

Multidisciplinary Journal of Educational Research
Volume 13, Issue 3, 15th October, 2023, Pages 295-312
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<http://dx.doi.org/10.17583/remie.9311>

Resources Mobilisation Challenges in Rural Schools of South Africa: What Can we Learn?

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Abstract

Government efforts to provide equal and quality education in rural schools has yielded minimal change in South Africa since the dawn of democracy in 1994. Growing inequalities and recent economic constraints exacerbated by the COVID 19 pandemic have further exposed and deepened resource scarcity among rural communities and schools. The South African Schools Act (1996) is clear that, through school stakeholders such as School Governing Bodies (SGB's), schools are required to supplement resources provided by the State. However, there is a paucity of research that explores resource mobilisation challenges experienced by school stakeholders in rural schools of South Africa. The article is based on a qualitative research study, supported by the Asset-based theory and Resource mobilisation theory. To collect data, we used participatory approaches such as the Free Attitude Interviews (FAI) and SWOT analysis. Four main findings emerged from the data, which were used to make recommendations to address and improve the quality of education in rural communities. These are untapped resources, propensity towards action, under-valued school stakeholders and community voice mobilisation.

Keywords

Asset-based approach, participatory methods, resource mobilisation, rurality rural schools

To cite this article: Mkhize, T. R., & Davids, N. M. (2023). Resources Mobilisation Challenges in Rural Schools of South Africa: What Can we Learn?. *Multidisciplinary Journal of Educational Research*, 13(3), pp. 295-312 <http://dx.doi.org/10.17583/remie.9311>

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Multidisciplinary Journal of Educational Research
Volumen 13, Número 3, 15 de octubre, 2023, Páginas 295-312
© Autor(s) 2023
<http://dx.doi.org/10.17583/remie.9311>

Desafíos de la movilización de recursos en las escuelas rurales de Sudáfrica: ¿Qué podemos aprender?

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Resumen

Los esfuerzos del gobierno para brindar educación igualitaria y de calidad en las escuelas rurales han producido cambios mínimos en Sudáfrica desde los albores de la democracia en 1994. Las crecientes desigualdades y las recientes limitaciones económicas exacerbadas por la pandemia de COVID 19 han expuesto y profundizado aún más la escasez de recursos entre las comunidades y escuelas rurales. . La Ley de Escuelas de Sudáfrica (1996) deja claro que, a través de las partes interesadas en las escuelas, como los órganos de gobierno escolar (SGB), las escuelas deben complementar los recursos proporcionados por el Estado. Sin embargo, hay escasez de investigaciones que exploren los desafíos de movilización de recursos que enfrentan los actores escolares en las escuelas rurales de Sudáfrica. El artículo se basa en un estudio de investigación cualitativo, sustentado en la teoría basada en activos y la teoría de la movilización de recursos. Para recopilar datos, utilizamos enfoques participativos como las Entrevistas de Actitud Libre (FAI) y el análisis FODA. De los datos surgieron cuatro hallazgos principales, que se utilizaron para hacer recomendaciones para abordar y mejorar la calidad de la educación en las comunidades rurales. Se trata de recursos sin explotar, propensión a la acción, partes interesadas de la escuela infravaloradas y movilización de la voz de la comunidad.

Palabras clave

Enfoque basado en activos, métodos participativos, movilización de recursos, escuelas rurales de ruralidad

Cómo citar este artículo: Mkhize, T. R., & Davids, N. M. (2023). Título Artículo. *Multidisciplinary Journal of Educational Research*, 13(3), pp. 295-312
<http://dx.doi.org/10.17583/remie.9311>

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G yielded minimal change in South Africa since the dawn of democracy in 1994 (DoE, 2005; Gardiner, 2008, Chikoko, 2018). The National Development Plan 2030 (NDP) recognises quality education at all levels including rural areas as a catalyst for socio-economic transformation and creation of job opportunities (NPC, 2011). ‘Quality Education’, is identified as part of the Fourth Sustainable Developmental Goal (SDG) of the 17 SDG of the United Nations Organisation (UNO). Quality education has been defined so as ‘ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all’ (UNESCO, 2016). Furthermore, Agenda 2063 of the African Union implores African countries to acknowledge well-resourced education as important for human capital development and quality education. Rural schools are still faced with challenges of infrastructural and educational resources required to advance quality education (Ndofirepi & Masinire, 2021). Studies such as Masinire (2020), and Mkhize (2018), posit that resources are key to quality education in schools. Unfortunately, resource scarcity continues to prevail in rural schools and communities which is compounded by a paucity of critical research that highlights the plight of rural communities. This study argues that resource mobilisation theory (RMT) offers an entry-point to open the discussion around leveraging existing resources to address developmental issues to the benefit of the material environment and impoverished human conditions.

