Challenges of school resources management for curriculum delivery in South African Rural High Schools: Principals' perceptions on the way forward

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ABSTRACT

Various existing studies have established the multi-faceted nature of social inequalities in South Africa. The social inequalities also segregate schools into urban and rural schools, with adequate or lack of infrastructure influencing learners' performances in various South African schools. Hence, school principals are expected to manage the available resources to attain curriculum delivery and the whole school's performance. This qualitative study explored principals' perspectives on managing uneven school resources to achieve the goals and objectives of the education system. This study adopted an interpretive paradigm to understand the voices of 20 rural school principals in semi-structured interviews. The principals were purposively selected from 20 rural schools in King Cetshwayo district in KwaZulu-Natal. The audio-recorded interviews were thematically analysed to generate themes for findings and discussion. Findings revealed that most rural schools need more adequate school resources, and the principals need more support to attain quality curriculum delivery in schools adequately. The principals also lamented the high expectations placed on their schools for the academic excellence of their learners. Thus, the contents of each subject curriculum could not be efficiently unpacked and delivered to learners. The study, therefore, recommends improvement in resource provision to rural schools. At the same time, principals should be capacitated on effectively managing available school resources to achieve desired and efficient curriculum implementation in rural schools.

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Introduction

School resources have a critical impact on any nation's education system, as the adequacy of the school resources enables teachers to effectively unpack curriculum content for each school subject, thus enhancing learners' academic performance (Ajani, 2019). South African schools enjoy different provisions of necessary school resources. Several studies say social inequalities in South African schools hurt many learners, especially in rural schools (Uleanya, 2023). Mabula, Khalabai, and Simeon (2023) argue that inequalities in providing educational resources to schools can be traced back to the apartheid era, with apparent disparities between white-dominated and black-dominated schools in different parts of South Africa. Ifeanyi (2023) posits that with the advent of democratic government in 1994, many expected a massive transformation in social equality in schools. However, Gamede, Ajani, and Afolabi (2022) report that after decades of independence in South Africa, rural schools are disadvantaged, as they grossly need more school resources that can benefit their learners. Although, inadequate provision of school resources is one of the most significant challenges in most African countries (Hompashe, 2018). Hence, the need for school principals who are instructional leaders and school managers becomes crucial in managing available and inadequate school resources in many rural schools (Myende et al., 2018; Muthala et al., 2022).

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The principals tend to plan for the acquisition of necessary school materials needed for effective teaching and learning to attain the educational goals, according to the South African School Act (SASA) (Republic of South Africa, 1996). As a result, the resources available to the school influence and direct teachers’ classroom practices. The dynamics of principals’ management of school resources drive and anchor the attainment of curriculum delivery. According to various extant studies, the need for more literature on school resource management for curriculum delivery in rural schools continues to trend (Johnson, 2023). As curriculum managers, the principals are tasked by the Department of Basic Education to manage school resources to attain the curriculum professionally, using available physical, material, financial, and human resources to implement the school curriculum effectively (Dayson, 2016). The World Bank (2018) opines that schools require adequate resources to enhance learners’ and the whole school’s performance.

Providing resources to schools determines the quality gap across South African schools (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018). Ajani (2022) posits that providing school resources is a political and social injustice to rural schools in South Africa. Furthermore, Dube (2020) describes the South African education system as highly complex, complicated, and diverse, situated within the unequal distribution of school resources, resulting in profound and long-term social inequalities. South African schools are characterised by bias compared to white and urban schools (Education Commission, 2016; Valley, 2023). Hompashe (2018) reports that learners from historically white schools perform better than their counterparts in black-dominated schools, where leadership in curriculum management is measured based on learners’ performance in academic assessments (Education Commission, 2016; UNESCO, 2017; Bashir et al., 2018; World Bank, 2018; OECD, 2018; Mkhasibe et al., 2021; Myende & Nhlumayo, 2022). Other studies agree that proactive and visionary principals deliver curricula based on prudent management of scarce resources available or allocated to their schools (Hompashe, 2018). Comparatively, essential resources and facilities, such as running water and stable electricity, are financially costly and place rural schools in resource distress due to their remote location, neglect, and poor infrastructure (UNESCO, 2017; Bashir et al., 2018; Ajani, 2019).

