A said that a lot of learning time was lost, which they tried hard to compensate for through extra classes.

Most of these children carry the burden in their homes. Boys go fishing to earn an income to support their families. Girls stay home to do house chores and babysit for their mothers who are away trading in the market or on the farm. (Principal A)

Much as the school was willing to support children who missed school, there was a hurdle, according to the principal. “The only challenge is how to motivate teachers in my school to do extra teaching outside normal teaching hours.” The principal clarified that schools did not have extra funds for extra learning, it was entirely the burden of parents. They always persuaded parents to contribute to support teachers, but this was only achievable for candidate classes when parents struggled to support the school, knowing that without extra learning their children would fail exams. However, he said the support was not anything significant, perhaps just a kind gesture that teachers appreciated.
We don’t give them anything monetary, just something small to motivate them. You buy Mwalimu [teacher] something like a jug, a flask and they will appreciate. There is nothing like payment [in the form of money]. It is just out of their good heart that they are doing that [teaching extra].

(Principal A)

The principal in School B agreed that the effects of transfers to other schools minimised time-on-task.

As a principal affected by the situation, I inform my pupils of the intended host schools and then distribute some of my teachers to those schools. While some pupils would form new classes with the distributed teachers, others joined other pupils in the host classrooms. (Principal B)

He emphasised a lack of proper and adequate resources, overstretched facilities (e.g. toilets, classrooms, etc.) and a challenge in the management of a big crowd. Again, teacher distribution was not automatic, “because different subject teachers have probably been displaced and so learning cannot take place in those particular subjects.” When asked how they ensured pupils came to school in these circumstances, he said,

Access was not an issue, as pupils camp next to, or in, schools. We adjust our timetables to accommodate everyone. Mostly, it rains in the afternoon so the pupils come in the morning and leave by noon before it starts raining; and after floods, we create extra time to make up for the time lost. (Principal B)

When teachers were dispatched to the host school to find out learners’ progress, the principal acknowledged that,

There is no meaningful learning during floods, because some learners get into schools that were ahead, or behind, in the syllabus. We make sure that when they come back we go back to where we had left before the floods and begin there. That is when we come up with weekend programmes, new timetables i.e. coming to school very early in the morning, to begin lessons from 7 a.m. until 6 in the evening. Remember these children are very poor and cannot go a whole day on only one meal that the school can provide.
So we call on the county administration and school management to join in encouraging parents to return to their homes. But it is really upon the school to know where pupils are. (Principal B)

Yes, I look for time outside the normal learning hours [over the weekend] and accommodation for pupils. Even my Class Eights [Std 8 pupils] are putting up in the school at the moment. Special attention is given to Class Eights. Those are allowed by the school to board whether their parents are camping there [at school] or not. But from Class Seven to ECDE, they are allowed to join their parents in different camps until the situation normalises. This means I have to look for money from well-wishers to buy food for staff and some of the basic needs. However, the quality of education is affected because of a very big number of complete, and half-orphans whose parents died of HIV/AIDS mainly due to poverty and other causal linkages. Other common causes of parental death especially in the deep rural areas are drowning. This compromises learning time, forcing pupils to have to repeat classes that they do not like to do. They drop out of school to go do other activities especially fishing. (Principal C)

Principal D talked of challenges leading to poor performance and low standards as a result of non-school attendance.

This is partly because of the incomplete syllabus, or a lack of concentration in class. Transfer to new schools and loss of learning material also distracts pupils from learning, resulting in poor performance. Relating to poor performance are cases of repetition and dropouts. Transition to the next class is based on merit. Because of poor performance, mostly caused by a lack of learning resources and lost learning time, pupils may be asked to repeat classes. Usually some parents and pupils are hesitant to do so. Furthermore, those that repeat get demoralised and eventually drop out. Dropouts are also characterised by the disrupted socioeconomic way of life, where learners forget school and decide to go fishing to get quick money. (Principal D)

When children in impoverished environments learn to make money at an early age, they tend to believe education is not as beneficial.’

The many immoral activities happening at the camps distracted learners mostly leading to dropouts, early pregnancies and marriages. “There
is hardly quality time for learning before, and after floods. When the river bank burst, learning stops, as the society prioritises other issues” (Principal E).

**School Resources**

School A, which hosts affected pupils during floods, faced access and participation challenges.

We and those from other schools come to school, and parents pay some levy to counter the overstretched facilities, due to the high population at school. Senior teachers (S/Ts) organise for interim feeding programmes to ensure that children come and also stay at school.

Our school has created a variety of programmes. You know, during and after floods, the property is destroyed and families are displaced, making it hard to provide food for the pupils. So, when the community hears the school provides food, they will find a way to ensure their kids come to school. This being in the rural areas where there is abject poverty, we also provide shelter for the affected families; hence the place becomes home and school at the same time. (Principal A)

In School B, the principal just ensured that his teachers at least had all their meals at school.

Through my initiative, the school plants rice on a piece of land donated by a member of the school management committee, whose proceeds support the teachers at school. It is my way of keeping all teachers present at school always and also to teach for extra hours without a problem (laughs). (Principal B)

Just to mention, it was in this school that we interacted with a very enthusiastic staff over lunch. Besides, it was the best performing school of the five schools under study. School B had introduced these strategies, including boarding facilities, to ensure extra learning took place.
Reduced learning time affects the quality of learning. It is not easy to do homework in camps that have neither tables nor electricity. In fact, children are exposed to uncomfortable environments where they share one tent with the whole family. This is uncomfortable and definitely creates a climate of non-performance. Besides, there are many other ‘immoral’ acts happening in the camps, due to a lack of mechanisms to control adults in these camps. (Principal B)

We asked the principal if he believed a combination of (rurality) poverty and floods affected learning. “Yes, they affect learning, but there is a way learners can be motivated by things like feeding programmes, resources, and others. That is what I try to do and we excel” (Principal B).

Principal C stated that a lack of school resources/funds/learning materials was related to both quality learning and achievement.

The FPE [Free Primary Education] funds allocated by the government are not just enough. For example, this term we only gave each learner four exercise books for the whole term. Putting in mind that we have seven subjects that means they have to buy the rest of the exercise books. If by any chance a parent fails to buy the books, definitely the pupil is going to be affected academically. Some might even give up and drop out. Though the government supplements FPE funds, the major source of extra income in this community remains parents who endeavour to bring food to school, hire extra teachers through the BoM [Board of Management] and donate property (e.g. pieces of land) to schools to ensure that their children learn. In fact, 90% of parents in the locality are poor and mainly rely on farming rice, where most of the produce is consumed at home. Occasionally, the CDF [Constitutional Development Fund] comes in to put up classrooms or latrines after being consulted. I think I would have a bigger chance in the provision of quality education if I was not heading a rural flood-prone school where most of my time is spent looking for resources. I always feel I am not giving my school the right direction because the little money I get, I concentrate on how to maintain what exists instead of putting up something new. (Principal C)

In 2011, the school lost almost the entire stock of books. These books were stored in a higher place, but still got destroyed due to the dampness of the room (poor infrastructure). Money is given according to the school popu-
lation. Not because you are poor or not. Our population is low so we get money according to the number of pupils we have. On the other hand, destroyed classrooms with cracks and potholes bring about other challenges—jiggers being the most recent problem experienced in the school. This forces me to seek assistance, which distracts me from my normal responsibilities. I usually go to the Ministry of Health in the county to get some drugs. We use pesticides that we spray but they [pupils] still carry them [the jiggers] home. We clear them here then when going home they come back with them from home. Linked to jiggers is the issue of toilets or latrines. It is one of the biggest sanitation challenges schools in the area face. If you go to the latrines that we have, you will see maggots coming out. If by any chance they contract diseases due to that, the time the pupil will use to seek medication, that time they would be studying. If the latrines are in that condition, the pupils will avoid going there and it affects learning. In short, poor sanitation affects results. There is support from the government in the provision of anti-malaria drugs and medicines to treat water in my school. But there is evidently more donor than government support, where the government either delays in responding or completely ignores calls for help. (Principal D)

The government does not consult on needs, but strictly allocates funds per policy. It would be better to give slightly more to flood-prone schools to mediate the relationship between equal opportunity, quality learning, and capability. When parents come to take refuge in school during floods, they destroy desks, they even damage the classrooms because they cook inside the classes. This means most of the classes are used as homes for the displaced. It would be good to get more resources for repairs. Most resources are misplaced. For example, if you had money for constructing the library then it floods when you still have that money, it might be directed to something else that was not meant for it i.e. food. Schools lack enough resources and do not get help from the government. They, however, have to deal with other extra duties before floods. For example, for the preparation and reconstruction after floods, we work with the government and NGOs (Red Cross, UNICEF) to co-ordinate the provision of relief food, medicine, and nets to the people in school and camps during flooding. We also oversee the rebuilding and reconstruction of school infrastructures. (Principal E)

“We thank God for small structures and camping facilities given by the Red Cross or other donors.”
Parental Involvement

Principal A mentioned that though parental involvement existed in his school, it was mostly affected by the education levels of parents and poverty.

Those with a low education level (most of them are) do not care much about what their children are doing at school. They, however, attend school meetings, perhaps because I insist that it is important to understand how their children are progressing. One-on-one interactions with parents are not common unless they are for planning purposes or disciplinary cases. (Principal A)

Though parents did not follow up much on what pupils did at school, they were interested in the performance of the school in national examinations. This raises questions on whether parents attach importance to educational achievement, or just embrace the competitive nature of examinations in Kenya.

Most parents don’t value education. During planting, harvesting and even fishing season, we will experience a lot of absenteeism because pupils get involved in those kinds of jobs. I do take advantage of parents’ meetings at class levels to increase interaction with the school. Sometimes parents would need the intervention of the Sub-county administration to reinforce the importance of school-family partnerships. They have a perception that once a child comes to school, it is completely the teacher’s business and the fact that there is the FPE, parents believe that is enough. (Principal A)

As a principal, I do take advantage of the BoM to influence other parents to attend meetings. I noticed that parents do attend meetings after a positive result because they like to be part of success. Again, I involve parents in decision-making (e.g. involving them in school projects, like rice farming), to win their trust, as a way to motivate them towards embracing school-family partnerships. But I know most parents in this area don’t value education. So in my school, I try hard to motivate them. Parents are very involved and are willing to pay for extra lessons, for exams and for teachers employed in the BoM. They try to participate in their children’s education, as well as in the development of the school. After harvest, these
parents usually provide food (rice) for their children at school. Besides, they take care of fish and tomato farms in turns and manage the harvest programme for the school. I know some do this to please the school and myself (laughs). They like being nice to the school. Whatever it is, as long as they are involved at school, am fine with that. (Principal B)

Principal C mentioned that,

Though parental involvement existed in this school, it is mostly affected by the education levels of parents and poverty. Those with a low education level do not care much about what their children are doing at school. They, however, attend school meetings, perhaps because the principal insists that it is important to understand how their children are progressing. Interestingly, parents may not follow up much on school activities but are very concerned with grades and the performance of the school in national examinations. In fact, I can say about 65% of parents value education, yet a whopping 90% do not participate in school activities. The obvious strategy here for me is to carve a relationship between participating in school activities and participating in their children’s learning progress.

When asked about who was most affected during this time, between girls and boys, the principals confirmed that both were affected.

Although girls are more affected, as they fall pregnant and drop out of school, boys also interact with some challenges, which distract them from learning. There are about three girls who dropped out [2015] and they only came back to sit for their final exams. And definitely, they did not do well because they were also expectant. Since the parents are not so involved in their children's schooling, quite a number of pupils drop out of school. (Principal D)

Parental involvement remains a serious issue where teachers have been fully left to be in charge of pupils. Their (parents) contribution is very, very low which I can rate at below 50%. The less involved parents are, the higher the rate of absenteeism, which affects learning. Sometimes we have to involve the local administration to bring them to attend school matters. And this helps for sure. And we as principals are calling for civic education in this area. (Principal E, is the worst-performing school among the five under study)
Teaching Methodology

In school A, there was a big challenge in terms of teaching methodology when schools hosted affected pupils. “It is total confusion when teachers try various methods to suit levels of the syllabus covered with different learners in the classroom” (Principal A). While the principal acknowledged that there was no specific teaching methodology he used in his school, he did acknowledge that the school took care of weaker students through some teaching strategies.

Principal B said he had special/remedial classes after school for weaker pupils or learners who did not attend school regularly due to ‘situations’ at home. “In my school, the most common teaching methodologies are the lecture method and the question-and-answer method, to allow interaction between teachers and students.” Though he revealed that teachers were exposed to in-service training, the principal confirmed that,

I have to go around classrooms to monitor teachers and correct any mistakes that are made. I am aware that this is not taken positively by some teachers, but it works well for me (laughs). To improve teaching methodologies, we use practical teaching (learning aids, charts, real objects cards, etc.) to allow learners to take part in learning to understand better. (Principal B)

In this school, most of the teaching aids used were improvised by subject teachers. For instance, the principal used a convectional box designed by one of the teachers to teach the movement of electric current. “Teaching aids not only make learning very interesting but real,” said Principal B. Indeed, there were notable effects on learning in this school from others where teaching aids were not used.

Principal C explained that he indeed dealt with the curriculum and instruction of the school. “I employ various strategies from good planning, togetherness, extra lessons, teacher motivation, boarding facilitates, mobilising resources from the government, CDF\(^1\) and donor support.” However, he also tried to empower his staff:

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\(^1\) Constitutional Development Fund designed to support constitutional-level development projects.
Yes, the school will move normally under the deputy and the senior teacher. The deputy does everything I do in my absence, while the senior teacher deals with guiding and counselling and discipline. Generally, we have disseminated duties among teachers (i.e. sports, health clubs among others). (Principal C)

This was a way to motivate the teachers which he believed related to positive learning.

I motivate my teachers through interventions, like providing free or subsidised lunch, rewarding performance at the end of every year, benchmarking with other schools, participating in decision-making, a teachers’ welfare scheme for loans, team-building visits in different parts of the country, etc. This has worked well despite the poverty we live in. (Principal C)

We have INSETS (In-Service Education and Training) for teachers to improve teaching methodology, normally done within working time. This is achieved through the help of subject service heads and workshops for teaching methodologies, facilitated by TAC tutors. There is also SSMASE, at times partnering with NGOs, a government-sponsored workshop where teachers are brought to speed on result-orientated methods of teaching. (Principal D)

Principal E agreed that,

Peer group discussions, where learners are put in discussion groups to discuss various topics, identify areas of weaknesses and strengths are key. This, coupled with extra teaching lessons, helps to bring about specific methods of teaching and saves time as well. Other than the commonly used question-and-answer methods coupled with practical learning and teaching aids, tests and homework are also used to improve learning to cover for lost time and identify areas of weakness. The problem across the board is that despite all the challenges listed, there is usually no financial support from the county administration. Sometimes we have to move books and other portable facilities in and out of schools to just enhance learning.

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2 SSMASE: Strengthening of Science and Mathematics in Secondary Education.
Instructional Leadership

Principal A agreed that he oversaw activities in schools, but also had people in charge.

The deputy sits in for me when I am absent, while the S/T supervises learning in classes and school attendance for both learners and teachers. Besides, I have an executive panel made up of a few teachers that act as my ‘cabinet’ (giggles.) They advise, and even go to classrooms to oversee and report on learning and teaching.

In short, he delegates work to staff, who constantly keep him informed. “My school runs normally whether I am in or not”. Principal A was also quick to mention that they rotated teachers to have them learn different responsibilities: “Of course there are challenges that come with managing adults, especially in rural settings.” Despite empowering staff, the principal said in their setting, most principals were an overburdened lot.

Heads are normally strained. I don’t know when they are going to come up with what we call job descriptions, especially in rural areas … but we have a lot. This may be attributed to a lack of capacity in schools in rural areas. A head is the chair of the staff meeting, the secretary to the school board of management, like in our situation we are the clerks/secretaries/receptionists/keep books of account/we teach in class/we supervise and still don’t earn more. (Principal A)

It sounded like an overlap with the Board of Management3 (BoM) responsibilities, but the head clarified that,

The BoM only ensures school resources are properly utilised, I have to be in the BoM meetings as secretary. For instance, keeping books of account could easily be given to clerks like in secondary schools, yet in primary schools, the head teacher is expected to be in control of everything. (Principal A)

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3 Works with the community to improve learning.
Principal B confessed that it was not easy to manage both teachers and non-teaching staff.

We deal with complicated issues like absenteeism, restaffing during leave periods, like maternity leave, motivating staff and, at times, payment of non-TSC\(^4\) [Teacher Service Commission] teachers. If non-teaching staff are not paid on time, they simply abandon duty. Maternity issue in this area is a problem in terms of replacing staff, especially when it is taken by more than one female teacher at the same time. There are no extra teachers in this area. (Principal B)

This perhaps explains why most leadership positions in and out of schools are held by men.