While recognising the daunting challenges such as poverty and unemployment facing rural communities, we caution against a deficit mindset towards development and favour an Asset-based disposition (Moletsane, 2012). Therefore, this study encourages the exploration and mobilisation of human resources within the context of these communities (Mkhize & Hungwe, 2022). RMT emphasises the importance of structural factors such as the availability of resources to a collective and the position of individuals in social networks and stresses the rationality of participation in social movements (Golhasani & Hosseinirad, 2017). In Ghana Abdul-Wahab et al. (2019), applied RMT in their study that successfully identified resources mobilisation strategies for the sustainability of the Wa Municipal Assembly. Abdullah (2020) elucidates the importance of RMT in the context of socio-political movements in Egypt and their subsequent influence by looking at the utilisation of social media throughout political uprisings in the country. In South Africa, Burchardt (2014) utilised RMT in the mobilisation of resources through AIDS activism. Considering the relatively unexplored potential of RMT, based on relevant studies, we proffer RMT for consideration as a pathway for rural educational development.

Therefore, we argue that resources, especially the lack thereof, are central to the challenges of providing free and equal quality education in South Africa. We posit in this article that, it is only when resource mobilisation (RM) challenges are fully explored and understood that school stakeholders will be better equipped to formulate successful RM strategies and mitigate resource scarcity in their context.

Background to the Problem

Schools in rural contexts are faced with several challenges and these require additional resources, which the state may not be able to provide given the current economic challenges.

The South African Schools Act stipulates that through school governing bodies (SGBs), schools are required to supplement resources provided by the State (RSA, 1996b). Given the state of the economy, school stakeholders have the task of supplementing the schools' resources, a necessity if schools have to survive. Many studies such as du Plessis (2020), Gamede (2020), Mestry (2020) and Veit (2022) indicate that SGBs in many South African schools in rural contexts are not well equipped to execute their duties and argue for the empowerment of SGBs in their roles, including that of supplementing resources through RM. Furthermore, there is a gap in literature that explores RM challenges in rural schools of South Africa. We maintain that within rural contexts, the task of mobilising resources cannot only be assigned to the school principal and the SGB. However, different school stakeholders are better positioned to effectively identify RM challenges and devise strategies for effective mobilisation of resources in rural schools (Gamede & Uleanya, 2021). In the next section we explore literature on rurality and rural schools and its relation to RMT.

Rurality as Educational Context

A large section of the SA population lives in rural communities and a significant percentage oscillate between the rural and urban for economic reasons. As stands to reason that if rural communities can become developmental hubs for job creation and development, a greater resource base may emerge which may lead an increase the asset – based which may be capital generating. This article is about RM challenges in rural schools of South Africa. Why do we explore rurality? We posit that “rurality can be a useful construct for investigating life and education in rural areas” (Trahar et al, 2020, p. 932). South Africa defines the concept of rurality differently from first world countries like the United States of America (USA), countries within the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and Canada. This has contributed to many meanings of the concept of rurality and its elusiveness (Ndofirepi & Masinire, 2021). In Canada, rurality is defined based on population census and postal codes (Jaworsky, 2020). In the United States of America (USA), “rurality” encompasses all population, housing, and territory not included in an urban area and that is defined as a having at least populations fewer than 2,500 people (United States Census Bureau, 2020).

This study adopts the definition of rurality drawing from the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act, No. 41 of 2003 (RSA, 2003) and the KwaZulu- Traditional Leadership and Governance Act, No. 5 of 2005 (KwaZulu-Natal Legislature, 2005), also adopted in many ground-breaking studies on rurality (Chikoko, 2018; Myende & Hlalele, 2018, Mkhize, 2018). These Acts define rurality to denote areas under the jurisdiction of Amakhosi (chiefs). This definition is adopted in this research because it does not emphasise the deficit conceptualisation of rurality but only stresses the form of leadership and the importance of acknowledging resources and capacities that exist within rural contexts.