Hence, this study explored the perspective of rural high school principals’ contexts to effectively manage school resources for curriculum delivery in a conducive learning environment. Abenawe (2022) says that, even though schools do not have enough essential resources and infrastructure, principals also develop and implement plans for how to teach the curriculum well. Most of these rural high schools have been able to record good learners’ academic performance despite their challenges. Thus, the situation at the rural schools in KwaZulu-Natal province serves as a call to improve school resources and curriculum management in rural schools.

**Literature Review**

**Nexus Between Education Resources and Curriculum Management**

The essential components of the educational system are the people, non-material and material resources, school environment, and community resources that can improve curriculum management and make teaching and learning easier (Usman, 2016; Mthethwa et al., 2022). In the simplest terms, the educational system’s resources include teachers, other staff, buildings, teaching and learning materials, and community resources that can be used as much as possible for teaching and learning. According to Yulieana (2020), various educational materials are available, including community members, artefacts, specimens, models, and school facilities such as chalkboards, display boards, and buildings. Because of this, Dlomo and Ajani (2022) argue that it is crucial to have a variety of educational resources to both carry out the curriculum and shape the teaching and learning environment. Khoza (2016) contends that when sufficient and pertinent resources are available, teachers become more confident in their teaching ability.

Similarly, Usman (2016) asserts that the availability of sufficient and appropriate educational resources influences the effectiveness and efficiency of school management. So, managing these resources in schools influences the performance of the entire institution. In contrast, insufficient resources would ultimately hinder learners’ ability to achieve their learning objectives and hinder school administrators’ performance. According to Yulieana (2020), schools with sufficient resources have highly productive management systems and high-quality output. However, Yulieana (2020) notes that many schools in underdeveloped African nations need more government financing to offer the resources required by the schools.

Furthermore, schools are situated within communities, with community members responsible for supporting schools with necessary educational resources. However, the raging poverty in most African countries has incapacitated community members’ support for the provision of resources (Ajani, 2019; Ajani et al., 2018; Dlomo et al., 2022). Hence, there is a need for critical management of the available educational resources to attain the desired results. According to Usman (2016), school leaders must ensure prudent management of school resources for balanced usage and maximum utilisation if school goals are to be attained.

**Curriculum Management in Rural High Schools**

The core of each school’s mission is delivering curriculum content throughout its creation, presentation, and dissemination (Flick, 2014; Ajani, 2022). Research on the principal’s role in various school programmes has shown that the terms “curriculum management” and “instructional leadership” are often used interchangeably within the context of educational leadership (Dayson, 2016; Abenawe, 2022; Valley, 2023). Principals must maintain equilibrium between the many responsibilities placed on them as educational leaders, including those related to curriculum administration and instruction, school finances, employee welfare and relations, and interactions with School Governing Bodies (SBG). Principals must plan, develop, oversee, and evaluate educational
materials and activities to ensure they are efficient and appropriate for the contexts of their schools and the efficient use of resources (Mandukwini, 2016). As a result, principals investigate various methods for managing school finances and purchasing resources that promote quality teaching and learning.

Curriculum delivery involves the business of teaching and learning in schools and assessments aimed at effective teaching and learning in schools (Abenawe, 2023). Aside from quality teaching and learning, effective curriculum management and implementation are crucial determinants of learner achievement (Mohapi et al., 2014). Taole (2015) concurs that constant curriculum review or assessment is essential for school functionality and improving educational quality. As a result, curriculum managers must be well-versed in curriculum management. Furthermore, Oliva (2013) highlights the importance of principals and SMT as curriculum managers and leaders in designing, approaching, and providing resources to achieve school curriculum implementation. Similarly, Mandukwini (2016) expands the role of curriculum managers to include modification, questioning, and adaptation of the prescribed curriculum to promote values and school/educational needs.