In my school, we employ class ability groups, where a stronger pupil guides weaker ones through peer discussions. There is also peer learning from teachers, where they share what works and what does not. Through CATs\(^5\) [Continuous Assessment Tests], we discover learning trends, rate them and devise teaching methods to specific areas of weakness. On the other hand, monthly examinations help teachers to gauge general performance and to plan ahead effectively. (Principal B)

When asked how teaching methodologies would be improved to increase the quality of learning, one of the principals said,

We engage in in-service training and benchmarking/exchange programmes like visiting other schools, especially those performing better, perhaps once a month to see what they do differently. We, however, need learning resources, especially textbooks and retreats to motivate teachers even after these pieces of training. Currently, the ratio of textbooks to the pupils is unrealistic. The ministry gives Kshs.40 per pupil for textbooks. Accumulating Kshs.40 to come up with one textbook is challenging and makes the ratio to be imbalanced. (Principal C)

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\(^4\)Teacher Service Commission manages human resources within the education sector.

\(^5\)Continuous Assessment Tests.
In my school, we reward teachers through an external process (e.g. promotions). There was not much said on the motivation of non-administrative staff, other than providing meals at school and paying salaries promptly. We run the school normally. The principal, deputy and senior teacher have designated roles in the schools. The rest of the roles are rotational and are given to different teachers. (Principal D)

School Communities, Community Culture, and Environment

Principal A stated that indeed school communities\textsuperscript{6} were helpful. For instance, the local government assisted in putting up buildings, like the ECDE\textsuperscript{7} (Early Childhood Development and Education) classroom, while the CDF did build some other facilities (e.g. toilets and supported electrification).

They are my strength! (excited). The people partnership I have around here is very helpful and the strategies they bring are amazing. We also have the church. Theirs is to give spiritual nourishment and instill good morals to the learners. This one is a Catholic-sponsored school, so the priest comes to do that work. (Principal A)

He also talked highly of donor support and other support from local leaders.

Regarding donor and NGO support, USAID provides clean drinking water and disaster mini structures for shelter. Life Straw provides small water tanks, while the county government provides sanitary towels for girls, as well as tents during floods. Local leaders enforce school attendance with parents. (Principal A)

\textsuperscript{6} Comprise groups of people with direct working relationships or interested in work done by the school internally and externally.

\textsuperscript{7} Early Childhood Development and Education.
According to the principal, school communities have a strong impact in this area; they do, however, need to co-operate with each other to ensure the achievement of uniform goals.

Regarding community support, Principal A agreed that there was still very minimal assistance from the community, partly attributed to an impoverished community with low financial status. ‘Though the community encourages and gives moral support, it is simply based on the principals’ strength. The community does pull resources to support orphans or to buy equipment for schools. ‘Though they destroy property during floods when they take refuge in schools, the community is generally very supportive. They are just poor and cannot give much.’

On Culture and Environment, Principal B said,

In my school, there is a tree that is used as a shrine. Pupils go there and they feel like they are part of the school. I can’t fully explain what happens but I found it [tree] here (laughing). (Principal B)

Principal C hailed the community for being supportive.

They are disciplinarians, they assist in instilling good morals and always hand over all pupils loitering aimlessly, among other responsibilities. In general, the community within (teachers, pupils) and the outside, the parents, the donors, the politicians, and even the government, plus the Catholic Church that provides spiritual nourishment are great. They all have the interest of the school at heart. (Principal C)

The major economic activities in the locality are small-scale fishing and farming rice. Though land in the locality is very fertile for farming, there is no harvest when it floods, leading to famine and poverty. During floods, fishing is also affected, where there is a high demand for fish and low production. It means there is hardly enough food to survive on, not to mention the destroyed houses and property. Due to poor infrastructure, transportation and communication are also affected; and the little proceeds there are, are not easily sold. While families with a high socioeconomic status invest more in their children’s education, those from impoverished homes lack adequate learning materials and parental care at school. In this
community, socioeconomic causal linkages have led to a high rate of school dropouts and spread of HIV/AIDS, leaving the community more impoverished. (Principal D)

Analysis and Discussion

Based on the narratives presented above, I now present an analysis locating the events in literature and theory.

School Resources

Learning resources are a major factor and have consistently been associated with high achievement in schools, without which pupils’ academic performance is affected, leading to a decreased interest in education and eventual dropouts (Abagi and Odipo 1997). From the narratives told, it emerges that the unavailability of resources is a major factor contributing to non-performance in rural schools. Principals clearly establish that educational resources are important ingredients for academic achievement in their schools (Zuze 2008). They endeavour to make resources available to support infrastructure and basic meals for their teachers and pupils, using FPE and other supplementary funds. Though schools receive funding and try to supplement their income through mobilising resources and other income generation activities, it is not enough. Inadequate facilities and learning materials are major and direct problems confronting these rural, flood-prone schools. Strong evidence points to an impoverished society with widespread poverty, largely attributed to rurality.

Teacher Methodology and Motivation

Teachers’ attitudes towards their work and to pupils, classroom management and their interaction with pupils have a great impact on academic achievement (Abagi and Odipo 1997). The narratives refer to ‘school-driven teacher motivation’ and internal teacher motivation, which comes from within the teacher, who is orientated towards job satisfaction. Principals have incentives in place—both monetary and non-monetary—to motivate teachers. The biggest challenge with this has been that principals tend to work on their own to find resources to motivate teachers. Parents, occasionally supple-
mented by the school BoM, are burdened to financially support incentives related to teachers’ increased workloads. It is evident that schools endeavour to provide incentives like meals and rewards that eventually become unsustainable due to inadequate funds.

**Instructional Leadership** In an effective school, the principal acts as an instructional leader and effectively and persistently communicates that mission to the staff, parents, and students (Lezotte 1999). Principals in the schools under study understand and apply this practice to promote instructional effectiveness. Their schools have the instructional programme through the principal as the instructional leader. Through this practice, principals in the five schools understand and embrace this spirit to build the capacity and confidence of their teachers towards their schools. Throughout the narratives, principals in the five schools are generally happy with the status quo. The school climate seems to be just fine in most schools, as every teacher gets a chance to lead in respective areas. Principals rotate responsibility amongst their teachers to build their capacity in different departments, which is positive. However, all the stories told reveal a lack of adequate/trained human resources in the school which often compromises learning.

**Parental Involvement** In the effective school, parents understand and support the school’s basic mission, and are given the opportunity to play an important role in helping the school to achieve this mission (Lezotte 1999). There is evidence that aspects of family involvement in education do help more students succeed. In fact, parental involvement (Epstein 2005) has short- and long-term benefits during and after, early childhood education programmes. Principals generally embrace parental involvement in school work, but it appears that parents do not prioritise this. Of interest is that most parents understand the importance of parental involvement at school and are willing to participate, but do not. Some participate at school, but the participation is not academically related. Rather, these parents dedicate their time to school farming and other activities with which they are both familiar and comfortable. These parents volunteer to do this work, but cannot attend a single meeting with teachers on their children’s progress at the same school. Some parents get
involved in other school activities (e.g. farming) partly because it is prestigious to be associated with the principal. The participation is just to be in the ‘good books’ of the school administration. However, I get the sense that perhaps schools do not know how to deal with parental involvement in school matters effectively, let alone increased levels of parental participation. Being a rural setting, most parents are too illiterate to participate in anything academic for their children and therefore prefer to stay away. Others are too preoccupied with family commitments to attend any school matters and, therefore, do not prioritise school activities. When aggressive strategies are used on parents to attend progress meetings of their children, they comply. Of interest is the fact that parents get more interested in participating in school activities of their children in the candidate class. They provide support like meals and learning material, and also attend meetings as required, probably to support their children to excel. This is an area that requires further attention, perhaps more encouragement on school-family collaboration in rural schools.

School Communities, Community Culture and Environment

School Communities  The principals’ experiences show that school communities are an integral part of promoting learning. As emphasised, school communities, families and communities share (Laosa 2005) major responsibilities for children. When working collaboratively, they can play important roles in fostering cross-cultural understanding and intergroup cooperation. I closely link school communities to culture, the community, the environment, and the school, as schools tend to mirror the culture and environment they are in. There is convergence from principals on the positive perception of school communities towards schools’ strategies and their support towards promoting learning. This support is closely linked to positive aspects of the community culture and the environment. Principals acknowledged the out-of-school disciplinary role parents, the community and the local government play, as well as practical and cultural solutions they offer to particular problems. However, positive school community strategies and perceptions are impeded by some
cultural practices in the locality. According to Abagi and Odipo (1997), culture and beliefs that develop into sociocultural factors, such as initiation ceremonies and gender socialisation, are some of the cultural factors responsible for pupils’ failure to complete primary school education, as explained below.

**Culture** Less useful cultures (e.g. *disco matanga*), along with gender stereotypes, associated with immoral behaviour, should be eradicated in this locality even if it calls for aggressive strategies. Related to culture and beliefs is the issue of child labour. In Budalang’i, the community’s measure of success lies in the socioeconomic activities: farming and fishing. The community and parental influence are evident, where parents ask their children to take care of crops on rice farms or to go fishing to supplement food for the family, often resulting in absenteeism and poor performance. There are also cases of pupils, particularly boys, going fishing to obtain money during and after flooding. This is usually to provide for the family or to supplement food at home. At times, boys just want to take advantage of floods to make some money from fish sales, which proves to be detrimental because they eventually get disinterested in school after obtaining the proceeds from the fish. Girls, on the other hand, stay away from school to help with household chores. The community also deals with cases where mothers abandon their children to get married elsewhere, which, to an extent, affects their children’s learning. In general, socioeconomic causal linkages in this community have led to a high rate of school dropouts and the spread of HIV/AIDS, leaving the community socially, economically and educationally impoverished. I acknowledge that cultural beliefs may, at times, supersede school, but only if they are useful. Less useful cultures that may stifle learning need to be eradicated as principals strive to achieve learning.

**Community/Environment** Generally, this community embraces the importance of education. Firstly, regarding gender, there was no significant variance in gender enrolment, which is a positive aspect. In the five schools under study, participation stood at 49.2% male and 50.8% female, conforming to enrolment documents in the schools. However, getting into a deeper understanding, the community seemed to maintain
the superiority aspect of boys over girls. Educational opportunities for girls may have increased, perhaps because of the FPE and not due to a change of cultural norms and practices. Either way, an opportunity for the education of the girl child is a great leap forward towards promoting learning. Though more girls drop out in the course of learning, due to gender stereotypes and other reasons, boys also interact with some other challenges that distract them from learning.

Conclusion

Reflecting on the unfolding events, it is evident that rural circumstances create challenges for rural school principals. Principals as school leaders are supposed to provide strategic direction in the school system. However, the rural context creates additional and unique challenges that markedly differentiate their leadership from that of their counterparts in urban areas. There is a correlation between effective principal leadership and learning achievement. Rural school leaders are burdened with responsibility e.g. increasing accountability for learner achievement as well as management responsibilities. To this end, rural schools remain more disadvantaged with distinct challenges compared to urban schools. The leadership practices and challenges of rural school principals require rural-specific strategies. The provision of school resources and teacher motivation are necessary intervening variables to achieve learning. This should be coupled with adequate teaching and learning resources, well-qualified teachers together with adequate funding towards achieving school effectiveness and improvement.

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Understanding Rurality and Rural Schools: The South African Context

The conceptualisation of rurality has proven to be difficult because the interpretation of what rurality means is different for different people, leading to a contestation in research literature and government policy documents about what rurality means (Moletsane 2012; Hlalele 2012; Myende 2015; Nkambule 2017; Mbhiza 2017). In relation to this, the Nelson Mandela Foundation (HSRC 2005) postulated that within the South African context it is difficult to make a clear distinction between what constitutes a rural and urban context, stating that the conceptualisation often depends on who is making the distinctions between the two contexts and for what purpose. Similarly, Mukeredzi (2013) argued that “devising a clear and objective definition of ‘rural’ presents a conceptual problem” (p. 2). Some researchers used the geographical location of areas,
in terms of their proximity to cities to define rurality (Mbabazi 2015), while others conceptualise the term demographically by focusing on variables which include the population size of an area, household income, proximity to healthcare and other amenities (Ebersohn and Ferreira 2012; Mukeredzi 2013). Although various authors present different perspectives about what rurality means, of concern is that the majority of authors tend to point to negative aspects of rural life, which Moletsane (2012) refers to as the ‘deficit paradigm of rurality’.

Moletsane’s (2012) contention is that researchers should desist from adopting a deficiency-based paradigm characterised by being narrowly conservative, disadvantaged and isolated from the metropolitan life, and adopt a strength-based (also referred to as assert-based) paradigm of rurality. Despite the view of rurality that a researcher adopts, it is essential to note that rurality is dynamic and complex and needs to be understood from various perspectives. Another way to desist from the deficiency-based paradigm is acknowledging that rural constituencies are mere objects to their contexts, but “make use of time, space and resources differently to transform an environment”—alluding to the strength-based paradigm of rurality (Balfour 2012, p. 2). Thus, the current chapter adopts a strength-based paradigm to demystify how some rural schools survive against all odd to provide ‘quality’ education to their learners.

One of the conceptualisations of rurality that resonates with the strength-based paradigm is offered by Balfour, Mitchell and Moletsane (2008) in their work on the generative theory of rurality. Balfour et al. (2008) provide a framework for conceptualising rurality, theorising the dynamic nature of rural contexts and the multifaceted nature of rural constituencies’ lived experiences. The authors suggest two reasons why the generative theory of rurality could be useful. Firstly, Balfour et al. (2008) propose that the theory could be useful in allowing researchers who research within rural contexts with rural constituencies to unearth and interpret the findings of their inquiries. Secondly, the generative theory can enable rural constituencies to act as subjects and agents of change within their environments. The first reason is mainly important for this chapter because it demonstrates that teachers, learners, families, community members and other stakeholders such as local businesses have to play an active role in advancing the standard of rural education.
In addition to the above discussion, Balfour et al. (2008) identify three facets of rurality based on their contention that rural areas are generative and dynamic: forces, agencies and resources. The conceptualisation of rurality by Balfour et al. (2008) moves away from the traditional tendencies of viewing rurality in terms of its contradistinctions to cosmopolitan areas, but focuses on the three above-mentioned aspects which concentrate on rural areas as unique and independent spaces. This resonates with Masinire, Maringe and Nkambule’s (2014) definition of a rural setting as “a space that sustains human existence and development outside the jurisdiction of metropolitan town authority” (p. 148).

Firstly, Balfour et al. (2008) refer to forces as being both “centripetal and centrifugal” comprising “the movement of labour and production from the rural to the urban and back again” (2008, p.). This means that forces focus on the manner in which rural life is a product of time and space, considering that rural constituents often seek work elsewhere outside their immediate contexts, however they return to their contexts with alternate forms of knowledge and skills. As such, time is considered to be an important proponent of forces since it takes time for rural constituents to travel from one place to another, to access amenities such as healthcare due to isolation within rural contexts. Balfour et al. (2008) posit that:

... space not only is an enculturated and organizational concept in any discussion of rurality but also the one feature that changes or elongates time. This elongation of time in turn affects identities, since these are mostly constituted in relation to communities that exist in relative isolation in space and time from each other, and in greater isolation from urban centres.

Secondly, Balfour et al. (2008) identify agency as one of the aspects of the generative theory of rurality. Agency is important as it allows for an understanding that within rural areas there are individuals who are active agents in the communities. That is, rural inhabitants are not only products of the environments in which they live, but exercise their agency to change their communities for the better. In Balfour et al.’s (2008) view, rural residents are either agents that are passive and allow change to take place through compliance or they are active participants in advancing

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their communities. To exemplify agencies, Balfour et al. (2008) refer to entities such as tribal authorities, families, religious authorities and individuals within a specific rural context and posit that understanding the dynamics of relations of power and systems in rural areas is essential for research located in those contexts.

Thirdly, Balfour et al. (2008) identify resources as another facet of rurality. Using this facet to conceptualise rurality is helpful for researchers as it allows us to pay special attention to the resources that the community already has, alluding to the strength-base paradigm of rurality. The view of limited resources desists from the conceptualisation of rurality from a deficiency-based paradigm in which rural contexts are viewed as places of need and want.