Due to the bleak future of the South Africa's economy, we argue here that there are very limited signs that the state will one day provide sufficient resources, which means there is a need to find ways through which schools stakeholders can mobilise resources in rural schools. However, this paper argues that for school stakeholders to be successful in mobilising resources, there is a need for them to fully understand and appreciate RM challenges within their context.

Rural communities and schools cannot be generalised, which guides this research to remain focused on the specific context and space within which the rural schools in the study are located (Maringe, Masinire & Nkambule, 2015). We note that the need to explore RM challenges and marginalisation in rural schools is not only limited to the South African context. A study conducted in United States of America by Crouch and Nguyen (2021), found that schools within rural context are faced with challenges which are classified as academic, financial sustainability and human capital. Research on rural schools throughout Europe reflect that small rural schools in remote and sparsely populated areas have closed or live under threat of closure, marketisation of education, difficulties in attracting and retaining staff, lack of funding, and diminishing resources (Beach & Vigo Arrazola, 2020; Cannella, 2020). In rural China, Shi and Sercombe (2020) found that the lives of rural students are exposed to poor quality education, resource scarcity, unpleasant school experiences and long-suffering peasant parents where peasants' voices are not generally heard.

What about the RSA context of schools in this study? In the SA context study, the schools used fall within Quintile 1 category of schools in terms of the National Norms and Standards for School Funding as defined in the South African Schools Act No 84 of 1996 (RSA, 1996). Quintile 1 schools are predominantly poor, rural schools while Quintile 5 denotes well-resourced, mostly situated in urban areas. Schools in Quintile 1 to Quintile 3, because of the poverty associated with rurality in the South African context (Moletsane, 2012; Myende & Hlalele, 2018) are exempted from paying school fees. Thus, these schools solely depend on government budget allocation. Dependent on government, faced with resource scarcity, a paucity of research that explores RM challenges, these school struggle to sustain their operations and promote quality education in their context. Thus, the importance of exploring RM challenges in this study. In the next section we explore the theoretical framework utilised in this article.

Theoretical Framework

In achieving the purpose of this study, we decided to integrate the asset-based approach and resource mobilisation theory as a framework that inform the identification of RM challenges and RM in rural schools. The discussion focusses specifically on the explanation of theories and their application and relevance to this study.

The asset-based approach

Kretzmann and McKnight (1993), posit that the industrialisation of jobs, unemployment and job losses in the United States of America prompted leaders, business, and government to seek solutions to respond to the challenges of unemployment. They state that, in providing solutions to challenges presented above, two approaches were adopted. The first focussed on community needs and deficiencies whereas the second approach emphasised commencing by discovering inner strengths and capabilities where community assets are discovered. According to Kretzmann and McKnight (1993, 1996), this mentality often conveys half of truth about the real circumstances within that particular community or school. These authors explain the fact

that the “needs map” in most cases informs policies and programmes that are deficiency focussed. In response to the challenges and problems emanating from the needs map approach, Kretzmann and McKnight developed the asset-based approach (1993). The asset-based approach is an alternative path to the deficient path of the needs-based approach (Emmett, 2000). According to Kretzmann and McKnight (1993, p. 25) assets are “gifts, skills and capacities” of “individuals, associations and institutions” within a community. Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006) provides a relationship orientated definition of the asset-based approach. They perceive the asset-based approach as a ‘bottom-up approach’ that shifts the emphasis from a service perspective to an empowerment perspective.

Eloff (2003) emphasises the importance of relationship building and state that individuals, local organisations need to build and rebuild relationships that acknowledge the talent and capabilities of all stakeholders. In the case of this study, the principal, SGB, local organisations and local municipality capabilities must be acknowledged as assets that may add value to the identification and mobilisation of resources. Therefore, the starting point in this theoretical framework is the focus on what people and communities have, instead of moving from a deficit question, which asks what people and communities do not possess. Ebersöhn and Mbetse (2003) provide the key characteristics of the asset-based approach as encompassing the following: (a) Acknowledgement of resources and potential within people, societies and organisations; (b) Promotion of self-determination; (c) Developing school-community partnerships; and (d) Reliance on inner-innovation, self-control and power. This study further maintains that the asset-based approach adopted in this study pays attention to the fact that schools within rural contexts have challenges and deficiencies (Chidakwa, 2020). However, what is encouraged in this study is that external resources should be better utilised if organisations, schools and communities have mobilised their own resources first.