### How Should The Curriculum Be Managed in Rural Schools?

The primary leadership behaviours of rural principals in promoting instructional and curriculum delivery have been linked to learners' effective teaching and learning, as stated by Mohapi and Netshitangani (2017). On the other hand, most rural school principals and SMT members report that it takes more work to fulfill their responsibilities while also catering to the requirements of learners (Myende, 2018; Bashir et al., 2018). Many researchers have argued that rural schools are unable to provide learners with the same resources that are available in urban schools, which are essential for the teaching of curriculum (Education Commission, 2016; du Plessis & Mestry, 2019; Bashir et al., 2018; Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018; World Bank, 2018). In addition, du Plessis and Mestry (2019) contend that the geographical isolation of many schools is to blame for the lack of adequate and necessary basic, physical, and other resources in those schools. According to Basson and Mestry (2019), rural schools need more learning materials relevant to their learners' needs in curriculum delivery. This includes having teachers who need to be qualified, having inadequate facilities, and having many learners for each teacher. For example, research by Mohapi et al. (2014) found that principals and SMTs need help implementing changes and reforms to the curriculum and classroom practices. After all, they do not have the resources they need to do so because they work in rural schools (Mthethwa et al., 2022; Muthala et al., 2022).

Although the Department of Basic Education has initiated to develop a new Rural Education Policy, delivering the educational curriculum in rural schools still requires several modifications (Dlomo & Ajani, 2022). The new initiative seeks to provide rural schools nationwide with sufficient resources to guarantee educational programming is available in rural communities (Yuleiana, 2020). On the other hand, this policy did not have much of an effect on the quality of the delivery of the curriculum because rural schools continue to struggle with a lack of school resources, which in turn leads to poor educational outcomes and a lack of quality in the delivery of the curriculum (Education Commission, 2016; World Bank, 2018; Basson & Mestry, 2019; Ajani, 2022).

### The Challenges of Curriculum Delivery With Inadequate School Resources in Rural Schools

Educational policy and legislation reforms are necessary if the educational system continues to be responsive to society's needs and the nation's interests (Bantwini & Moorosi, 2018; Myende & Nhlumayo, 2022). Numerous competing interests in South Africa divert the government's attention away from adopting efficient curriculum delivery with equitable resource allocation for high-quality instruction and learning in rural schools. This is because of the prevalence of these competing interests (UNESCO, 2017; Valley, 2023). For the government to provide quality education, all efforts must be made toward eliminating the existing inequities in the education system (Mohapi et al., 2014; Ajani, 2019; Mabula et al., 2023).

According to Taole (2015), Myende and Nhlumayo (2022), and Valley (2023), fundamental reforms needed to be implemented in the South African educational system to realign it so that it serves the majority of the country's inhabitants in rural areas. The National Norms and Standards for School Funding (NNSST) Act is a piece of legislation drafted to resolve budget inequities and give affluent urban schools a financial advantage (Olivia, 2014). The report on the National Education Policy Act (NEPA) emphasises how important it is for government departments to make use of their fair share of the provincial budget to guarantee fair resource distribution over the long term, which is necessary for effective curriculum delivery and high-quality results (Du-Plessis & Mestry, 2018). Because of this, school principals and the school management team (SMT), who oversees the curriculum, are under pressure to support, implement, and manage curricular changes because it is their responsibility. Members of the SMT must conduct frequent research into the methods that can be used to enhance curriculum delivery in schools. This is done to ensure that the ever-changing educational requirements are met. To advance learning and teaching while maintaining oversight of the curriculum delivery, members of the SMT must demonstrate benevolent and professional leadership toward teachers (Oliva, 2014; Dube, 2020).

Although rural schools are being given funding, most extant studies show that these schools continue to have difficulty gaining access to the school resources and infrastructure, learning and teaching support materials necessary for curriculum delivery (Education Commission, 2016; UNESCO, 2017; Bashir et al., 2018; du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). Rural school principals are expected to fulfil multiple roles (including curriculum management) for efficient curriculum delivery; principals have responsibilities that go above and beyond what is typically expected of them (Dube, 2020; Assan, 2018). Mlachila and Moeletsi (2019), and Abenawe (2022) have all emphasised the need for principals to show superior strength and grow more resourceful to guide SMT toward the...
achievement of high-quality teaching and learning. According to Mohapi and colleagues (2014), the Department of Basic Education (DBE) must enact education reforms to improve curriculum delivery and address learner performance issues in rural schools.