Notwithstanding the foregoing discussion, as I posited elsewhere (Mbhiza 2017), the major difficulty in conceptualise rurality and rural school is “having to make mental ‘imagination’ to focus on the non-described aspects of rural areas which are assumed to be ‘flips’ of what is described in urban definitions” (p. 15). In terms of the non-described aspects of rural contexts, Atchoarena and Gasperini (2003) postulated that in view of the problematic and contentious nature of defining rurality “one is tempted to adopt J. Robinson’s attitude by saying that even if we cannot define what an elephant is we are able to tell when we see one” (p. 36). While this could be interpreted to be true, rural researchers must be careful not to homogenise all rural areas, especially considering that rural areas differ in terms of distinguishing features and nature of life from one area to another (Hlalele 2012). Thus, we cannot overlook that within different rural contexts there are different inhabitants who interact in different ways that are context-dependent and time-bound to sustain themselves and their environments. Accordingly, a rural area in this chapter refers to a space in which human existence, daily activities individuals engage in, which includes learning and teaching and community development, are sustained independently of urban authority (Masinire et al. 2014).
A Methodological Statement

To shed light on the strength-based paradigm of rurality, I centre the discussion on the information provided by parents and learners about the nature of help rural learners receive from their family members to ensure that there is learning continuation at home. The information was selected purposefully from a wider range of similar iterations made by both parents and learners regarding learning at home; as such they provide insight into the relationship between families and schools in Mpumalanga rural schools. This primarily exploratory study was part of a larger research project that explored conditions of teaching and learning in rural Mpumalanga schools and uses a quantitative research approach to explore a variety of factors that influence teaching and learning processes in this context. De Vos, Deloport and Fouché (2011) posit that an exploratory study is conducted to understand phenomena, community or individuals. According to Neuman (2011), an exploratory research design is useful when the subject under study is new or if little knowledge about the subject exists or nothing is known about it.

Considering that rurality and rural education remains underresearched and marginalised in South Africa, there is a need to popularise research and report on these aspects. The primary goal of the project resonates well with the general characteristics of exploratory studies as it sought to provide a basis for understanding the nature of teaching and learning within rural areas and schools. While the study focused on a myriad of factors that facilitate and/or constrain learners’ learning of different contents of the subject matter, this chapter focuses primarily on two parts of the larger research project: the role of rural parental involvement in facilitating learners’ learning, and rural learners’ experiences and attitudes towards learning mathematics. To explore the phenomena, semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with parents and learners. The interviews with parents focused on their understanding of parental involvement and their involvement in their children’s learning, and the interviews with learners focused on their experiences of learning within rural contexts and schools, mathematics learning in particular. The practices emerging from these two aspects allowed for a deeper
analysis of how rural families are and can be a resource for learning in those contexts and opening space for considering what constraints could be withdrawn to enable effective learning within rural contexts.

Learning at Home: Beyond a Deficit View of Rural Family Involvement in Education

The schools in rural and farm areas of South Africa still face many challenges in offering quality education for the communities which they serve even post-apartheid. Of concern is that parental involvement in education in rural and farm areas seems to be very low compared to the involvement of parents from well-off socioeconomic backgrounds in their children’s education (Joan 2009 as cited in Kainuwa and Yusuf 2013). While various post-apartheid educational policies stipulate that parents and the communities should be recognised as partners, it is not clear if school principals in rural and farm schools encourage parents and the communities to be part of this partnership. This is to ensure that the children are constantly motivated to attend school and take part in learning. The discussions in the following subsections demonstrate that beyond the deficit understanding of rural education there are families within rural contexts who play active roles in ensuring that there is learning continuation at home amidst the grand narratives about teaching and learning in rural contexts.

Through the Parents’ Voices

Jabulani said, “I am always involved in task that he is not sure of … tasks that are a little bit complex, he is always inviting me and I am helping.” This shows that some parents identify the importance of always being available and checking children’s homework, in particular for tasks that seem challenging. This relates to Vygosky’s concept of the zone of proximal development, where children need assistance with tasks they are currently unable to do, to be able to attempt to do them independently. This idea also concurs with Epstein and Salinas (2004) that parents at home
can motivate their children to take the initiative and develop a high working ethos to actively participate in learning. Because of the positive support and inspiration they receive from their parents at home, they can aspire to advance their academic performance and horizons.

The interest that parents show in assisting their children with homework or monitoring that tasks get completed possibly shows their children that they are interested in what they do at school. Of importance also to note is that some parents only assist their children when it is possible for them to assist, that is, they are sometimes constrained from helping their children due to the nature of the subject. For instance, Thomas said:

Yes, I do assist them … then the other one because she is doing science I make sure that we organise our church member, he also invite all the learners who are doing science and maths, so we are encouraging them to attend over the weekends … when coming to English and other learning areas I do assist …

The response suggests that the participant tries to assist his children where possible and when he is unable to assist due to limited subject knowledge, he seeks help outside. Of importance is that children are assisted with subject knowledge from home to ensure that they are not frustrated at school, at the same time helping teachers to teach the contents easily. In addition, Lerato maintained that he does help his child with schoolwork, although the focus is on mathematics and no other subjects:

… to be honest, I used to fight with my first born child because each time she comes from school she must take a break of 20 minutes … undressing and take whatever she can eat and she must seat on the table before she can go around playing … I must assist her do her maths activities… it’s not that I don’t like SS [Social Science], I don’t like EMS [Economic and Management Science], but since I grew up I loved Mathematics…

So, it was interesting for me to see how the parents’ own interests and preferences between learning subjects shape how they help their children
with schoolwork. A question of interest is that since Lerato focuses on assisting the child with mathematics, how is the child assisted with other subjects? However, Leraro seems dedicated to assist the child and make sure the understanding of content knowledge and good performance is attained. While this practice is good, it is also imperative that the parent recognise that other subjects also need as much time at home as the one they are passionate about, to ensure balance in performance.

From the discussion, it appears that parents believe that when they are constantly monitoring their children’s school activities, it does influence their children’s academic performance. This means that parents who are aware of their children’s school work and areas of difficulty motivate their children to work hard and perform successfully at school. Regarding this, Jabulani said: I work with my kids always, because when they have got a task, assignment I sit down with them, I am helping them, I am doing, I am working with them.

The responses seem to suggest that when parents have regular discussions about schoolwork with their children and constantly monitor their work, it can shape the children’s motivation to attend school and strive to perform well. Similarly, Epstein (2013) posits that most children want their families to be actively involved in their education and that they are knowledgeable partners in their educational activities. Although participants maintain that they are involved in assisting their children with school work at home, it is also important to acknowledge possible problems that can be encountered if teachers do not clearly set out expectations and guidelines on how the parents are supposed to assist their children. As Epstein and Sanders (2002) state, parental support at home should be through encouraging, listening, reacting, praising, monitoring, guiding, and discussing. It is evident in the information provided by the parents that they are eager to support their children, and it is the partnership that the school and parents form that can enable this to happen successfully. The partnership that is formed between parents and school also addresses issues of decision making, that is, involving parents in making decisions about processes of schooling. Parental involvement also includes allowing parents to be part of the decision making body, either during parents’ meetings or through other forms of practice or engagement.
Through the Learners’ Voices

While some participants acknowledged that the classroom—as the microsystem according to the Bioecological theory—is valuable, in particular their teachers in their learning of mathematics, others illustrated that home also plays a crucial role in their learning. This theme is about how learning mathematics at home and interactions with family members influence the development of particular experiences and attitudes towards learning mathematics. The findings from the interviews with learners suggest that family members play crucial roles in learners’ learning as Guides in Mathematics Content (GMCs), which I discuss below. This addresses the school-home and home-school interrelatedness in learning mathematics, which Bronfenbrenner calls the mesosystem. Bronfenbrenner (1979) suggests that the learning potential can be increased as a function of the supportive links that are available for the learner within different microsystems. The findings suggest that learners’ experiences and attitudes towards mathematics are deeper and mostly associated with the learning environment, rather than from interacting with the contents of the subject matter.

Learning at home has been overemphasised in previous research as playing an important role in ensuring that learners are motivated to take the initiative and develop a good working ethos to actively participate in learning mathematics (Epstein 2004; Msila 2012). In this study, some learners’ responses highlighted the powerful influence of the home environment on their learning of mathematics. Their responses suggest that their family members assist them at home to make sense of the mathematical content, skills and processes that were covered by the teacher in the classroom but resulted in misunderstandings by the learner. This relates to what Mestry and Grobler (2007) mentioned that when family members assist their children with homework continuously and consistently, it helps to enhance learners’ performance in schools and also shapes learners’ interest to actively participate in learning. For example a learner, Tsan’wisi, said:

My aunt helps me, she doesn’t give me all of these answers, she shows me that you can do this, and do this. She will say, ‘I will give you an answer for
this one, but you will do this one on your own.’ I have to do that on my own and she will never help me, she will never help me.

Even though Tsan’wisi emphasised that his aunt gives him the opportunity to do mathematics himself, his choice of words “she shows me” and “I will give you” demonstrate that the aunt is helpful when he experiences challenges, as a way of mediating unknown knowledge.

While family influence on learners’ mathematical capabilities and the promotion of more positive attitudes has been argued to be essential (Van Voorhis et al. 2013; Mestry and Grobler 2007), it might be perceived that the kind of support that Tsan’wisi receives from his aunt does provide him with an adequate opportunity to make sense of the mathematical contents himself. As the aunt gives him the opportunity to engage with other maths problems without assistance, it suggests some kind of scaffolding and the space to learn and make mistakes. With this in mind, it seems from Tsan’wisi’s response above that his aunt’s availability to assist him with mathematical contents at home fosters a positive attitude towards learning the subject.

Another learner, Tiny stated that: “Maths is not difficult, get the right person who can teach you maths, like my father, he helps me when I am stuck in maths because he studied pure maths”. Similarly, Musa said:

My brother at home gives me questions and I answer, and where I don’t get answers good, he gives me corrections. He takes me and shows me how we do this here; I then have to redo the same questions that I did not understand.

These learners’ responses demonstrate that the assistance they receive from their family members when they encounter difficulties in understanding the mathematical content promotes a sense of hopefulness in learning the subject. Both Tiny and Musa believe that in adverse circumstances when learning mathematics, the assistance from the father and brother respectively can help them clarify misunderstandings, which in turn appears to instil positive attitudes towards mathematics. These responses also show that in a rural context there are educated people to assist learners with learning, a reason some learners perform successfully.
The responses show that the identified family members are GMCs, because they have some level of mathematics background. This means that for a family member to act as a GMC they should have some level of mathematical proficiency and rural families, especially parents, are always perceived to lack this proficiency (Ndlazi 1999; Msila 2012). Epstein and Salinas (2004) argue that family involvement and learners’ attitudes and behaviour towards their school activities are directly proportional to each other. This means an increase in parental involvement in educational activities can play a role in shaping learners’ behaviour during the process of teaching and learning in the classroom.

**Strength-Based Paradigms: Families as Resources for Learning**

From the information provided by the parents, the findings demonstrate that they consider their participation in their children’s educational activities to be an important element in their children’s learning. The findings concur with the belief that when parents are involved in their children’s education, they can motivate and help their children to develop a high working ethos in their educational activities and consequently their performance. It is evident from the participants’ responses that they have high aspirations for their children to attain higher grades in their academics. Thus, my findings concur with findings from other research on parental involvement which suggest that parents play a very important role in their children’s learning and ensure greater learner performance at school (Msilä 2012; Kainuwa and Yusuf 2013; Okeke 2014). Although parents identified factors that impinge on their effective involvement in their children’s education, such as their socioeconomic status and time—which are not focused upon in the current chapter—however, they still emphasised that their participation in their children’s learning is of utmost importance. From the parents’ responses only five out of the six types of parental involvement as coined by Epstein were reflected, with collaboration with community not reflected (Epstein 2004).
In terms of mathematics learning, the information provided by the learners show clear roles played by their family members in their learning of mathematics, which in turn shape the promotion of positive attitudes and enhance meaningful learning of mathematics for the learners. From learners’ information, those with existing support and motivation from family members not only show the ability to learn mathematics, but show positive experiences and attitudes towards learning the subject, which is often overlooked in local research. The findings from the information provided by learners show that in cases where learners encounter unfavourable learning experiences within mathematics classrooms, at home these could be countered through family support and motivation to learn. Thus, the involvement of family in learners’ learning of mathematics helps learners to engage in the learning processes at school with positive experiences. In relation to rural education, the findings are broadly in harmony with suggestions made by Moletsane (2012) that rural areas should not be viewed through deficit lenses, instead through strength-based paradigms. The information provided by both parents and learners illustrate that in rural areas there are people who are educated and have the ability to assist learners with subjects such as mathematics, a reason learners perform successfully and develop positive attitudes towards education. In view of the above discussion, there is a need to conduct research that examines learners’ experiences of learning within rural areas and schools, and consequently how rurality shapes learners’ learning and in turn their academic performance. Furthermore, research should also be conducted with parents within rural areas to gain an understanding of their perceptions of education, because consciously or subconsciously they do play a role in influencing their children’s interests to attend school and participate in learning.

References


Part III

Rurality, Gender and Access in Education
Introduction and Orientation to the Chapter

In 2003, the UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan stated that:

*There is no tool for development more effective than the education of girls. No other policy is as likely to raise economic productivity, lower infant and maternal mortality, improve nutrition and promote health.* (cited in UNICEF 2008)

Kenya has made commendable strides towards providing education for all at primary and secondary school levels. Education in the Kenyan context is juxtaposed with developmental goals. It is associated with the development of human capital and human capabilities that enhance people’s well-being and the status of the nation state in terms of productivity, industrialisation and competitiveness on a global scale (Bloom et al. 2006; Sefa 2008; Wangenge-Ouma 2010). In considering the
importance of education, this chapter argues that no form of marginalisation is acceptable. Furthermore, tolerating marginalisation and exclusionary tendencies exposes learners and students from peripheral communities and groups. They are denied opportunities to develop and participate meaningfully in society. The debates advanced in the chapter are based on secondary data that investigate the state of the education sector in Kenya. In particular, the chapter has taken great interest in analysing the extent to which rurality and gender affect the education of girls and women in Kenya. The chapter has concluded that female learners from poor and rural backgrounds face a plethora of challenges that inhibit their progression in education. The chapter has suggested various interventions such as providing sanitary products, dealing with poverty, reducing the cost of school uniforms, harmonising the cost of education, tackling sexual abuse and harassment and securing the learning environment as possible avenues of ensuring that girls access and succeed in education.

The developments alluded to are attributable to the education reforms that have been undertaken in the last two decades. Current data from higher education indicate an upward trajectory in enrolments in public and private institutions of higher learning. Records from the Commission for University Education (CUE) (2017) indicate that Kenya has 30 public universities, 5 Public University Constituent Colleges, 18 Private Chartered Universities and 13 Institutions with Letters of Interim Authority. Although this is the case, there are instances of gender skewing especially when deviations are explicit in areas of study (Onsongo 2009; Sifuna 2006). Women are underrepresented in science streams (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics- STEM) as compared to arts and humanities (Sifuna 2006; Shabaya and Konadu-Agyemang 2004). I argue that this kind of skewing whether intended or otherwise is pervasive as it is used to propagate ideologies that view women as inferior to men.

Other interventions targeting primary and secondary education have been implemented. They include the introduction of free basic education in 2003 and Subsidised Free Secondary Education (SFDSE) in 2008. These policy manoeuvres were meant to encourage learners who would have left school to remain in classrooms and on school playgrounds
Furthermore, the government has been robustly pursuing advancing day secondary education with the view of boosting enrolments and learner retention. The ideal of advancing day secondary schooling was to assist the poor and marginalised rural students who struggle to pay high fees that are charged by boarding schools. However, although these reforms are laudable as they have boosted enrolments, James, Simiyu, and Riechi (2016) argue that the vision for learner retention and expanded participation has been stifled by an acute shortage of teachers. In addition, Mutegi, Muriithi, and Wanjala (2017) argue that the cost of school uniforms is a major hindrance to progression in secondary school. These observations call for further investigations to be undertaken in order to establish the extent to which factors other than tuition fees hamper the progression of learners in the Kenyan context.

Whereas the progress that has been realised is notable, education is still a pipe dream for the majority of Kenyan learners and students whose dreams continue to fade away due to their contexts and the prevailing harsh economic circumstances. The cost of education has been highlighted as a major impediment to learners from poor family backgrounds. Achoka (2007) opines that the high dropout rates at high school are attributable to the inability of parents to shoulder the burden of paying fees for their children due to poverty. According to the Ministry of Education records, out of the 70% of learners who complete the primary education cycle and join secondary schools, 9% drop out annually. Subsequently, 30% proceed to higher education (Ministry of Education 2014). I argue that this is a worrisome trend that should rally educational practitioners and stakeholders to think of probable solutions that will bolster progression and completion at various levels of the education cycles in Kenya. I also note that the low retention levels significantly impact the developmental trajectory of a nation. It does not only occlude the goals and aspirations of young people who are leaking out of the system, but the country loses on key developmental objectives.