Resource Mobilisation Theory

The resource mobilisation (RM) theory was developed in the early 1970s to challenge social marginalisation and deprivation theories that identify individual grievances as the primary motivation for collective action (Golhasani & Hosseinirad, 2017; Abdullah, 2020). RMT theorists argued that the formation of social movement organisations (SMO’s) and the ability of these organisations to mobilise resources from potential supporters, both human capital and money, are the critical factors in movement mobilisation (Zald, 2017; Manky, 2018). According to Zald (2017) and Manky (2018), RMT is currently the dominant approach in the field of SMOs. argue that social movements succeed through efficient mobilisation of resources and the creation of both economic and political opportunities for members. Burchardt (2014) and Manky (2018) further maintains that movements can mobilise both material and non-material resources. Material resources include money, organisations, human resources, technology, means of communication, and digital and print media, while non-material resources include legitimacy, honesty, relationships, social networks, public attention, authority, moral commitment, and unity. Therefore, within RMT, school stakeholders may have access to different resources offered by RMT to address resource scarcity within rural school context (Edwards & Kane, 2014; Zald, 2017). These are material resources, human

resources, social-organisational resources, cultural resources and moral resources. Next, we discuss the research methodology utilised in this study.

Methodology

The main research question that guided this study is the following: “*What are the resource mobilisation challenges experienced by school stakeholders in rural schools of South Africa.*” Therefore, this study deals with challenges for mobilising resources in schools within rural context. We worked with 15 school stakeholders attached to three schools. This study was conducted in three schools in UMzimkhulu Circuit situated within UMzimkhulu local municipality. School stakeholders included three school principals, three teachers SGB’s, three parent SGB’s, one trade union, two non-profit organisations, two corporate social investment managers and one local municipality manager. Drawing from the above explanation we declare that this qualitative study adopted a purposive sampling technique (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2019).

We used Free Attitude interviews (FAIs) and the SWOT analysis as our data generation methods. A Free Attitude interview, as described by Meulenberg-Buskens (1996), was used because it enabled inclusive and robust questioning, clarity seeking and follow-up questions that yielded summarised versions of issues that were classified as data (Malebese, Tlali & Mahlomaholo, 2019). Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis (Bhenzanghta et al., 2021) was conducted with all participants from three sites in the study. The principal, SGB, union representative, NPO worked together in identifying internal and external forces that impact on the creation of successful conditions for resources mobilisation to thrive. We used thematic data analysis to identify, analyse, and report patterns (themes) within data (Clarke & Braun, 2017). To ensure rigour we used reflective journals and member-checking to ensure that what emerged from our interactions with school stakeholders in this study was not influenced by our own person interpretations and biases (Guba & Lincoln, 1984).

According to Bless et al. (2006), research ethics assists in avoiding research pitfalls and misuse; it also promotes the accountability of researchers, who need to be guided by, and respect, ethics. Permission to conduct the study was granted by the institution ethical clearance committee in the College of Education. Further approval for conducting the research was obtained from the Department of Basic Education (DBE) in Kwazulu-Natal. The study is informed by ethical principles that include non-maleficence, autonomy of research participants, informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality (Creswell & Clark 2019). Findings and discussion of this study are presented in the next section.

Findings and Discussion

In this section, challenges for resource mobilisation in schools within rural contexts are discussed. The findings are presented and discussed under four broad themes that emerged during the inductive and deductive data analyses. In other words, the themes draw on the theories, literature, predetermined research questions and the issues emerging from the field. These are *Untapped resources*, *Propensity towards action*, *Under-valued school stakeholders and community voice mobilisation*.

Untapped Resources

Capacity building in mobilising resources in this paper is believed to be the cornerstone for resource mobilisation to thrive. According Fullan, capacity building refers to the development of competencies, resources, and motivation. School stakeholders are considered high in capacity “if they possess and continue to develop the knowledge and skills” and if they are “committed to putting the energy to get important things done collectively and continuously” (Fullan, 2010, p. 57). While capacity is important in mobilising resources and is stated as a condition for success (Mkhize, 2018), data sources from all sites revealed a lack of capacity as a challenge for resource mobilisation in the studied schools. The SWOT analysis show lack of training in networking skills, stakeholder development, marketing skills and community participation.