Even though a Policy Framework for Education and Training (PFET) anticipated the easy implementation of National Learning Systems, like learner-centred and achievement-led education, most schools located in rural areas are faced with inadequate school resources to deliver curriculum to learners efficiently (Marongedza et al., 2023). This endeavour is essential because effective curriculum delivery encourages academic achievement among learners (Govender & Ajani, 2021). As a result, curriculum delivery places a significant emphasis on monitoring individuals and systems to ensure the quality of education provided to learners (Yulieana, 2020). In addition, teachers are expected to become more creative in how they approach education and instruction, regardless of the location of the schools in which they work (Ajani & Govender, 2019; Valley, 2023).

**Theoretical Framework**

*Critical Emancipatory Research*

Adopting a theoretical framework in any study is to project a clearer understanding of the phenomenon using an appropriate theory or theories. The theories give us ideas or rules that help us understand the social problem we are looking into. Hence, this study adopted Critical Emancipatory Research as the lens that underpins the study. Several hypotheses have been put forth regarding the philosophical antecedents of Critical Emancipatory Theory. However, the Frankfurt School in Germany, where Jörgen Habermas created CER in 1923, is generally accepted by researchers. To enable individuals to have a voice and be heard, this pioneer defined Critical Emancipatory Research (CER). In the context of a rural school, the CER lens is used to examine the SMT’s fiduciary obligations to provide sustainable, equitable resources. The Marxist view of economic and social issues informs Habermas’ Critical Economic Research (CER) (Schmidt, 2007: 51).

Moreover, McKernan (2013) links the German philosopher Immanuel Kant, who first described critical theory in 1871 and later theorised it as a philosophy to change social order through his work, as the source of the CER’s concepts. The further problematisation of “historical and social conditions of crisis, oppression, and inequality and replacement with emancipatory ones” was done by some academics who studied the CER (Sinnerbrink, 2012: 370). Hence, the conditions that emancipate SMT, SGB, and learners to improve social and learning conditions are the justification for the CER in the rural school context in South Africa. As a result, it enables rural learners to take advantage of resources of high quality and equality, which can enhance learner performance in classrooms. It can also lessen pressure on the SMT to oversee instruction and learning without fear of being criticised by the same members of underprivileged communities. The CER theory can be adopted to evaluate and explain how to use school resources best to teach the curriculum well in rural schools.

The CER is the best theory for empowering stakeholders to question systemic failures and carve out solutions to address the challenges of the poor resource allocation paradox that has plagued South African rural schools for millennia. The theory’s primary goal is to enable various marginalised rural schools to benefit from adequate human resources, which can transform the school system with other resources for temporary situations (Mahlomaholo, 2013). CER is an appropriate theory that ensures the inclusion of all learners in life-changing experiences through individual emancipation to achieve lived realities while promoting societal values of human rights, social justice, and inclusion. Conversely, CER ensures that all considerations are focused on attaining educational objectives, using available resources to achieve school learners’ academic performance.

**Research and Methodology**

In this study, a qualitative method was employed to investigate the lived experiences of rural high school principals regarding managing school resources to deliver curriculum in their respective schools. According to Kumar (2018), utilising a qualitative design allows researchers to gain insights into the participants’ perspectives. This interpretive qualitative study elicited in-depth information from the rural high school principals who were purposefully selected for the study. The study’s design allowed the researcher to investigate the participants’ experiences managing school resources to deliver curriculum while simultaneously achieving or attempting to achieve a quality education system. The researcher was provided with in-depth information that could answer the research questions thanks to the qualitative research design (Creswell, 2014). In addition, qualitative research is an inquiry-based approach exploring participants’ lived experiences in authentic and natural settings. This is accomplished using semi-structured interviews and observational tools. Twenty rural high school principals from King Cetshwayo District in KwaZulu-Natal were asked to participate in semi-structured interviews for this study. The interviews with the participants were carried out over the phone in their homes.