Literature emanating from Kenya is replete with examples of how the political, economic, ethnic and social factors affect learners’ progression in education (Onsongo 2009; Sifuna 2006). Nonetheless, very little attention has been paid to the extent to which the intersection between rurality and gender contribute to the current impasse in the education
sector (Onsongo 2009; Sifuna 2006; Shabaya and Konadu-Agyemang 2004; Kimani and Kombo 2010). This is against the backdrop of an estimated 0.5% of female students coming from arid and semi-arid areas being currently enrolled in higher education (Mulongo 2013). I suppose that this revelation should interest scholarship that should investigate how to overcome spatial injustices in education. There is documentary evidence that alludes to the fact that girls and female students from arid and semi-arid areas are victims of unrelenting and yet outlawed cultural practices that are sustained through stringent patriarchal hegemonies and toxic masculinity. Early marriages and religious factors have also been cited as stumbling blocks to women’s progression in these areas (Mulongo 2013; Onsongo 2009; Odhiambo 2011; Kabeer 2005). Despite the nuances that are associated with rurality, very little attention has been accorded to rurality as a framework of study. Consequently, Pini, Moletsane, and Mills (2015) allege that most studies have concentrated on urbanity and neglected rural education. This is also reflected in feminist scholarships that seem to be affected by the stereotyping of rural women and girls as traditional, insular and reactionary, and thus are not productive and constructive for feminist inquiry. The misconception of the rural space is also to blame for the lack of interest in adopting it as a unit of analysis (Pini et al. 2015).

Apart from overt costs that parents have to contend with in the process of educating their children, they also encounter institutionalised unevenness in the cost of education and school uniforms. The incongruences have been highlighted by Mutegei et al. (2017). They argue that the cost of school uniforms is a limiting factor to girls’ education at primary and secondary school levels. Thus, Mutegei et al. (2017) found that the cost of girls’ uniforms is 12% higher than the cost of boys’ school uniforms. The deviation in the cost of school uniforms that is skewed on gender lines is a constricting factor to girls’ enrolments and advancement in secondary schools. Their socioeconomic circumstances do not accommodate the high cost. Besides, the cost of education depends on gender and the school types. The cost of educating boys in day schools is higher than that of educating girls (Kenya Shillings- Ksh31,323 versus Ksh29,863). On the contrary, the cost of educating a girl in a boarding school is higher than for educating boys (Ksh52, 474 versus Ksh49, 194 for boys). The
three scenarios reveal gaps and variances in the cost of school uniforms and the cost of education for girls and boys in day and boarding schools. Whilst considering the mentioned examples, it is clear that being rural, poor and female is very challenging. I argue that although the school type cost might be defended, it is susceptible to serious scrutiny unless the government is willing and able to mitigate the difference in costing. This will avoid exclusion of deserving learners who may not afford the cost of the education they deserve. On the other hand, I observe that the skewing with regard to the cost of school uniform can be reduced if the government can introduce minimum standards that can be adhered to by all schools and uniform suppliers. Mutegi et al. (2017) opine that if the challenges are not addressed, there is a high likelihood of them obscuring learner (both girls and boys) retention and progression in secondary schools.

Despite the fact that the reforms in primary education primary and secondary have impacted higher education positively, several challenges have arisen that are threatening the sustainability of high enrolment rates. The beleaguered education landscape grapples with further turbulence in funding poor and needy students (Ngware 2015; Munene and Otieno 2008). This quagmire has rendered poor and rural students as unwanted persons on university campuses. Thus, they have limited access to higher education owing to their individual and familial circumstances. This is heightened by limited family resources, high cost of tuition, accommodation and subsistence spending (Achoka 2007; Sifuna 2006; Chege and Sifuna 2006). Some of them have taken to non academic activities that include menial work for survival. As it is, their futures are at stake unless a solution is found which will guarantee their stay in lecture halls and university lawns.

The chapter is organised as follows: a brief history of the Kenyan education landscape, the complexities of conceptualizing the experiences of rural students in Kenyan education institutions, linking rurality, gender and educational achievements, and using the social justice option in dealing with gender and rurality injustices.
The Problematic Nature of Conceptualising Rurality

The importance of educating girls and women in particular cannot be overemphasised. According to Nussbaum (1999), educated women can function adequately in society. The developed capabilities help in promoting good health for the family, lowers high maternal deaths, enables them to plan well for their families and equips them well to fight diseases and live long lives. The Kenyan government still recognises the critical role that education plays in the well-being of individuals and the nation at large. It is intricately linked to the economic, social and political hygiene of a country (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) 2015). Kenya's Vision 2030 is therefore formulated around these areas as Kenya looks towards industrialisation and further development. Interlocutors such as Sen (1980), Nussbaum (1999) and Sefa (2008) maintain that education is intricately aligned to developmental goals, human resource development and development of capabilities and functioning. The intrinsic value panacea and promotion of individual well-being are equally encapsulated.

Whereas education for all is envisaged in the Constitution of the Republic of Kenya (2010), the preceding section has shown that this is not the case. A plethora of factors have been noted as hampering learners and students from benefitting equally from opportunities. It seems as though the effects of rurality have been minimised as demonstrated by Odora Hoppers (1997, 2004) and Moletsane (2012). According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Working Paper No. 312 (2016), the definition of rurality renders itself to various conceptualisations. Precedence is given to the definition of rural areas as often seen as backward, irrelevant and inconsequential to the cosmopolitan urban areas. I argue that this is a misconstrued understanding that is reductionist. The binaries fail to unveil the complexities imbued in rurality and how it intersects with other peripheral notions of marginalisation (Moletsane 2012). Thus, rurality is fluid; it is convolutedly linked to variables such as geographical positioning, economic statuses, demography or availability – or lack thereof – of resources. It is further noted that rural
communities are not fixed. They are very dynamic, owing to the fact that people migrate to cities in their country and yonder in search of job opportunities and better life opportunities. In addition, rural communities do have diverse cultures and languages due to settlement patterns. In view of these factors, ILO intimates that individual countries ought to be clear about the definition of rurality that has been operationalised and can be used to appropriate equity measures (ILO 2016).

Rurality in the Kenyan context is diverse and not generalisable and thus it is experienced in a variety of ways. The operational connotations of rurality are drawn from a wide spectrum of factors which encapsulate poverty, underdevelopment, disease, unavailability of crucial social services and amenities like tap with running water, connection to the national electricity grid, impassable roads, and poorly resourced schools and hospitals (Mulongo 2011). Rurality is also synonymous with discourses of traditionalism, historicity, colonialism, anticolonial, postcolonial, ethnicity and geographical positioning (Omuteche 2015). It has been argued that the link between gender, rurality and marginalisation is indisputable. Milligan (2014) argues that the urban rural dichotomies have an effect on how girls and women experience education in Kenya. Furthermore, the complexity of navigating rural places and spaces imposes a myriad of challenges on their (girls'/women's) educational trajectories (Onsongo 2009; Sifuna 2006; MoEST 2012). I observe that the alleged challenges demonstrate a high probability of rurality and gendering hindering the general progression, attainment and success of students and learners, especially girls and from rural areas.

Although it is problematic to valorise rurality, nevertheless, rurality in the Kenyan context is defined alongside spatial differences, poverty indexes and developmental parameters (Kenya Bureau of Statistics 2017). However, Omuteche (2014) and Owuor (2008) maintain that rurality in Kenya cannot be homogenised due to historical, colonial, postcolonial, anticolonial, ethnic, geopolitical location, as well as social class factors. In particular, Omuteche (2014) points to the complexities of settlements and movement of people in Kenya. He argues that an in-depth analysis should be undertaken on the multiplicity of factors that conglomerate to
form what is currently perceived as rural and urban Kenya. He notes the following:

The slippage between ethnicity and ethnicism has come to define Kenya’s politics and power dynamics, and by implication class dynamics due to its role in the access and distribution of national resources and economic opportunities that impact on the social and economic landscape of the country. (Omuteche 2014, p. 110)

The South African definition of rurality goes beyond a deficit theorisation prototype. Accordingly, the adopted definition hopes to transcend the narrow definition of rural areas that is linked to lack (deficit model) and not considering other cleavages that offer opportunities that are found in these areas that can be used to develop and better education. The same sentiments are shared by Chambers (2014) and Leibowitz, Bozalek, Schwalkwyz and Winberg, (2015) who argue that due to the complexities, dynamism and fluidity of rurality, those involved in rural education scholarship and thought should not restrict themselves to the binary of urbanity and rural places. Moletsane (2012) explicates that if improper analytical lenses are deployed to interrogate rurality, systemic and structural factors that propagate marginalisation will be less exposed and the status quo will be sustained. According to Moletsane, strength-based epistemologies of rurality will help alleviate the current impasse in conceptualising success for rural learners (Moletsane 2012). Odora Hoppers (1997, 2004) claims that the rural population should not be viewed negatively as passive, backward and lacking capabilities to participate in developmental activities. Rather, they should be incorporated as active partners who have something valuable to offer. She further argues that when western values are imposed and entrenched in defining rurality, rural people are seen as ‘other’ and lacking the capacity to participate in finding alternative frameworks to their own problems (Odora Hoppers 1997).

The Ministerial Committee on Education in South Africa (2005) agrees with the views that have been expressed by Moletsane (2012) and others who are in agreement that the deficit model is narrower, untenable and very limiting. It promotes negative sentiments regarding rural people
and communities at the expense of positive experiences and capabilities possessed by rural people and communities.

Promoting rural development and schooling must go beyond “deficit” approaches. From the second half of the twentieth century, the literature on rural education tends to emphasise histories and structures that have created conditions and circumstances of “oppression”, “deprivation”, “disadvantage” and “deficit”. In similar deficit terminology, people in rural areas are often stereotyped in ways that emphasise their powerlessness: “rural peripheries” become the “dark side” of urban centres of “enlightenment”. While acknowledging the importance of history and quantitative factors, the committee believes that it is important to see beyond the numbers and negative “deficit” views to recognise the positive capabilities and assets of rural people and the inherent worth of indigenous knowledge and practices. A people-centred exploration of rural Africa opens up a wealth of indigenous knowledge in fields such as medicine, conservation, arts and culture. (Department of Education 2005)

Furthermore, rural areas are mainly characterised by farms, forests, water catchments, farming communities, poverty and deprivation, mountains, sparse population and underdevelopment. In view of the problems that face education in the rural areas, ILO (2016) proposes an integrated approach which will involve multisectorial players at local and national levels. Provision of services and resources such as adequate road networks and transport, health care, feeding programmes, social amenities, boosting security in insecure areas, resourcing schools with proper facilities and trained teachers will bolster development of rural places in general and education in particular (ILO 2016; Milligan 2014; Gottschall 2014).

Therefore, adopting a definition that is narrower may not suffice because other crucial variables that contribute to the rural experiences are discounted. For instance, constructing rurality along poverty may not suffice because of the variance in poverty that intersects with geographical positioning. Data from the Kenya Bureau of Statistics, Kenya Integrated Household Budget Survey (KIHBS) 2015/16 (2017) shows that out of the total survey sample, 40% of inhabitants classified as poorest based on per capital income reside in rural areas as compared to 28–9% of those
who reside in peri-urban areas. When using the non-poor scale of near poor, the share of near poor remains consistent. According to the analysis, there were 43–4% people classified as non-poor living in rural and urban areas. When a stricter definition of poverty is applied (living 1.5% below the poverty line), 80% of Kenyans are either income poor or near the poverty line. This means that poverty is not only restricted to rural areas, but poor people reside in urban areas too. The three scenarios are therefore indicative of the complexities of assigning a definition to rurality in the absence of other competing variables.

The Effects of Rurality on Education in Kenya

The impact of rurality on education is enormous and cannot be ignored. The effects vary from attracting and sustaining teachers, poorly resourced schools, high dropout rates and absenteeism for adolescent girls and poor performance. For instance, it is very hard to attract new trainees to rural schools due to distance from urban areas, remoteness, poor living and working conditions, lack of technology and general infrastructure and social amenities. Due to underresourcing and fewer trained teachers, rural schools struggle with high learner teacher ratios that hinder individualised attention (Masinire 2015; Mulkeen and Chen 2008). Therefore, competing with private and well-resourced public schools is a distant dream for such schools and learners. Hence, the inequalities in society are reproduced and sustained because the upward mobility for rural learners is not guaranteed. Likewise, Mitchell and Yang (2012) hypothesise that it is becoming increasingly hard to attract and keep female teachers in rural areas. They argue that apart from the unattractive working conditions in rural areas, female teachers are overburdened by domestic chores, limited career development opportunities, high insecurity levels in schools and homes, lifestyle-related factors and a lack of adequate policies regarding the deployment of women and girl education. I postulate that girls’ education is impacted severely by the lack of female teachers in schools. Aside from the inequitable access to education and employment arguments that can be advanced against the practice, girls are denied an opportunity to be mentored by female teachers and to
receive positive messages regarding girls’ education and women’s place in society (Onsongo 2006, 2009). The excerpt below, from an ILO Report (2016), captures some of the dilemmas that rural teachers face in Juba South Sudan. Teachers in other contexts can identify with them in one way or another.

Juba, South Sudan

I live more than 4 kilometres away from the school and there is no transport. All the classes are overcrowded, making it difficult to teach and to get children to focus on their lessons. Some of the children, who have returned from the north to South Sudan, only speak Arabic, so teaching and making them understand is an uphill task. There is also a shortage of teaching material and textbooks for the students. Often, students arrive late to class, which disrupts lessons. In addition, as the school has no boundary wall and is not fenced, vehicles drive through the compound, which further distracts the children. Last, despite the rising cost of living, teacher salaries are still low. (ILO 2016, p. 16)

It is apparent that poverty plays an important role in determining enrolment levels and progression between primary and secondary school education. As earlier iterated, the skewed cost of school uniforms for girls and boys contributes fundamentally to educational attainment in primary and secondary schools in Kenya. This, coupled with school type and geographical location, contribute to the exclusion of learners who fall within the peripheries of poverty (Mutegi et al. 2017). Sifuna (2006) argues that when girls fail to get into worthwhile secondary schools, their chances of performing well in national examinations diminish. In the long run, they do not make it to institutions of higher learning, and this limits their career trajectories and aspirations. Inferences have been made to these factors while conceptualising the gap in enrolments which further widens in secondary school enrolments (location, income and poverty status) as illustrated by data from the Kenya Bureau of Statistics, KIHBS 2015/16 (2017). The factors are intertwined with family economic status (income poor and non-income poor) (Malusu and Zani 2014). For instance, there was a gap of 11% between the income poor and non-income poor families in primary school enrolments and 23% in
secondary school enrolments. It is evident that this is a question of educational inequity that is propelled by geographical positioning and income status that requires urgent attention if all school-going children must access education equitably.

Milligan (2014) argues that the rural urban dichotomies are significant in fathoming how girls experience education in Kenya. She further notes that although rural areas are dynamic and not static, they ought not to be viewed as timeless and in isolation. They should be part and parcel of the larger conversations around educational reform. It is unequivocal that, due to the diversity in rurality, the experiences are vast and dissimilar (Omiteche 2014). The views in the below excerpt from Diwakar and Shepherd (2018) best explain the challenges faced by girls in a rural county in the Western region of Kenya.

Girls face additional burdens. Bejine (Vihiga) notes that “educating girls was not a priority … so none of us girls went to school; they said a girl would just get married so I dropped out in primary.” Similarly, when Florence (Vihiga) wished to continue her education, she remembers how her father “refused and told me to stay home and help my mother.”

Diwakar and Shepherd (2018) found that the high dropout rates for girls in primary and secondary schools is precipitated by early marriages, preference of boy child education as opposed to that of the girl child, no female teachers to mentor girls, lack of sanitary and other hygiene products, long distances to school, and early pregnancies. Likewise, the vulnerability of rural girls is further exacerbated through extended domestic chores such as fetching water and firewood. This is done at the expense of valuable learning time. Other studies have indicated that children provide labour for farming and herding communities (Davidson 1993; Kenya Bureau of Statistics, KIHBS 2015/16 2017). Jewitt and Ryley (2014) concluded that there is a connection between poor sanitation levels and low school attendance for post-pubescent girls in Sub-Saharan Africa. Their study of the experiences of girls in Kisumu County in Kenya indicated that emotional geographies of puberty and menstruation worsen gender inequalities in social mobility and education. They also presupposed that poverty and a lack of sexual education
are mitigating factors that further prevent girls from accessing education. The situation is further compounded by lack of water and private toilets, painkillers for menstrual cramps, sanitary products – most of them are unable to afford disposable products that cost approximately 65–120 Kenyan Shillings ($0.79–$1.45), change of clothes in case leaks occur, long school hours (8 hours in Kenya). The constant harassment by boys due to menstrual leaks is equally embarrassing for girls. Muito (2004) notes that stigma, infections, bad odour and discomfort are experienced when girls are unable to change sanitary products timeously. In view of this, absenteeism is high as girls prefer to manage their menses from home. Hence, girls view menstruation as the greatest barrier to education in rural Kenya. One of the principals who participated in Jewitt and Riley’s study noted the differences in performance and attainments between girls and boys, attributing the difference to puberty-related factors:

Girls appear to do better pre- and post-pubescent, grades being only worse than boys around the menarche. Girls perform so well when they are in the lower primary, but when they reach class 5/6, they drop … you now find boys performing much better than girls.