Lack of knowledge and training on resource mobilisation is a huge challenge when it comes to mobilising resources for our school. (SWOT analysis: Site one)

We lack trainings and resource mobilisation plan. This means we have no guidance in terms of how we can be successful in mobilising resources for the school (SWOT analysis: Site two)

Lack of networking, stakeholder development, and proposal development skills. Lack of marketing skills. This affects our efforts to mobilise resources. (SWOT analysis: Site three)

In addition to the SWOT analysis, interviews with stakeholders revealed that the absence of training on how to mobilise resources poses a challenge in their context. For example, the union representative had this to say: “ As a teacher union, we need to put pressure on DoE to provide training on resource mobilisation for SGB, SMT and the Principal ” (Teacher Union).

The voices of participants indicate that lack of capacity in the mobilisation of resources, marketing skills, networking skills and proposal writing poses a challenge for mobilising resources. SASA (Act 84 of 1996) requires SGBs to work in collaboration with all stakeholders, namely the state, business, traditional leadership, and others. Nevertheless, this cannot be realised if school stakeholders are not trained to perform their duties in an effective and efficient manner. Numerous studies (Aina & Bipath, 2020; Lumadi, 2020) are in line with the above finding where they identified lack of training as a challenge for stakeholders in discharging their duties effectively. The asset-based approach in this study stresses capacity-building (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993, 1996) where the focus is moved from service-orientated approach to an empowerment approach. Within RMT, school stakeholders may have access to different resources offered by the resources mobilisation theory below to address resource scarcity. These are material resources, human resources, social-organisational resources, cultural resources and moral resources (Zald, 2017; Manky, 2018; Mkhize & Davids, 2021).

This study bemoans the fact that SASA expects school stakeholders to perform functions as dictated by the Act, yet there are no policies and programmes in place to equip stakeholders. The concerns of stakeholders regarding the lack of capacity above needs to be understood in relation to their perceived powerlessness to make a meaningful contribution in the mobilisation of resources (Mkhize, 2018). This study argues that lack of capacity reinforces stakeholders’

internalised powerlessness; it presents the importance of what Freire (1974) refers to as conscientisation. According to Freire (1974): “Conscientisation implies that when I realise that I am oppressed, I also know I can liberate myself if I transform the concrete situation where I find myself oppressed”.

Critical to note here is this study’s discovery that makes a connection between the asset-based approach and conscientisation (Freire, 1974). This connection emanates from the realisation that the asset-based approach requires conscientisation as a catalyst that leads to stakeholders organising themselves to take action to change their social realities (Freire, 1974; Otjes et al., 2020). The study therefore argues that the empowerment of school stakeholders may elevate the consciousness of school stakeholders from perceiving themselves as powerless to awakening the realisation that they possess capacity and resources to change their prevailing conditions. Furthermore, this shift in terms of power dynamics enhances the equal participation of all school stakeholders in the mobilisation of resources, thereby challenging the internalised belief that views rural people as powerless.

Propensity towards action

Data sources in this study revealed that stakeholders are aware of the resources in their context but there is no action taken to mobilise these resources. According to Otjes et al. (2020), inaction refers to the failure of people, groups and organisations to act against their disadvantage. From the discussion, what comes out is that participants are aware of challenges and resources that may address their challenges but they do not act to address these.

Identification of business, NPOs, parents to support resource mobilisation efforts is what we need to do. (SWOT analysis: Site one)

Partnerships with other education institutions within UMzimkhulu. In-service placement of TVET and university students to assist in resource mobilising at school level is necessary. (SWOT analysis: Site two)

SWOT analysis in site one and site two revealed that stakeholders are aware of resources available around them but lack urgency to mobilise them. In addition to the SWOT analysis, interviews with participants revealed that stakeholders are aware of resources, but inaction hinders them from actively mobilising resources. Principal A had this to say: “Firstly, we do not discuss anything about how we can mobilise resources internally. There is something lacking with us but I can say we are indeed lacking”.

It further comes out from Principal A that the school has never discussed how they can mobilise resources as the declining government allocation to schools worsens each year. Therefore, the study argues that, in addressing collective challenges faced by schools within rural contexts, collective action as proposed in the asset based approach is of critical importance (Ebersöhn & Ferreira, 2012; Myende & Chikoko, 2014).