Principals of rural high schools were the participants in this study, and they had in-depth information that answered the research questions (Etikan et al., 2016). Although they were purposefully chosen, their participation availability was ensured by considering how convenient it would be for them (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The information supplied by the district office served as the primary means by which the participants were located and identified. They were given an adequate briefing on the study, and their participation in the study voluntarily was emphasised to them. An informed consent form was provided to every participant so they could sign it. Before reaching out to the participants, we got the necessary approval from the appropriate authorities. Interview guides were made available alongside the informed consent form, and various times and places were scheduled for the interviews. With the
participants' permission, the interviews, which lasted anywhere from 30 to 60 minutes each, were recorded to obtain accurate information from the participants. The interviews were analysed thematically, and an interpretive paradigm was used to generate themes used in the presentation and discussion of the study's findings (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Findings and Discussions

The data collected from the twenty rural high school principals in the district were transcribed scientifically, coded into similar ideas, and then analysed. The participants' lived experiences on the topic of school resources management for curriculum delivery led to the emergence of five themes. Due to the need for confidentiality, only a few excerpts from the participants labelled Principal 1 through Principal 20 have been included in this section.

The Significance of school resources to rural schools

Understanding the importance of school infrastructure to the overall success of any school system is the first step in effectively delivering the school curriculum. The purpose of the study was to investigate the principals' ability to manage school resources for school delivery and why these school resources are essential to the successful delivery of the curriculum. To fulfil their responsibilities as school leaders, the principals stepped up their game in administration, supervision, and curriculum development. The principals debated their critical roles in realising the educational goals of the rural schools by ensuring that the teaching activities ran smoothly using the resources available to the rural schools. This is what one of the principals had to say about it:

For the school to operate appropriately, it needs a variety of resources. These resources are required to deliver the curriculum successfully. However, the delivery of curriculum in schools is impacted by the existence of these resources and by their level of sufficiency. As principals of rural high schools, we find that most schools need more or more resources. For instance, my school only provides learners access to computers they can use. Although we can access additional resources like books and stationery, more is needed for our learners. However, I am responsible for ensuring that instructors make copies of any relevant pages before each lesson they deliver to learners (P12).

While another participant buttressed the point with this:

Even though we constantly push teachers to use the resources effectively, there must be more LTSM. However, they are encouraged to be creative to ensure that the curriculum delivery for every subject is achieved. There are complaints from teachers, but I keep trying to persuade them to find alternative solutions (P2).

It was found that the principals had a solid comprehension of the various school resources' functions in delivering the curriculum. The principals expressed their understanding of the difficulties that arise when schools do not have sufficient resources for teachers:

It is common knowledge that a school's geographical location affects the distribution of its available resources. Based on my observation and discussion with colleagues from rural high schools in the King Cetshwayo District, we can manage schools with limited educational resources. The limited resources we have are a significant source of stress for us. As principals, we are held to the same accountability standards as those in urban schools if we have sufficient resources. We are aware of the critical role that school resources play in curriculum delivery, and as a result, we make every effort to ensure that learners receive the curriculum efficiently (P1).

Another principal asserted that no school could attain any meaningful academic success without curriculum delivery:

The understanding that it is necessary to manage the school's available resources effectively depends on the goals the Department of Education wants to achieve, even if there are no resources. Even though the Department recognises that you require resources for the delivery of the curriculum, the availability of human resources, and LTSMs, which include textbooks and school furniture, makes it challenging to cover the curriculum adequately; the Department needs to provide these resources. It is so unfortunate that rural schools do not have adequate supplies of school resources, and in some cases, some school resources are absent in rural schools; however, as principals, we are expected to effectively carry out the delivery of the curriculum in rural schools despite these challenges(P18).

Most principals admitted that the availability of school resources is a significant factor in determining how the curriculum is delivered in rural schools (Mthethwa et al., 2022). Yulieana (2020) and Valley (2023) believe that the Department of Education needs to provide adequate resources to a substantial number of rural schools, which results in this Department's neglect of these institutions. According to several studies, rural schools need more teaching and non-teaching staff (Muthala et al., 2022). This is because most teachers prefer to work in urban schools. In addition, Mabula, Khalabi, and Simeon (2023) state that essential specific buildings need to be added in various rural schools. This is according to their research. Ifeanyi (2023) asserts that the focus should always be on urban schools because learners in these settings are provided with a wide variety of learning support materials, which leads to improved academic performance.