Lack of information on the subject and cultural secrecy around menstruation have been cited as factors that lead to high pregnancy levels, spread of HIV/Aids and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs); which subsequently affect girls’ education in Sub-Saharan Africa (Mason et al. 2013; Pattman and Chege 2003). The African NGO Zanaa had the following to say about the menstrual challenges and how they impede the schooling careers for Kenyan girls:

Kenyan adolescent girls miss approximately 3.5 million learning days per month due to lack of funds to purchase sanitary pads. This impedes their ability to compete in the classroom, leads to low self-esteem, higher drop-out rates and, in many areas of Kenya, makes them vulnerable to early marriage. (2012, p. 1)
A comparative study between Malawi and Kenya (1993) found that apart from the school-driven inequities of social class, ethnicity, gender, and geographical positioning, parental attitudes towards education affected girls’ education significantly. Davidson noted that African parents have a greater say regarding who attends school and for how long. The study revealed that Kenya is better resourced than Malawi and that Kenyan parents are more receptive to sending their daughters to school than Malawian parents. The Kenyan mothers are in support of educating girls because they believe that girls are more responsible than boys. They also believe that having an education will open economic doors for their daughters and improve the general well-being of families. The views of the Kenyan parents are akin to Nussbaum (1999) and Sen’s (1980) theorisation of a capability’s approach to human development that centres development on developed capabilities, functioning and freedom.

On the other hand, the preference of boys’ education over girls is predicated on a misconception that males are more intelligent than girls. Since girls contribute more to household labour and chores than boys, many parents from impoverished rural communities are unlikely to let them attend school. This view promotes the traditional gender roles model that is entrenched in patriarchy and is outdated (Butler 1988, 1991; De Beauvoir 1989; Onsongo 2009; Akala 2019). In the same vein, the portrayal of women and girls in school curricula and textbooks has been very worrying. The bias in textbooks advances the view that women are passive, meek, nurturers of children and households, homekeepers and good wives to their husbands. Unfortunately, the hidden curriculum instils these attributes and values in girls implicitly (Sifuna 2006). I argue that this hegemony ought to be countered through sensitive curricula that are not embedded in gender biases.

It has also been argued that parents hold back, determine or elevate the achievement levels of their children. This view is premised on parents’ levels of education which determine their own aspirations and that of their children. Fundamentally, the ability of parents to assist with homework supervision and assistance, progression or dropping out of school, career guidance and assessment of children can be linked to parents’ level of education (Davidson 1993). Another area of concern that has been noted is the environment where the school is located. Mensch and Lloyd
(1998) argue that school environments can pose challenges or provide opportunities for adolescent girls accessing primary school education in Kenya. Thus, schools that are in low income areas are disorganised, pursue severe punishment modes, lack comfort, resources are scarce and there is little knowledge of sex education. Furthermore, the performance of girls in these schools is poor as compared to boys. Teachers’ expectations of adolescent girls are lower, and entrenched in traditional gendered roles. Children whose parents’ level of education is lower experience more corporal punishment than educated parents who are aware of human rights violations and do not condone any forms of abuse. Vices of a sexual nature that include sexual harassment, body touching and fondling at home and at school by schoolmates, teachers and community members are ignored and unpunished. The girls are at a high risk of exposure to STIs, early pregnancies and risk of infection with HIV/AIDS (Mensch and Lloyd 1998).

Finally, formal schools are not neutral places as they are portrayed in education thought and practice. The experiences of Maasai girls show the tensions that arise from traditional gender norms and social forms. Schooling sites are therefore rife with contestations of ethnicity and gender jostling to form local identities. This is a common feature of marginalised communities in rural Kenya (Switzer 2010). The adverse educational impacts that are associated with rurality and gendering are mainly felt by the poor, rural and marginalised communities whose survival depends on government support and enrichment. If the aforementioned factors are not addressed immediately they will have adverse effects on the quality of education, educational outcomes and teacher learner ratios.

**Tackling Rurality and Gendering Through a Social Justice Approach**

It is clear that rurality and gendering have contributed to the current exclusions in the Kenyan education system (Onsongo 2009; Sifuna 2006). This is against the backdrop of a very progressive Constitution that guarantees the rights of all Kenyans regardless of creed, gender,
sexuality, ethnicity and geographical positioning (Constitution of Republic of Kenya 2010). The enactment of laws and policies that are keen on promoting equality at all levels has also not levelled the playing field. For instance, the Ministry of Education is aligned to the objectives of EFA in ensuring equitable access to Education for All according to the National EFA Review Report 2001–2010. Other regulations that have been promulgated by Parliament include the Basic Education Act No. 14 of 201 and the Higher Education Act of 2012. The National Gender Equality Commission (NGEC) was also established by an Act of Parliament in August 2011 with the overall goal of reducing gender inequalities and discrimination against all. At an international level, the government has adopted international declarations, conventions and platforms of action which abhor any forms of discrimination and aspire towards a more just world where men and women can enjoy equal opportunities. They include UNDHR (1948), the Convention on the Elimination of all Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (1979), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1989), the Jomtien World Conference (1990), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), the Dakar Framework of Action on Education For All (Dakar 2000) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (2000).

It has been demonstrated that the government is well versed with information regarding equality and access to opportunities. In spite of this, the discordant in policy and the reality on the ground is explicit. From the ensuing discussion, I argue that it is indisputable that a lot still needs to be done in order to eliminate explicit and implicit forms of marginalisation and injustices. According to Young (1990) and Fraser (2006, 2008), equality cannot be a reality if the contextual issues are not taken into account. Rawls (1971, 2009) argues that in order for social justice to be obtained, the equality and equity principles have to be observed concurrently. I argue that in as much as equality has been guaranteed for all as a constitutional imperative, a section of the polity has not been able to benefit from the legal and formal provisions of the constitution. This means that the equality clause alone is insufficient to address the divergences in experiences and contexts. This is why the paradigm is paramount in bridging the gaps that drive societal marginalisation (Rawls 1971, 2009; Mackinnon 1993; Fraser 2006). However, Nussbaum
(1999) and other writers argue against homogenising people’s lived experiences and circumstances. The same applies to rural contexts that are advocates for the politics of difference that will be able to encapsulate the differences and specifics that occlude the enjoyment of equal opportunities for all. In addition, Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998) argue that figured worlds are socially and culturally constructed realms through which actions are perceived and interpreted. They can be characterised as historical phenomena in which people are situated and recruited to participate. They are also social encounters in which people’s positions matter. As they are located within space and time, they are socially organised, institutionalised and reproduced. Depending on the basis of interactions in the locale, they divide and privilege people resulting in the production and reproduction of subjectivities and inequities. They also distribute people beyond their landscape by penetrating other fields into which their activities stretch to (Holland et al. 1998).

Moletsane (2012) and Chambers (2014) note the tension between existing research frames that have ignored rurality as a framework of analysis. Moletsane, Chambers and Odora Hoppers (1997, 2004) argue that an excellent understanding of rurality will assist in coming up with solutions for the endemic challenges that face rural learners and students. Writers such as Milligan (2014) and Omuteche (2014) assert that rurality is diverse, fluid and dynamic. Therefore, a one size fits all approach is not a probable solution to the current impasse. This chapter has iterated how gender and rurality intersect and the extent to which girls and women have been impacted by the intersectionality. The challenges of puberty, high dropout levels, poverty, parental attitudes, biases in parental choice, cost of education, uniforms, violence and sexual abuse, child labour and mentorship cement the view that a multipronged approach is required to make education equitably accessible to all. It is worth applauding some of the interventions that have been put in place to deal with some of the challenges. For instance, the reintegration of girls back into school policy has enabled those who were victims of early pregnancies being given an opportunity to access formal education, economic opportunities, vocational and skills education. This is a step in the right direction because, initially, the majority of young mothers were not allowed re-entry into school after the birth of their children. They suffered
multiple tragedies: being punished for falling pregnant and being excluded from educational opportunities whilst their partners were allowed to continue learning and realising their dreams. The previous gender skewing favoured the educational advancement of boys and men and not girls (Yasunaga 2014).

Secondly, it is vital to deal with sexual violence so as to ensure equitable access to education by girls, especially in the rural areas of Kenya. Sexual violence and abuse, early marriages, child labour due to abject poverty in families, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) are some of the vices that the Stop Violence against Girls project is dealing with. The project has been spearheaded by the Teachers’ Service Commission, the Ministry of Education, teacher unions and the Children’s department. This is an example of a multipronged approach to a social problem that should be emulated in other areas of education and development (UNESCO 2014). Thirdly, it is important to build partnerships with communities that will provide support for schooling, safe school environments that are gender sensitive, rights based and inclusive. The school should provide quality education and should have linkages with the community (UNICEF 2008). Other departments and ministries can also be incorporated to bolster the quality of education in rural areas. By the ministry of transport and communication improving communication and road networks, travelling will be made easier and this could make rural areas attractive to newly trained teachers.

The mismatch between policies and the reality on the ground has also been highlighted (Mama 2006). In order to minimise the gaps therein, a synchronisation of policies and interventions is required. The discontinuities stifle the reform agenda. It is important to have political will and to work across political fields in order to tackle the challenges in a holistic manner. Availability of resources is crucial in enabling transformation and equitable access to quality education if the gap between urban and rural schools ought to be bridged. The resources will also assist in providing hygienic products to girls who miss valuable school time due to biological changes. Providing safe and private toilets for girls is also paramount. Sex education is also important so as to avoid harassment emanating from menstrual periods, and to educate the boys and girls
about biological changes that occur with growth and puberty (Jewitt and Ryley 2014).

There is overwhelming evidence regarding the importance of rethinking the definitions that are allocated to rurality for spatial justice to be achieved (Holland et al. 1998). This view falls under the caveat of substantive justice that intervenes in the form of equity parameters that address the particular and specific circumstances of marginalised individuals (Mackinnon 1993). Narrower definitions do not obliterate the incongruences between rural and urban areas. At the same time, negatively constructed meanings of rurality are unattractive to advancement of studies in rurality. Thus Moletsane (2012), Chambers (2014) and ILO (2016) have argued for strength-based approaches and integrated approaches when dealing with rurality and gendered forms of marginalisation. Finally, sexism and patriarchy have to be addressed especially for the rural communities that still view girls’ education as inferior and unwarranted. Exterminating the vice will ensure that girls have equal opportunities to education (Onsongo 2009).

Concluding Remarks

The analysis in the chapter has confirmed that the intersection between gender and rurality has serious ramifications in the educational sector. This has partly been caused by inadequate approaches to rurality and gendering. Poverty and the high cost of tuition and school uniforms have contributed to the current gaps in retention and progression of learners from rural areas. Girls have been affected to a larger extent by sexual abuse and violence, familial preference for boys, puberty and transitioning to adulthood, early marriages and pregnancies, child labour and home chores. The chapter has suggested, amongst other solutions, a multipronged sectoral approach to help alleviate the current challenges facing education in the Kenyan context.
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Can Social Justice Be Achieved Through Decolonisation?

Zvisinei Moyo

Introduction

There has been notable effort among researchers to examine gender issues in education. Interest in gender issues has expanded over the past two decades, gaining global attention. This has been a result of social justice concerns that seek to transform society (Cuervo 2016; Keddie 2012; Lumby 2013; Pratt-Clarke 2010; Shields 2014; Theoharis 2007).

Scholars in African countries, for example, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa and Zimbabwe, have focused on historical, political, economic, social and cultural factors that perpetuate gendered power hierarchies (Chabaya and Gudhlanga 2013; Greyling and Steyn 2015; Moorosi 2010; Netshitangani and Msila 2014; Shabaya and Konadu-Agyemang 2004). These African scholars have established cultural, social, economic and political impediments that impact on women’s advancement (Chabaya et al. 2009; Moorosi 2010; Moyo and Perumal 2019;

Z. Moyo (✉)
Department of Educational Leadership and Management, University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg, South Africa

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Muzvidziwa 2013; Mestry and Schmidt 2012; Parsaloi and Steyn 2013). This body of literature highlights that African girls and women are fighting patriarchal, oppressive structures and colonial, as well as postcolonial, legacies (Masinire 2011; Moyo and Perumal 2018; Nnaemeka 2003), but none focused on rural education as a distinct discourse occurring in contexts that fall short of modernisation (Corbett 2017).

The emerging scholarship on decolonisation in Africa, in particular Zimbabwe, deserves international attention. Indeed, Masinire (2011) concludes that decolonisation and postcolonialism in Zimbabwe have further complicated the rural context, warranting this study. The authors paid attention to this report with respect to examining the interplay of rurality, gender and education to determine if decolonisation has brought social justice to rural girls and how that affects them later as women.

Indeed, rurality has impacted significantly on social transformation considering that females form the largest portion of the majority of the Zimbabwean population residing in the rural areas, where traditional patriarchal structures change slowly (Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZimStat) 2016). Thus women in rural areas have had to transcend sociocultural norms, colonialism and postcolonial legacies. In the past twenty years, Zimbabwean scholars have documented challenges faced by girls in accessing education, and later as women facing leadership strategies and persistence of gender disparities (e.g. Makura 2012; Wadesango and Karima 2016; Zikhali and Perumal 2016), but none of the studies have focused on critically examining the extent of social justice in schools after the advent of decolonisation, on rural girls. To be more specific, in this study, Fraser’s social justice theory was used to scaffold how rurality and gender are complexly intertwined to promote a socially unjust decolonisation system. It precisely targets what marginalised groups need to be on a par with the rest of society. Thus the study critically reflected on the extent of equality, equity and fairness in rural postcolonial Zimbabwe, with specific focus on girls in schools and the effect this has on them as women. In order to enhance understanding of the heterogeneity of rurality, paving possible ways of balancing gender relations, the study unmasked the complexity of the decolonisation process in rural areas in Zimbabwe. This study contributes to the overlooked area of rurality, gender and education and seeks a nuanced understanding
of the complexities of the social justice agenda for rural girls in a postcolonic era.

The contribution of this study lies in the most pertinent concern of most African societies, the oppression of girls and women. Therefore, this chapter will find interest among scholars, gender activists, and government departments interested in addressing the oppression of girls and women and rural development, as well as assessing the achievements of decolonisation. This study adds its voice to the concerted efforts seeking a revolutionary approach to transforming institutional matters for sustaining gender equity. It paves the way of attempt to find solutions that will mitigate female oppression in Zimbabwe, as well as opening up gaps for further research. Scholars have documented the multilayered crises in Zimbabwe: political and economic crisis, violence and development (Hwami 2013; Mlambo and Raftopoulos 2010; Mvundura 2014; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2012); yet, there is a current dearth of the examination of decolonisation in the rural contexts of Zimbabwe, making our study timely. More importantly, this study is located within the international knowledge economy on social justice where fairness, equity and equality are advocated in order to transform society.

Conceptualising Social Justice

Although social justice, like other social concepts, has a variety of definitions, it has common ideas and concepts that bind and distinguish it. Hence, there has been increased global concern about social justice in education (Keddie 2012). The aim of social justice is to guide societies on transforming different aspects for instance curriculum, historical injustices and cultural values, and to mitigate disparity (Theoharis 2007). Pratt-Clarke (2010, p. 28) explains that social justice

... involves the implementation of strategic solutions informed by multiple disciplines, to minimise the effects of injustice toward individuals and groups based on their intersecting identities as a result of the operation of systems and structures of oppression and power.
Jayavant (2016, p. 371) refers to social justice as “full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs, including an equitable distribution of resources where all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure”. However, the distributive paradigm has been criticised for failing to examine social structures and institutional contexts, for example how decision making bodies are organised (White and Cooper 2014). Therefore, social justice is concerned with fairness, equity and equality with regards to social, political and economic benefits for all aspects of society.

In line with this, Fraser’s three dimensional view of social justice in education was deemed most appropriate to guide this study. The approach emphasises that,

Justice for all is possible when the structures of the economy reflect an equitable distribution of material resources, when the status order reflects equitable patterns of cultural recognition and when the construction of political space ensures equitable representation. (Keddie 2012, p. 264)

The three dimensions (redistribution, recognition and representation) take cognisance of socioeconomic, cultural and political injustice, elaborating that socioeconomic injustices emerge when societal structures create unfair distribution for specific social groups. Social injustices, on the other hand, surface when institutionalised patterns of cultural values generate misrecognition, lowering the status of particular groups of people or individuals; political injustices will also appear when some groups’ voices are muted or are not given equal opportunity in decision making (Fraser 2007).