The study finds it important here to unearth why school stakeholders above show awareness of resources but fail to act in mobilising them? Masinire (2020, pp. 29- 30) explain that “the foundation of deficit thinking about African education and rural education in particular was

constructed and consolidated by the Afrikaner Nationalist Party”. This study argues that the above reinforces inferiority complexes and stereotyped narratives that rural people are inferior with no power to act, challenge and change their circumstances. Freire (1974) explains that the oppressed consciousness can be confronted with huge inferiority complexes especially when faced with those that think they know more. This study highlights the importance of heightening the consciousness of school stakeholders through empowerment initiatives that decolonise their minds (Ngugi, 1981) from viewing themselves as inferior and unable to act and change their world. The argument of RMT in this study is that the collection and utilisation of resources through any form of governance are the basic requirements for the achievement of the desired goals of that society (Abdullah, 2020).

Under-valued school stakeholders

Individual interviews with stakeholder’s uncovered under-valued school stakeholders as a challenge for mobilising resources. For example, SGB parent C added: “ You see my child. All members of the SGB are uneducated. It is only the school principal that is educated ”.

SGB parent B in site two stated: “ We all need to be trained on how to mobilise resources as the SGB and not leave this responsibility with the principal only ”.

Similarly, data sources revealed the challenge of overreliance on government. For example, principal B in site two had this to say: “ Our problem here is that we have this belief that government is the only source or solution to our resource scarcity”.

Even though the education system in South Africa has adopted a democratic management structure (SASA, Act 84 of 1996) that promotes the participation of parents and other stakeholders, the voices of stakeholders here continue to reflect overreliance on the principal. On the other hand, the asset-based approach in this study (Chidakwa, 2020; Chikoko & Khanare, 2012; Myende & Hlalele, 2018) views parents and other stakeholders as a critical resource that has sustained schools within rural contexts. Teachers and parents who happen to be at the bottom of the hierarchy perceive the principal as being on top of the hierarchy. Secondly, the false view that suggests that parents’ limited formal education renders them inferior and incapable of making meaningful contribution in the development and mobilisation of schools within rural contexts is critically challenged in this study.

Furthermore, limited empowerment initiatives for school stakeholders on the part of government should not be understood only as a contradiction to what is advocated by the asset-based approach when emphasising the importance of empowering human resources as an asset (Moletsane, 2012; Myende & Chikoko, 2014). This may also be understood from the perspective on how it encourages dependency on government and entrenches powerlessness (Mahlomaholo, 2009) on the part of school stakeholders. The study argues that this situation further encourages feelings of inadequacy over action, thereby maintaining the status quo and narrative of rural people as passive recipients of government aid rather than active participants in determining their future. The asset-based approach challenges this deficient, hegemonic view and argues that providing resources based on the needs approach creates a perception that

only outside technocrats, organisations and government departments can provide genuine help (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). The absence of empowerment in the mobilisation of resources may be understood as one of the underlying reasons that encourages dependency on the school principal and the Department of Basic Education and this situation warrants to be challenged.

This study maintains that the dependency mentality portrayed by stakeholders in this study may be traced back to literature that marginalises rural communities as situated on the fringes of social life and amenities. For an example, Dube (2020, p. 4) defines a rural area as follows: “Rural areas are remote places found in the countryside, in forests and mountains. Typically, rural people lack access to socio-economic amenities, such as quality education, good health services, transport, marketing facilities, and even electricity”.

Important to note in this definition is that it presents half-truths that depict rural people lack power to control their destiny. Therefore, the study here argues that school stakeholders should be conscientised to such an extent that they are able to recognise privilege and marginalisation as well as unlearn the old knowledge inculcated by the euro-centric worldview designed to subjugate and exploit ‘the other’ (Langdon, 2013). The key idea of RMT is that the capability to mobilise and drive collective action is facilitated by the presence of certain social structures and resources including school-community partnerships (Zald, 2017).

Community voice mobilisation

Data from all sites showed the importance of community voice mobilisation that represents and advocate for the mobilisation of resources for all schools within the municipal district as critical for RM within rural context. In addition to the SWOT analysis, individual interviews highlighted the similar concern and suggested the formation of a collaborative and advocacy structure representing all schools.

We have to advocate for the mobilisation of resources jointly within all schools in UMzimkhulu municipality. (SWOT analysis: Site one).

We need a structure formed by school that will drive resource mobilisation for all schools in our area. (SWOT analysis: Site two).

Partnerships with other institutions within uMzimkhulu and sharing of resources is important for promoting working together as education institutions in our area. (SWOT analysis: Site three)

In addition to the SWOT analysis, interviews highlighted the similar concern and suggested the formation of a collaborative and advocacy structure representing all schools. For example, SGB parent A had this to say: “We need to speak with one voice as communities and schools within rural contexts”.

The Municipality Manager (MCM) supported the view that schools have to form a unifying structure and gave an example with the NPO sector: “We prefer collaboration. We have

recommended that all NGOs must follow suit. They now have a structure called the NGO Coalition. We do not want NGOs to compete but we want them to complement each other ” .

CSI Manager B corroborated the views above and stated:

At provincial and municipal level, you need to have effective stakeholder management. The DOE use to have a stakeholder relations coordinator who coordinated corporate involvement in schools. If ABSA, Toyota or Mondi wants to invest in a school, the stakeholder coordinator will know what the needs in a particular area are. This will assist in facilitating resource mobilisation and allocation to schools.

The voices above show that mobilising resources as individual schools can pose a challenge for the school and for funders and supporters. RMT emphasise collective acting and collective identity as critical in the mobilisation of resources (Abdul-Wahab, 2019; Abdullah, 2020). Central to the above definitions is the importance of acting as a collective in addressing RM challenges which enables school stakeholders to challenge and change any injustices and marginalisation experienced by schools within rural contexts (Myende & Hlalele, 2018). Patton (2012) avers that critical emancipatory research is not only limited to studying society but also its aim is to critique and change society. Therefore, the study finds it important here to unearth reasons why rural schools and stakeholders have not formalised themselves into a unified voice capable of building power to change the existing circumstances.

Therefore, it is important to highlight the fact that long before the dismantling of apartheid, it remains entrenched and unchanged as rural communities and stakeholders remain without a collective bargaining and advocacy voice. This study argues that rural communities’ false belief that after 1994 all their challenges, which include marginalisation and unequal provision of services, will automatically be addressed by the new government explains the absence of a powerful collective rural voice. The study argues that these are directly linked to whether rural people and schools have a mobilising political voice or not (Edwards & Kane 2014; Manky, 2018). The next section of our article discusses the conclusion and recommendations.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Our research is a qualitative study conducted in three schools within a rural context. Thus, our findings cannot be extended to other schools. However, we argue that the intention of this study was not to generalise its findings but, rather, to understand a practical case that can be used to unravel discourse about RM challenges in rural schools. In response to the research question formulated to guide this research, and based on our findings, we conclude that rural schools remain faced with resource scarcity constraints. However, school stakeholders need to firstly understand and deal with RM challenges within their context for effective RM efforts to prevail and enable quality education. As presented in the above section, findings of the study suggest *Untapped resources, Propensity towards action, Under-valued school stakeholders and Community voice mobilisation* as critical in addressing RM identification and mobilisation within rural contexts. While capacity is important in mobilising resources, data sources from

all sites revealed *under-valued school stakeholders* as a challenge for resource mobilisation in the studied schools. In line with the above findings, literature identifies capacity building as a critical in ensuring that stakeholders discharge their RM duties effectively. Therefore, the asset-based approach and RMT theory in this study recommends capacity building as important for addressing RM scarcity. We argue that the empowerment of school stakeholders may elevate their consciousness, stopping them from perceiving themselves as powerless and awakening the realisation that they possess capacity and resources to change their prevailing conditions.

It was further found that schools are aware of available resources, but they do not develop strategies to address RM challenges. This was revealed as a major challenge for the mobilisation of resources, in both the literature and data in this study. From the findings, what comes out is that participants are aware of challenges and resources that may address their challenges, but they do not act to address these. Following the asset-based theory and RMT theory in this study, we recommend the importance of action in addressing RM challenges. This study cautions that *propensity towards action*, reinforces inferiority complexes and stereotyped narratives that rural people are inferior with no power to act, challenge and change their circumstances. Finding from data and literature revealed an overreliance on a school principal and government as a challenge in their context. The asset-based approach and RMT in this study views parents and other stakeholders as a critical resource that has sustained schools within rural contexts.

The false view that suggests that parents limited formal education renders them inferior and incapable of making meaningful contribution in the development and mobilisation of resources for schools within rural contexts is critically challenged in this study. While there is an issue of power among different people at different levels of hierarchy, *community voice mobilisation* was revealed from both literature and data in this study as a key challenge to the mobilisation of resources. This study recommends the formation of a collaborative and advocacy structure representing all schools in addressing RM challenges in schools within rural context.

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