Fraser’s theory of social justice was chosen to comprehensively gain insight into how social, political and cultural arrangements “institutionalise the deprivation, exploitation and gross disparities in wealth, income and leisure time” (Fraser 2007, p. 27) thereby denying a particular category equal participation. When the intersection of gender, rurality and education was analysed using Fraser’s three dimensions of social justice, a more nuanced view of ways of subverting gender issues was developed; for instance with regard to this study, it showed that the Zimbabwean rural context has evolved over many years from precolonisation to British
colonisation to almost four decades of decolonisation, and that this has had a significant bearing on gender equality, leading to problems in the gender order. Worth noting is that Fraser’s approach is not concerned with recognising group identity based on invisibility or privilege, instead it is based on dismantling the tangible arrangements that hinder parity (Keddie 2012). In essence, social justice seeks to reverse socially constructed and sustained differences in material conditions of living (Hlalele 2012) so as to reduce the privileging of some groups over others. Unfortunately for social justice, the mechanisms of injustices are mostly invisible and, on the surface, appear normal.

**Rurality in Post-Independent Zimbabwe**

In spite of efforts by the new political dispensation’s interventions aimed at redressing colonial injustices, transformation remains elusive, especially with regard to education generally, and girls’ education specifically. Rural areas are usually places where the ageing population retires, taking a break from urban life (Hlalele 2012). Unfortunately, rurality in Zimbabwe is connected to colonial policies of resettlement, dispossession and exclusion from opportunities. The colonial government in Zimbabwe developed urban areas and ignored rural areas where most black people resided. Indeed, research has excluded the impact of the historical background of rurality on gender and differential vulnerabilities on rural girls and women. Decolonisation has ignored the multilayered complex modes of female marginalisation and discrimination that have accumulated over many years under the watch of a colonial government serving a white minority. While taking into consideration the evolution of rurality in Zimbabwe, our concern was the current state of affairs in relation to gender disparities with a focus on rural girls, after 39 years of democracy. Hence, Fraser’s social justice theory unmasks the operation of power and inequality, strongly recommending representation of minority groups and questioning exclusionary frames within schooling contexts (Keddie 2012).

The majority of the Zimbabwean population are not living in rural areas by choice, but have been forced by lack of employment and other
political and socioeconomic factors, to migrate. Rurality is mostly characterised by low economic status, lack of infrastructure (roads and communication networks, electricity, running water, recreational facilities), long distances to urban centres, and minimal supply of services like education and health. Poverty is the most permeating feature of rural areas in Zimbabwe, further worsened by illiteracy and patriarchy. The ZimStat distribution of population in 2016 showed that of the 67.5% of the rural population, 72% were women, a sharp rise in the rural population from 5,561,475 in 1980 to 10,937,510 in 2016.

After attaining independence from the British colonial regime in 1980, the Zimbabwean government undertook a decolonisation process guided by a socialist ideology, leading to, among other priorities, massive expansion in education (Chabaya et al. 2009). Concurrently, Zimbabwe became a signatory to international, regional and national conventions geared towards gender equity. These were supported by institutional programmes and policies to weaken the deep-rooted institutional gender disparities. The aim was to overturn colonial policy frameworks, for example The Land Appointment Act, The Customary Law Act and The Labour Act (Gudhlanga 2013) that subjugated women. Through these laws, women became the custodians of rurality, tilling land that they would never own and producing food to support their families. The colonial capitalist regime inaugurated extremely gendered policy frameworks and practices, driving women to the rural areas where they have remained until today.

Postcolonial Zimbabwe, like other African states, has been characterised by poverty, harsh weather conditions, political and economic instability, as well as deteriorating natural resources (Masinire 2011). As a result, rural women continue to suffer institutional discrimination, as well as other forms of socioeconomic inequalities. During colonialism, the racial subordination of the black population by the white minority rule was exacerbated by the fact that skin colour and affluence were inseparable. The majority of black girls and women were very poor and whites were not. Hence, attainment of independence in 1980 should have ushered in a new dawn of transformation of the livelihood of Africans, but still remains unattainable. Social justice strongly appeals for human dignity – dealing with historical injustices and exclusionary practices (Shields
In concert with this, Fraser’s (2007) recognition perspective warns that girls’ and women’s differentiated status has been established by the order of society that privileges masculinity, explaining further that to help overcome subordination of women, strategies must combat the two fundamentals of sexism – maldistribution and misrecognition.

Other perspectives have established cognisance of the role of economic power in realising decolonisation. This perspective is illustrated by the lack of development of rural areas. The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) obliges the government to address rural development, taking into consideration that the majority of people living in the rural areas are female (Gudhlanga 2013). Rural women are experiencing challenges and the chances of rural girls accessing basic services, among them education, are minimal (ZimStat 2016). Rural schools in Zimbabwe lag behind in every aspect because of poverty, low fiscal capacity, adult illiteracy and low human and material resources, creating a complete cycle of poverty. The extent of poverty in the countryside is overshadowed by the dominance of urban places (Sachs 2018). Rural women constitute a population component that has not been thoroughly researched. They rely on agriculture for survival and “their material circumstances have greatly deteriorated … the arrangement has helped the ruling elite to keep those rural Zimbabweans subservient to the government” (Coltart 2008, p. 15). Social arrangements are constructed by dominant groups to benefit a portion of society (Hlalele 2012). Critiquing and challenging unjust social systems is what makes social justice most suitable for understanding the female population.

The Ups and Downs of Decolonisation in Zimbabwe

Decolonisation aimed to reaffirm human dignity and restore justice by reaching out to beneficiaries of historical injustice who were still trapped in injustices, so that justice prevailed. The call for decolonisation stemmed from the long-standing political grievances and injustices that had not
been dealt with. Post-independent Zimbabwe was guided by a socialist ideology (Gudhlanga et al. 2012) which transferred political power to the new government and, most importantly, shifted ownership of the means of production from the hands of colonialists to the majority of Zimbabwean people. Hence, the period from independence in 1980 until 1999 saw a repeat of other African countries that had attained independence. Zimbabwe became a signatory of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank economic policies, culminating in the Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes (Raftopoulos and Mlambo 2009) which had intolerable consequences on the poor, let alone the rural inhabitants (Coltart 2008). The ESAP programme forced the government to abandon its socialist ideology, eradicating free education. This created more structural barriers for girls in schools as the government did not pursue pertinent issues such as identifying economic, political, cultural, and marginalisation sources of gender injustices. The root causes can be traced back to the whole package of ‘Mugabeism’ ideology which served the minority elite groups mostly located in urban areas. Actually, what was presented and celebrated as decolonisation has become recolonisation.

In the year 2000, there was a sudden turn in policy, described by other scholars as genuine revolutionary decolonisation which aimed at empowering the black population formerly disadvantaged by white colonialism (Hwami 2016; Moyo and Yeros 2011; Sadomba 2011). However, another category of scholars, through the eyes of human rights, have criticised the developments, raising issues such as violation of rule of law, political violence, authoritarianism, undemocratic elections, corruption and economic meltdown, leading to high levels of poverty for the majority of the people (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2012). Mlambo and Raftopoulos (2010, p. 3) explain:

Meanwhile, the economic crisis resulted in a massive collapse of the country’s once-celebrated social services sector, with health and education provision declining precipitously in the face of chronic and severe underfunding and debilitating brain drain as most professionals voted with their feet in search of better prospects abroad.
What the former group of scholars refer to as revolution, was marked by repossession of land, formerly owned by the white minority, by the black Zimbabweans. The majority of the beneficiaries of the redistribution of 4500 commercial farms were rural peasants (Moyo and Yeros 2011). The mass transfer of land was introduced as indigenisation and black empowerment (Hwami 2016), witnessing black majorities violently grabbing not only the land, but all the means of production.

**Decolonisation Through Black Empowerment**

Despite state violence, the government of Zimbabwe adopted black empowerment and indigenisation as distinguishing characteristics of decolonisation. Black empowerment was meant to undo the colonial policy frameworks that created injustices that put black Africans in an inferior position, unable to equally participate economically and politically. According to Hwami (2016), 51% of farms, banks, mines and other means of production were now owned by indigenous black Zimbabweans, fulfilling the government’s anticolonial and anti-Western moves. Some scholars have praised the process as real sovereignty and decolonisation. However, another perspective has accused the regime of self-enriching in the name of indigenisation, opposing what social justice encompasses – that the state through its different departments and agencies influences distribution of advantages and disadvantages to each individual person on equal terms (Miller 1999).

As a result, some scholars have concluded that the British colonial regime has been replaced by a local black one because rural peasants, and women in particular, have remained poor. The perspective that insists on dictatorship and mass violation of human rights of the democratic government, sets Zimbabwe as a good example of the complexity of decolonisation. Much to our surprise, it has taken almost four decades for a politically liberated government to reverse the colonially crafted mass injustices by addressing the well-being of citizens, especially women who were forcefully driven to the rural areas by the British colonialists, who instead of fulfilling the promises of national development and redressing inequalities, concentrated on privileging minorities (White 2015). Rural
women have always been socioeconomically excluded and the lack of educational opportunities has meant that girls in rural areas remain out of sight. Social justice says that politicians and officials' behaviour must be constrained by the quest to achieve fairness, so much so that there has to be a culture of social justice.

After decades of seeking development, the Zimbabwean population has remained socioeconomically stratified according to class and gender. Instead of redressing the deep-seated gendered power hierarchies, the indigenisation policies constructed a “patriotic bourgeoisie” (Hwami 2016, p. 31) loyal to the ruling party. For instance, Mpondi (2018) observes that the black empowerment leadership structures meant to enhance economic access for the rural inhabitants were people aligned to the ruling ZANU PF party based in urban areas. Hence White (2015) argues that the legacies of the colonial regime continued to inform Zimbabwe’s political debates. In contrast, social justice is premised on the discourse of overturning structural mechanisms that support the persistent exclusion and marginalisation of social groups. Indeed, social justice advocates for the undoing of social constructions that categorise people according to material possessions, so as to decrease and gradually eliminate the existence of privileged minorities at the expense of others. Fraser’s social justice approach, which framed this study, prioritises a critical analysis of the arrangements, that is, the economic and cultural unjust structures and relations hindering parity (Keddie 2012).

Political Violence in Post-Independent Zimbabwe

The process of decolonisation in Zimbabwe has been complicated by state-sponsored political violence which Hwami (2016, p. 27) refers to as “a dictatorship that is internally colonising its own people”. In concert with this, researchers have described post-independent Zimbabwe as a crisis, catastrophe, and a tragedy (Sachikonye 2010). Literature in Zimbabwe documents how these events have affected the people socially, economically, politically and emotionally (Coltart 2008). Since the
government used its security agents to unleash violence on fellow citizens, the question was: Did the state aim to undo the travesty of colonialism? Indeed, the liberation war fought against the British settler regime was to attain a black majority government in 1980; the politically motivated violence that occurred in post-independent Zimbabwe was not racially motivated nor based on tribal differences, yet it further relegated the pursuit of gender equity to the backwaters by not committing to the eradication of gender inequality.

This is how decolonisation unfolded in Zimbabwe. It is worth noting that the whole process was characterised by state-sponsored violence, militarised domestic politics, immense economic constraints, rural underdevelopment, abandonment of socialist ideology, lack of service delivery, as well as ignoring implementation of gender equity policies. Central to social justice is the politics of contemporary democracy which attacks policies and practices that are socially unjust and this has been largely ignored after decolonisation, especially with regard to education (Miller 1999).

Indeed, the whole process was not supported by European countries and institutions; hence they responded by imposing economic sanctions in the year 2000, which plunged the country into what has been called the Zimbabwean crises. The government was accused of gross human rights violations which gave rise to sponsorship of political opposition parties, as well as the non-governmental civic organisations. These groups were seen as representing “Western imperialism and colonisation” (Hwami 2016, p. 25) which justified the unnecessary force to suppress them. The major political opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) was touted as an opposing force to the gains of independence, therefore collaborating with the Western countries to effect regime change.

Thus the decolonisation process emerged as a suppressor of dissent. For example, the 2005 clean-up campaign called *Murambatsvina*, which drove 70,000 people from urban areas to rural areas, was followed by torture and intimidation of civilians in retaliation for urban support of the opposition. At the same time, “Mugabeism” (Hwami 2016) promoted nativism – defending the African humanity as well as ideology. Unlike in other African countries where neoliberalism is being enforced,
the minority Zimbabwean elite nationalists have been at the helm of promoting patriotism, while the majority has suffered in poverty (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2012). Elaborating on this observation, Hwami (2013) reports that the indigenisation process empowered the elite as evidenced in how social services such as education were based on “capitalist privatisation principles” (Hwami 2016, p. 26). It is within this discourse that this chapter interrogated the extent of social justice after decades of decolonisation processes, with specific focus on girls in rural areas in relation to education and how this affects them as women.

Social Justice Assessment of Decolonisation in Zimbabwe

Excluding individuals and social groups in the exercise of power and decision-making is one of generative roots, along with issues of redistribution and recognition of inequality in schools. (Cuervo 2016, n.p.)

First and foremost, the current global consensus to achieve social justice in education sees the redistributive agenda as a way to level the playing field between urban and rural schools. To put contemporary decolonisation, rurality, gender and education in Zimbabwe into perspective, Fraser’s three dimensional view of social justice was used. This study echoes the social justice consensus that when people receive the same amount of material benefits, inequalities are reduced (Cuervo 2016). As a social concept, social justice demands equal rights and opportunities across all the major axes and differentiations; gender, ethnicity, race, religion, nationality and sexuality (Fraser 2007). Decolonisation in Zimbabwe will only take place when values such as promotion of human rights gain worldwide appreciation. It is widely indicated in the literature that the majority of people in postcolonial Zimbabwe are rural peasants whose livelihood and daily life practices are impeded by “capitalist market oriented socio-economic practices” (Hwami 2016, p. 27). This is in sharp contrast with how distributive principles of justice have been utilised in education policies and practice in Western contexts to achieve equity, that is, with the understanding that educational institutions
distribute materials unequally and that there are factors that put students in an inequitable position in accessing these materials (Keddie 2012). Therefore, policies and practice should assist disadvantaged social groups to achieve educationally, using the same measuring stick as their more privileged counterparts. This in turn will help them socially, eventually leading to them having access to society the same way as any other students would.

Questions relating to unequal distribution of resources have always constrained institutions of learning, with more profound impacts being felt in rural areas. Accordingly, principles of distributive justice acknowledge the connection between poverty, poor school achievement, early school dropout, post-school economic deprivation and dissatisfaction (Keddie 2012). Further generating structural barriers for rural girls is lack of further education, training and employment opportunities, and other dire situations that may force girls into early marriages. School achievement is at the heart of disconnecting these factors which certainly is the only way of breaking the cycle of poverty inherent in rurality. For a long time, distributive principles have framed policies of equity in countries like the UK, US and Australia which necessitated provision of extra funding and resources for economically deprived areas and needy students to support their participation and reduce the impact of poverty on school outcomes (Keddie 2012). This distributive principle of social justice has not been evident in the decolonisation processes in Zimbabwe.

Education determines employability and access to the labour market irrespective of historical background, social status and other disadvantages. Yet, in Zimbabwe there is not a socially just platform for all – rural girls, who are the focus of this study, are gendered beings defined by patriarchy, poverty, rurality and colonial history (Masinire 2011). The education institutions are not independent of the larger societal context which frames the traditionally acceptable gender norms. This coincides with the colonial school curriculum that conspired with the cultural gender order – preparing girls for the domestic sphere and orientating boys for industrial labour. There has been an outcry that the current Zimbabwean curriculum still manifests gender ideologies (Mutekwe and Mutekwe 2012). In other words, rural girls in Zimbabwe are disadvantaged in terms of education, regardless of decolonisation spanning...
39 years to date. Fraser (2007) emphasises that to transcend injustices means subverting institutionalised hindrances standing in the way of disadvantaged people to fully participate on a par with the rest of the society.

The question arising from the above discussion is: Are the policymakers aware of the systemic practices and processes that support the existence of social injustices and how much are they willing to transform the situation? The three dimensions of social justice – redistribution, recognition and representation – have to be applied so as to achieve socially just outcomes in rural schooling. The impact of social background must be a priority considering its influence on education outcomes; otherwise, a socially just education should acknowledge and redress structural barriers encountered by girls. Cuervo (2016) insists that the recognition of social groups form an integral part in redressing inequalities because it exposes structural impediments and not individuals’ failures. From this discussion, Fraser (2007) insists that recognition being a question of status does not require feminine identity, but equal participation in gender relations. This focus is of extreme importance in pursuing social justice, given that the education system continues to reproduce class and status fragmentation through unfair distribution of educational materials leading to an unbreakable cycle of poverty and future socioeconomic marginalisation. However, the distributive approach has its own blind spots; for instance, failing to recognise how issues of cultural disadvantage limit school achievement (Keddie 2012) – for example in this study, where rural girls are grappling with normalised traditional gender constructs, which do not change as they enter womanhood. Therefore, matters of cultural recognition together with fair economic distribution must be a priority for policy, practice and theory.

The political constitution of the Zimbabwean education context, as in the broader African continent, tends to undermine female voices and, in this case, is politically misrepresented. The context tends to be male dominated and there has been longstanding concern as to how rurality impacts the autonomy of girls. Rural schools are segregated in terms of proximity from urban areas, infrastructure, resources and attention of policymakers. Fraser’s concern of social justice advocates for recognition of all to reduce bias in redistribution, as well as for fighting status subordination (Keddie 2012). Misrecognition devalues the identity of girls by a
patriarchal culture which negatively impacts on their self-concept (Fraser 2007).

Looking at the paucity of research on rural education and the persistence of gender inequalities, one can safely say decolonisation in Zimbabwe overlooked the issues of social groups, in particular girls and women living and schooling in rural areas. The issue of rurality and gender disparity requires a moral demand for the provision of enough resources according to need so that girls can enjoy quality education. Girls in rural areas not only suffer distribution injustices during their school years, but also limited resources that negatively affect their post-school opportunities; as girls and then women, they also suffer injustices imposed by lack of power and status in a large way. Moreover, Zimbabwean society continues to legitimise the subordination of girls’ schooling in rural areas by reinforcing colonial and postcolonial discourses that bolster patriarchal relations. Actually, what was presented and celebrated as decolonisation has become recolonisation. The state has the key responsibility for identifying the least advantaged groups and distributing resources accordingly in order to attain fairness, thereby mitigating the effects of social circumstances on individual students. Rural girls feel powerless, inferior and marginalised because of the lack of cultural recognition, affecting both their present and their future. It is also important that both girls and women feel empowered to organise themselves to speak for themselves and to participate actively in decision making in their own concerns. Educational and gender equity policies guided by rural participants may serve as a practical guide when compared to policies formulated by policymakers located in capital cities. At the moment their female voices are muted, not only because they have no institutional power but because their status is socially constructed as subordinate.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has highlighted the unfolding of decolonisation in Zimbabwe and the extent of social justice on the outcome of rural schooling affecting the girls as they become women – from the lack of equal education with limited resources to the limited opportunities that this presents.
Using social justice as a framework, the study revealed that decolonisation in Zimbabwe has not brought social justice to girls’ schooling in rural areas, which has had detrimental effects on their ability to choose a different life for themselves. In addition, the study established that it is difficult to achieve social justice outcomes in a socially fragmented society. Rurality comes with a plethora of challenges ranging from traditional patriarchal systems, norms, values and practices, patriarchal colonial legacies, skewed distribution of material benefits, inaccessible education, marginalisation, poverty and isolation. Therefore, applying the three dimensions of social justice to rural schooling arguably improves distribution of resources and facilities, increasing outcomes that improve possibilities of participating in policymaking related to rurality, inclusivity and recognition of social groups. The absence of these dimensions promotes the accumulation of personal and structural injustices, for example inferiority, alienation, limited curriculum, disrespect and marginalisation. Although government policies are not sufficient because of their own shortcomings, their presence is necessary to eradicate gender oppression. Government policies should create a model for rural contexts that promotes a flow of resources to rural areas aimed at increasing outcomes and dismantling gender hierarchies; thus effecting social change. Rural education needs a distinct social justice framework that can be revised, is dynamic and is informed by people living in the rural areas. It is important that policies accommodate different discourses and practices inherent in society and the education system. Further research should investigate the experiences of girls living and schooling in rural areas, as well as how this has affected the lives of the many women that live there.

References


Preparation for the Fourth Industrial Revolution in Rural Areas: The Case of Students with Disabilities Prior to Higher Learning in South Africa

Sibonokuhle Ndlovu

Introduction

Among other studies on access into higher education in South Africa, Carrim and Wangenge-Ouma’s (2012) study has revealed that though there has been increased access of historically disadvantaged social groups, including those with disabilities, into South African higher education, these students still fail to cope with learning and success levels are low. Extensive research on rurality and education broadly, rurality and higher education, and South African rural schooling and its impact on students in higher education, have been conducted, for example the study by the Human Science Research Council (HRSC) (2005), Moletsane (2012), Hlalele (2012), Masinire, Maringe, and Nkambule (2014) and Leibowits (2017). However, there has been limited research on the challenges...
confronted in the preparation of learners with disabilities specifically, for learning in higher education in rural schooling in South Africa.

The present chapter brings a unique angle of specifically focusing on learners with disabilities, who have been always been grouped together with other disadvantaged learners, and not focused on as a social group of their own. While there are contextual challenges that are confronted by all disadvantaged learners, the chapter specifically focuses on those challenges that impact on learners with disabilities’ preparation for learning in higher education. This is one area of research that is important because learners with disabilities who manage to access higher education are also expected to succeed. The South African rural school context is important and relevant for this chapter because it is argued that, of all African countries, South Africa has the most comprehensive policies of inclusion (Chataika 2007). From this assertion, it is expected that all diverse learners, including those with disabilities, are well prepared for learning in higher education, in all schooling contexts. Thus, the specific focus on the rural context of schooling, and the case of students with disabilities specifically in South Africa, brings a unique angle to understand rurality in Sub-Saharan countries and social justice broadly, within a specific educational context. It is hoped that the chapter will enable understanding that preparation of learners with disabilities specifically, for learning in higher education cannot be overgeneralised to all rural schooling contexts. It is in this context that this chapter stands in the gap, by presenting specific challenges in the preparation of learners with disabilities for higher education in the rural South African context. This chapter might therefore provide new insights, and shed more light on the complex issues of rurality broadly, and rural schooling in Sub-Saharan Africa, which are topical issues in contemporary higher education.

Before presenting and discussing the challenges confronted in preparing learners with disabilities for learning in higher education in rural South African schooling, the chapter starts by discussing the context of schooling in general, and the policy of inclusive education, to reflect on what the government of South Africa has done to redress the past inequalities and social injustices of the previous regime. This is necessary in order to lay the foundation in understanding the concept of rurality broadly, and rural schooling in particular, and its impact on preparing learners
with disabilities in particular, to learn in higher education. Following that, the chapter discusses rurality and rural schooling in South Africa, to understand that the concept of rurality might differ from context to context, and consequently, its impact on how learners with disabilities are prepared for learning in higher education. It is hoped that this will reflect in the kind of challenges that will be presented in the chapter. It is important for the broad issue of rurality to be expounded on extensively because there have been misconceptions in which it has been totalised and reduced to disadvantage in all contexts. Thus, looking at all angles in the conceptualisation of rurality and its impact on education broadly is important to understand different educational contexts in the Sub-Saharan region of Africa. In passing, the issue of learning to learn as explained from the Vygotskian theoretical frame will be touched on, to shed light on preparation of learners to learn, which they should consequently apply in higher education. Next, Critical Disability Theory (CDT) is discussed and specific tools which will be drawn from the theory and used to illuminate the specific challenges are outlined. How charting the way forward could be done is also discussed and the chapter concludes by reiterating the argument and proposes further studies on understanding the actual classroom teaching to understand the issue of learning to learn by learners with disabilities in rural schooling in South Africa.

## Context of Schooling in South Africa

There has been some systemic transformation in terms of schooling in South Africa. While previously there was segregation in terms of disability, there has since been an effort to embrace inclusive education in which all diverse learners, including those with disabilities, are educated together in the mainstream. A number of scholars, including Naiker (2005), Walton, Nel, Hugo, and Muller (2009) and Walton and Nel (2012), have conducted research on inclusive education in schooling, to understand what it is and how it is working for diverse learners. What is emphasised by all scholars is barrier removal so that all learners, including those with disabilities, access learning in an inclusive learning environment in mainstream schools. It could be argued that when all barriers are removed for
all diverse learners to access learning, learners with disabilities can also be well prepared to cope with the demands of higher education. Bell (2013) has stated that Inclusive Education started in schooling and rolled into higher education. Considering its introduction about 26 years ago, it could be argued that though there are still barriers and obstacles that are confronted by learners to prevent their full inclusion, the move towards inclusive education has resulted in some positive change in schooling as a system. There have also been some changes in terms of adjustments in special schools, specifically in schools for the deaf, to include learning areas that were not formerly offered to learners with hearing impairments (Peel 2005). Howell (2006) has also confirmed some positive changes in schooling that have enabled learners with disabilities to also have access into higher education. Of importance to understand is that the government has been able to make remarkable attempts in terms of transforming schooling, as an important foundation and base for higher education. However, that there are still challenges which are experienced in the context of schooling cannot be glossed over. Challenges are still being confronted, more specifically in rural schooling, which interfere and impact negatively on learners with disabilities’ preparation to learn in higher education. It is important that those specific challenges are brought to light because students with disabilities are also expected to participate competently in higher education. Thus this chapter presents and discusses the specific challenges confronted in rural schooling in the South African context.

Policy of Inclusive Education

For the democratic government of South Africa to be able to make recognisable and significant systemic transformations in schooling, it is because of the policy of Inclusive Education. Numerous articles by a wide range of scholars, have discussed inclusion in South Africa broadly, and inclusive education specifically. The policy was adopted as a White Paper in 2001 (White Paper 6: Special Needs Education Building an Inclusive Education and Training System). It specifically addresses inclusive education and barrier removal so that all diverse learners can access learning
within the mainstream school system. Learners with disabilities are considered to be the most vulnerable, hence the need for equitable participation and equity in their education (Howell 2006). The inclusive education policy emphasises inclusion in schooling and access into higher education (Bell 2013). It could be argued that it is important for the inclusive education system to start from schooling because it is foundational to higher education in terms of learning to learn in the later context.

Rurality in South Africa

Rurality is difficult to define because it is conceptualised differently in different contexts and there is no standard international definition. Leibowits (2017) has argued that it is not only difficult but it can be impossible to define rurality. Criteria for defining rurality are country specific and different features and factors are used to determine the concept of rurality; these include, among others, total population density or size of locality, geographical location, settlement patterns and land use. Moreland, Chamberlain, and Artaraz (2003) have understood rurality in the context of “a category and set of experiences” (p. 56). Also rurality comprises a demographic and geographical space and cultural orientation, according to Roberts and Green (2013). Combining together the scholars’ understanding of rurality, it can be understood as a geographical space with people who have their own culture and experiences.

In the South African context, the definition of rurality is fluid because the classification of the country into rural or urban boundaries is not fixed and static. According to Statistics South Africa (2003), separating urban and rural areas creates inequity in terms of economy and resources, hence the artificial political and boundaries are functionally integrated. While it is so, in Statistic (2011, p. 18) rurality is defined as “any area that is not classified urban” which could be “tribal areas, commercial farms and informal settlement”. Leibowits (2017) has brought the dimensions of history, power, material resources and identity issues into the definition. While all the constructs help to understand the meaning of rurality, the Statistic (2011) Report’s definition could be viewed as reductionist because it locates rurality in rural areas, when that pertains to only a
geographical space, and leaves out other very important constructs that contribute to the understanding of rurality.

Rurality, not only in South Africa but in most contexts broadly, has always been associated with disadvantage, underdevelopment, remoteness and backwardness (Roberts and Green 2013), hence the inequalities and social and economic injustices (Wilson-Strydom 2014). With specific reference to rural South African schooling, it is reported that the disadvantages relate to material conditions such as lack of electricity, books, and access to the dominant language of English (Leibowitz 2001). Wilson-Strydom (2014) has argued that when looking at issues of social justice it cannot be expected that people who do not have the same opportunities achieve the same outcome. It is in this context that Hlalele (2012) has proposed a social justice approach in response to the inequalities and injustices of rural education. Though social justice is not the focus of this chapter, it is important because when rural schooling is limited, it might not be expected that preparation of learners with disabilities to learn to learn in higher education might not be without challenges.

While issues of disadvantage, backwardness, poverty and other limitations associated with rurality should not be ignored, consideration of these alone is a reductionist perspective and a limited conception of rurality. Moletsane (2012) has argued that studies on rurality have adopted a deficit model in which only the negative and limitations have been the focus expense of dynamic interactions of people within the rurality context, and how they engage, to shape themselves within specific contexts of rurality. Odora-Hopper (2004) understands this view as limited because it focuses only on the space and homogenises it rather than focusing on people, their identity, behaviours and other nuances and variations involved. What particular scholars argue, triggers the understanding that the totalisation of rurality as only disadvantaged is limited. There can also be success rather than disadvantage, especially when and where material and skilled human resources are well distributed. This understanding suggests that even in the South African context there is rurality that is not disadvantaged in terms of poverty, backwardness, provision, support and disadvantage in general. Thus, we find some rural schooling in South Africa is not disadvantaged, and can prepare learners with disabilities to learn how to learn, and consequently learn in higher education. This is
important to bring to the fore so that rurality is not overgeneralised to
disadvantage in all contexts. This chapter therefore does not focus on the
challenges confronted in rural schooling in the South African context as
hinged on the deficit model, but on the understanding that for effective
intervention to be suggested and possibly implemented, it should start
from understanding the challenges confronted and their possible cause.

As rurality entails a lot of factors, has different meanings in different
contexts and implies different situations of advantage and disadvantage
across time and space, in the present chapter rurality and rural schooling
in South Africa considers more specifically geographical location and cul-
ture in particular educational contexts. Focus on geographical location
takes into account both urban and rural schooling contexts, that is, of
disadvantage in terms of inclusive education. The culture of the people in
a particular geographical space is also important because it can have a
bearing and effect on the way learners with disabilities are included or
excluded in the preparation of learning, how to learn. In other words,
how disability is understood consequently influences certain behaviours
or attitudes towards learners with disabilities, which in turn impacts on
their preparation to learn in higher education contexts. This is not the
totalisation of rurality, as many other important aspects have not been
considered and applied in the context of understanding rurality and con-
sequently rural schooling in South Africa. Disadvantage and the culture
of the people in a particular geographical space have been considered core
because they help to understand challenges that are confronted and the
implications they have on the learning of students with disabilities, and
consequently their learning in higher education. There is understanding
and awareness of advantaged rural schooling contexts, but this has not
been the focus because it might not yield the same challenges as the dis-
advantaged contexts.

**Preparation to Learn to Learn**

Based on the fact that the chapter is broadly focused on the preparation
of learners with disabilities in terms of learning to learn in order to be
able to learn in higher education, it would have been worthwhile to delve
deeply into a number of theories of learning. However, for the scope of the chapter this has not been done because the challenges focused on presently do not specifically relate to the practice of teaching and learning within the four walls of the classroom. In that respect, preparation to learn to learn has been explained at surface levels, by the theory of learning as explained by Vygotsky. Vygotskian theory is also relevant for rural schooling and applies to the learning of all diverse learners, including those with disabilities. Learners might have different learning styles but the process of learning to learn might not vary significantly. However, for those with disabilities, their learning might require special support which may not be required for all learners Ndlovu and Walton (2016). Vygotsky (1978) argued that learning takes places when the sociocultural context of learners is taken into consideration. This means that teachers should utilise the informal knowledge learners bring with them to school in order to teach formal scientific knowledge at school (Vygotsky 1978). Thus in preparation, all learners, with and without disabilities, should be helped to learn to learn by drawing from their cultural capital (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990). In other words, they should be able to connect what they already know (informal knowledge), with what is new (formal school knowledge) to develop new knowledge. Thus, all diverse learners – from either rural or urban schooling – can further learn in higher education when they have learnt to learn to learn. Consequently, when higher education also provides the necessary support, those with disabilities can learn as much as those without, through the preparation of learning to learn that has been made at school.

Theoretical Framework

Specific theoretical concepts have been drawn from Critical Disability Theory (CDT), and used to underpin the chapter. The particular theoretical concepts have been important for their consideration of the material and local contextual conditions, and specifically questioning the social practices and structures that result in the marginalisation, exclusion and access of other social groups, more specifically those with disabilities (Meekosha and Shuttleworth 2009). CDT is broadly focused on the
Global South perspectives and non-Western settings (Meekosha 2011). Concepts that relate to that have been drawn to enable understanding of the contextual issues in South Africa, by virtue of geographical location. Furthermore, the theory privileges the voice from the Global South so that it is also heard (Grech 2015). Scholars who are proponents of CDT seek to shift the understanding of issues of disability specifically, and inclusion in general, from that of a Eurocentric Global West perspective, to include voices from the South (Grech 2015). It implies, therefore, that relevant concepts from CDT could be able to offer an explanation of South African rurality in terms of preparation of learners with disabilities to learn at higher education institutions in a more illuminating way. Broadly, the particular selected concepts have been used as the tool to understand what could be the possible underlying causes of the challenges confronted. They could also possibly enable understanding of how the disadvantaged rural contexts of schooling impact on preparation for learning in higher education. Broadly, the relevance of the particular theoretical concepts for the present chapter is that they could inform an understanding of contextual differences in terms of rurality and consequently challenges confronted in the South African rural areas, which might be different from other rural schooling contexts in Sub-Saharan Africa, Africa broadly and internationally.

Challenges in Preparation of Learners with Disabilities for Higher Education

Though South Africa has made efforts of transformation to address the inequalities of the past apartheid era, the school system is still dualist (Spaull 2012, 2015), hence the exclusion of diverse learners in disadvantaged rural schooling contexts. Learners with disabilities are the most excluded from the school system because, unlike learners without disabilities, their learning requires special support and exceptional skills from those teaching them. Well-resourced schools which were former White schools only are located in urban areas and they provide quality education (Spaull 2012). Former Black schools which previously
provided Bantu education are mostly located in poor high suburbs (locations) and disadvantaged rural areas, and they are still disadvantaged in terms of provision of quality education (Spaull 2015). The report, “Complicit in Exclusion” Human Rights Watch (2015), stated that there are a hundred of thousands of children with disabilities who are in school but excluded in the system. The report does not provide the exact statistics of those children, but it points to the extent to which the particular students are excluded by the education system more particularly in rural South African schooling. An experience of an exclusive school system is not only for learners with disabilities, but also for those without, although it is exacerbated for the former.

Explaining the exclusion of learners with disabilities in the school system broadly, Lewin (2007) has argued that they are ‘silently excluded’, meaning that though they are enrolled and attending school; there is little they are learning. Literature further reveals that it is the same predicament in special schools, where learners with disabilities are excluded in terms of limited subject choices. Higher grade subjects such as Physics, Maths or Accounting are not offered and some special schools do not offer education to Matric level (McKinney and Swartz (2016). One would then argue that in special schools specifically, learners with disabilities might not be well prepared for learning in higher education because the foundational subjects which could help them to be competent in the technology and computing skills required for further learning in higher education are not being taught to learners with disabilities.

**Contextual Barriers in Rural Schooling**

Besides being excluded by the school system itself, learners with disabilities are not fully prepared for learning in higher education because of a number of contextual challenges. It is revealed in literature that issues of extreme poverty, lack of basic amenities and poor health, associated with poverty, are some of the challenges confronted by learners with disabilities in rural schooling in South Africa. The challenges have negative implications for teachers’ teaching and the particular learners’ learning. Furthermore, the Human Rights Watch Report (2015) stated that
mainstream schools decide whether or not they are willing to accommodate learners with specific categories of disabilities. Furthermore, students with disabilities pay fees that those without disabilities do not pay, which include the payment of assistants. Parents of such children find themselves burdened to pay all the fees required and other basic amenities such as transport costs. It was further revealed by the Human Rights Watch Report (2015) that in rural disadvantaged schools, learners with disabilities are confronted with attitudinal barriers from teachers and other learners, resulting in physical abuse, violence and neglect. At other times, the particular learners with disabilities are turned away by school officials and the medical personnel, and referred to special schools. The process of enrolling in special schools takes as long as four years, while children wait at home or in care centres (Human Rights Watch 2015). It might not be expected that learners with disabilities, faced with such contextual limitations, can be well prepared to learn at the higher education level. Oliver (1990) has argued that the limitations of persons with disabilities are not in their impairments but in the social environments within which they exist. Oliver’s argument applies perfectly to learners with disabilities in disadvantaged rural schooling in South Africa. Their preparation to learn in higher education is not limited by their impairments, but by the poor socioeconomic conditions, compounded by rural disadvantaged schooling context. Contextual disadvantages in rural schooling are not only confronted by learners with disabilities but also those without, but are exacerbated for those with disabilities because their learning needs are unique and special.

Contextual difficulties in rural schooling not only affect learners with disabilities’ learning but also the teachers’ teaching. Literature reveals that teachers are also frustrated by large classes of about 50 learners or more which make it difficult to include all diverse learners in their teaching effectively. Furthermore, there are limited resources in terms of teaching aids, problems with student transport and inaccessible physical structures. Big classes and lack of adequate resources, according to Eloff and Kgwete (2007), do not support inclusivity. While this has negative implications for all diverse learners, it is more pronounced and compounded for learners with disabilities because they are delicate to handle in a ‘normal’ situation, how much more by frustrated teachers. Preparing learners
with disabilities for learning in higher education is therefore limited in such a rural schooling context. Those learners who manage to enter higher education will be inadequately prepared, lacking skills of accessing knowledge and functioning academically in a higher education context.

Issues of exclusion of learners with disabilities in the school system in general and the contextual barriers were illuminated by a theoretical concept from Critical Disability Theory that explains segregation and marginalisation in systems of schooling. South African schooling in general is understood in terms of a system that seeks transformation on one hand yet on the other it exists within a neoliberal context. Harvey (2005) has explained that neoliberalism is informed by economic policies in which value is placed on productivity and marketisation of education. A school system informed by such an ideology has its education becoming a commodity of sale rather than a basic right. There is therefore a tension between the transformative agenda, in which every child in the South African schooling system is said to have a right to education, at the same time that neoliberal practices place value on economic production. With such a situation as the predicament of the schooling system, it is not surprising that half a million students with disabilities who are disadvantaged in rural schooling, are out of school. Socioeconomic conditions determine who has access to quality education. The case of students with disabilities is exacerbated by the fact that their education is expensive by virtue of them requiring assistive devices, which are not required by those without disabilities. They also do not manage to pay tuition fees as education is a saleable commodity and as a result they drop out before they even complete their studies in basic education. Thus, though the government has made efforts of transformation in the education system in general and in schooling in particular, exclusion of students with disabilities from rural disadvantaged social contexts has persisted to date and an issue of neoliberalism makes this inevitable. When education is commodified and marketised, it becomes only accessible to those from middle class and high socioeconomic statuses. On this, Spaull (2013) has commented that South African education is egregiously unfair, with large proportions of learners from poor and rural schooling being illiterate and innumerate. Preparation for learning in higher education might not be expected to be different in poor rural schooling for learners with disabilities. This is
because literacy and numeracy competency are basic requirements to function in higher education.

While the context of neoliberalism has a negative impact on all learners of low-socioeconomic status, the impact is exacerbated on learners with disabilities. Devlin and Pothier (2006), the proponents of CDT, have argued that the core assumptions of neoliberalism are disablist to those with disabilities. With productivity and marketisation of education given priority, able-bodiedness is valued and preferred as associated with productive labour force, which is competitive at global levels. Consequently, impaired bodies might not be preferred. In simple terms, the school system that is informed by neoliberal policies would prefer able-bodied learners and students who are viewed as capable of contributing to economic production. Based on the statistics of learners with disabilities who are not in school, it could be argued that the underlying invisible cause for their exclusion could be that they are viewed as not expected to contribute much to the economic production. Thus, though there are attempts by the government towards transformation, in which all diverse learners could be included in teaching and learning, learners from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with disabilities in particular, may not be included because the education system needs to also fulfil the demands of neoliberalism. In such a situation, preparation for learning in higher education is limited.

Lack of Knowledge on Inclusive Education and Poor Implementation

That there has been transformation in schooling with a view to include all diverse learning is indisputable. However, despite the comprehensive policies of inclusive education (Department of Education 2001), South Africa has its state of inclusive education falling far short of what is expected. Carrim (2002) has described it as confused. Learners with disabilities are still excluded in what is understood as full-service schools which are expected to have teachers who could effectively implement an inclusive practice (Mahlo 2011). In the mainstream, in-service teachers
have challenges with the inclusion of diverse learners, including those with disabilities, in their teaching because they lack training and hence their efficacy in terms of classroom skills is low. They have a different understanding of inclusion education. Hay (2003) has argued that some of the teachers view inclusion as simply integrating learners with special needs into their mainstream classrooms. It is argued that the particular teachers use the individual model in which they understand limitations to be within individual learners rather than in the schooling context (Hay 2003). When the individual model informs the teachers’ understanding of inclusion, categorisation of learners with disabilities according to deficits is inevitable. Engelbrecht, Oswald, Swart, and Eloff (2003) have argued that other teachers understand inclusion as catering for the needs of all the learners in the class to ensure each learner achieves their potential. As William (1999) has argued, people’s perception determines their actions, and the way teachers understand inclusion influences how they implement the practice. As long as inclusive education is understood differently by different teachers, challenges in its implementation might not be averted, which negatively impacts on the preparation of learners with disabilities for learning in higher education. Thus, whilst inclusive education is promulgated, it is not yet at a level which can effectively prepare learners with disabilities for learning in higher education. Literature has further revealed that pre-service training is still poor in institutions of higher education. Graduate teachers who expected to join the service and offer better inclusive practices are also not fully trained to do that at present (Walton and Rusznyak 2016). Donohue and Bornman’s (2014) study has revealed that culture and tradition have a bearing on lack of effective inclusive education in South Africa. They argue that disability has been associated with sins or witchcraft and is therefore a punishment from God or the ancestors on the parents (Donohue and Bornman 2014). This cultural belief makes all involved with learners with disabilities who subscribe to the belief sceptical, and consequently this has negative implications. This is most prevalent in rural schooling in remote areas of South Africa.

Literature has further revealed that teachers mostly in rural schools have low self-efficacy in terms of collaboration. Teachers are not confident to play with other responsible stakeholders to implement an
inclusive teaching practice (Engelbrecht et al. 2015). It is reported that they prefer referring learners with disabilities to other professionals because they feel that those could better handle and support the particular learners (Engelbrecht et al. 2015). When teachers are reported to be limited in terms of collaboration it speaks to exclusion of learners with disabilities in learning. This is because they will continue to be removed and isolated from others in the mainstream class, to be supported by other professionals elsewhere. This totally contradicts what is meant by inclusive education in practice. In essence, when teachers’ efficacy in collaboration is low, the implementation of an effective inclusive practice that includes learners with disabilities is also limited. Furthermore, teachers in disadvantaged rural schools have also been found to be lacking in terms of content knowledge (Venkat and Spaull 2015). This complicates the whole issue of inclusive education, and learning by all diverse students, and has more negative implications for those with disabilities.

Lack of Knowledge of Disabilities by Teachers

Students with disabilities are limited in their preparation for learning in higher education because of teachers’ lack of knowledge of disabilities. Most South African teachers do not have basic knowledge about disabilities (Human Rights Watch 2015) and this is most prevalent in rural schooling. It is argued that teachers enter the classroom with the view that all learners are homogeneous (Walton and Rusznyak 2014). At institutions of higher education also, the Inclusive Education module does not explicitly engage pre-service student teachers in specific barriers and disabilities (Walton and Rusznyak 2016). It might not be expected that teachers who do not have adequate knowledge of various categories of disabilities will be able to fully prepare students with disabilities for learning in higher education. A survey conducted by the HSRC (2005) carried out in rural schools revealed that 29% of school principals stated that learners with disabilities were coping with the learning in schools. It suggests that most principals believed that those learners were not coping. If they are not coping in school, it might not be expected that they cope in higher education. They might not even have access into higher education.
Negative Attitudes Towards Learners with Disabilities

Due to frustrations that arise from lack of training, lack of support and lack of resources, teachers in rural schooling are said to have negative attitudes towards learners with disabilities. Scholars including among others, Bothma, Gravett, and Swart (2000), Engelbrecht, Swart, and Eloff (2002), as well as Horne and Farrell (cited in Cassady 2011) have argued that teachers report feelings of frustration that when they include learners with disabilities, they take a lot of time accommodating the needs of one learner with special needs at the expense of time for the majority of other learners. This could be seen as teachers manifesting negative attitudes towards learners with disabilities because they view them as a burden. Teachers also view the amount of time they need to attend additional meetings, to complete paperwork, and to collaborate with specialists as too much to benefit only a few learners with disabilities. They prefer to devote time to other learners in the class. Cassady (2011) has observed that negative attitudes of in-service teachers arise because they lack the necessary skills to implement a practice that includes all diverse learners, including those with disabilities. He has argued that

when general education teachers have negative attitudes toward inclusion and are unwilling to have students with disabilities in their classrooms; it is mainly because they may not provide the necessary supports that would create a beneficial learning environment for the students. (Cassady 2011, p. 3)

Indeed, when the efficacy of in-service teachers in terms of classroom skills is poor, they might have negative attitudes towards inclusion, more especially towards those with disabilities because they are hard to handle without knowledge and skills to teach them. Whatever the underlying reason, the fact remains that learners with disabilities are excluded by teachers in rural schools because of negative attitudes. That this has negative implications for their preparation for learning in higher education cannot be overemphasised.
Out of School Experiences

Besides exclusion in the school system and contextual barriers, there are children with disabilities who are totally out of school in rural South Africa. Presenting a report on the status of learners with disabilities in special schools, the Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities provided data that 597,953 learners with disabilities were out of school in 2013 (Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities 2013). They were not attending school at all and Martínez (2015), a researcher for Human Rights Watch, gave the statistics of those children as being half a million. This ‘out of school’ experience was provided in the same report, Human Rights Watch (2015, p. 1), which also stated that “In 2015 the Government declared that it has attained the universal enrolment in primary school, hence achieved the United Nations Millennium Developmental Goals.”. This statistical information needs to be verified because there cannot be any achievement of universal education when half a million learners with disabilities, who should be included, are out of school.

Cultural issues and traditional beliefs about disability come in when learners with disabilities are not found in school. As parents of children with disabilities are shunned and blamed for witchcraft by society, they might hide such children and not send them to school (Department of Education 1995). Donohue and Bornman (2014) asserted that the cultural attitudes can determine whether the parents see the importance of educating a child with disabilities or not. Preparation of the particular learners to learn, and to learn at higher education levels, cannot be talked of when the particular learners are not even at school.

Poor implementation of inclusive education and negative attitudes manifested by in-service teachers were illuminated through a tool from Critical Disability Theory which explains the effects of ‘top-down’ approaches within specific educational contexts. The two could be seen as resulting from the top-down approach in which those in the top hierarchy impose inclusive education on teachers in schools, without adequate training. Devlin and Pothier (2006, p. 12) have argued that “it goes beyond political analysis to pursue … transformation … it asks not only the traditional question of what is to be done, but also who is to do it…”
This means that the question of who will do it is imperative. In the case of the implementation of inclusive education, it is the teachers who have a lived experience of teaching and the challenges confronted in the classroom context. However, it seems the stakeholders in power and specialists are imposing on them without first finding out what they know and do not know about teaching learners with disabilities. For example, Mahlo (2011) has argued that one of the limitations experienced in schooling was that teachers were not implementing the strategies provided by the Learning Support Teachers (LSTs) to include learners with disabilities. The reason why teachers are resistant could be the result of the imposition of strategies. While attitudes could be seen as an intrinsic problem in teachers, it could be the result of the extrinsic force applied on teachers in a top-down way, hence the passive resistance manifesting in negative response.

**Way Forward**

The way forward in terms of preparing learners with disabilities in the rural schooling context for higher education in South Africa considered Moletsane's (2012) assertion that lack of change in education broadly, is largely influenced by use of deficit paradigms in research. The intervention should be that which acknowledges the challenges confronted in rural schooling but that also recognises the teachers and learners with disabilities’ agency as people within specific contexts of rurality. Teachers in particular, who are the practitioners in inclusive education and its implementation, need to be consulted. Their agency, and how it has shaped their understanding of teaching learners with disabilities to learn to learn, should be the starting point for improving the process specifically and the practice in general.

When students with disabilities access higher education, the issue of ‘learning to learn’ must not be looked at from the perspective of teachers in schools and students with disabilities only. Members of staff in higher education should also play their part in enabling the particular learners to utilise what they have brought with them, to further learn. Jones, Coetzee, Bailey, and Wickham (2005) observed that while students can bring with
them ‘community cultural wealth’ to learn, institutions of higher education also fail to support their needs so that they build on their cultural capital. It implies that the academics in higher education might fail to utilise what students bring with them to assist them to learn. For students with disabilities, the way forward will be an open dialogue between the two parties, to understand their different learning and unique needs. The voice of those with a lived experience of disability should be listened to (Hosking 2008) if meaningful intervention could be provided.

**Conclusion**

The argument for this chapter is that students with disabilities have the potential to learn in higher education if conditions conducive to preparing them to learn how to learn have been provided right from schooling. This chapter has only focused on contextual and barriers to do with inclusive education challenges confronted in rural schooling in South Africa, resulting in the particular students having problems coping in learning in the new contexts of higher education. There could be value added to the argument of the chapter if what is actually happening in the classrooms in terms of teachers’ teaching of learners with disabilities to learn and learn, to shape their further learning in higher education, could be understood. Thus, further research focusing on the actual teaching and learning in rural South African schooling could be useful in terms of understanding the big issue of rurality and how it influences preparation of learners with disabilities for learn to learn, to learn in higher education in South Africa and other countries in the Sub-Saharan region.

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