On the other hand, Usman (2016) contends that rural schools need more resources, such as learning and teaching support materials. Therefore, Du-Plessis and Mestry (2019) assert that challenges are involved in delivering the curriculum in these rural schools. Barrett et al. (2019) contend that rural school principals, who also serve as instructional leaders, need help to ensure that insufficient
school resources are effectively managed in schools to deliver the curriculum. According to Amin and Mahabeer (2021), social inequalities in the form of unequal distribution of resources continue to contribute to the segregation of schools in South Africa. Researchers Amin and Mahabeer (2021), Myende and Nhlumayo (2022), and Valley (2023) all agree that this is the area in which rural schools fare the worst. According to the study conducted by Tapala et al. (2021), school principals first need to have a solid understanding of the current state of school resources before they can effectively maximise those resources to provide an adequate school curriculum.

Uneven availability of school resources

The participants in the study were asked about their perspectives on the educational resources readily available in South African schools. The participants reported a disparity in the availability of school resources between rural and urban schools and between rural schools. They gave the impression that the fact that some of the school's resources are unavailable has significant implications for the delivery of the curriculum. One of the participants reiterated that:

*Having the necessary school resources is the one thing that can be protected if you indeed want effective curriculum delivery. To achieve the outcomes that are desired, adequate school resources must be available for both the administration of the school and the delivery of the curriculum. Adequate school resources improve the management of both the available human and material resources, which leads to accomplishing one's goals. Additionally, the resources improve teachers' classroom performance, improving learners' academic performance (P7).*

According to the findings, rural schools in South Africa need an adequate supply of both human and physical resources. This is the case for both types of resources. The lack of fundamental resources in the schools makes it impossible for them to perform their functions efficiently. This was the sentiment expressed by Participant P20:

*Rural schools in South Africa are faced with a need for more adequate resources, while some resources are not available at all. This is a big challenge to rural schools across the Republic. Teaching in rural schools could be more encouraging; even when teachers are willing to give their best shots, they are limited by inadequate or absent necessary school resources. The Department of Education uses the number of learners in schools to supply some resources. However, despite their many learners, rural schools must receive adequate attention.*

Many participants brought up the challenges of serving as principals in rural schools, which are even more challenging when there are not enough resources readily available in the school to deliver the curriculum. This was one of the central themes of the discussion. Rural school administrators have acknowledged that a lack of funding is a significant factor in determining the available resources to their schools. The participants voiced their worries about the quality of the current educational system. One of the principals has vouched for the following, and this has been established:

*The locations of the various schools in South Africa are considered when classifying them into one of several distinct categories. Schools can generally be classified into one of these five primary groups. Schools were ranked from the lowest to the highest quintile. Most rural schools are classified as Quintiles 1-3. The difficult task of generating additional revenue is given to the principals of the schools so that they can generate additional funds for the upkeep of their institutions (P10).*

In addition, participants confirmed that their limited access to educational resources contributes to the annual school enrolment statistics. The following is what Participant P2 had to say:

*Usually, our school enrolment should be used to supply school resources; however, when we do not receive adequate provision, we must exercise enrolment control. When there are many learners at a school who have access to sufficient educational resources, another problem with learners arises. The learners desire access to everything the schools should make available to them. Because there are not enough learning and teaching support materials, there is a disruption in the delivery of the curriculum (LTSM). It is a problem that there are insufficient classrooms, which leads to overcrowding, which affects classroom teaching (P2).*

Schools are put in a difficult position when their resources are insufficient or nonexistent. The principals of the rural schools argued that it is only possible for them to manage the schools with adequate resources. Affirmation of Principal P7:

*Our schools need laboratories where learners can conduct experiments. Many of our schools need access to computer labs and even those that only sometimes have computers in working order. In addition, some schools have computers in their buildings that are not connected to the Internet. (P7).*

According to the findings, rural school principals' challenges are significantly more significant than those of their urban school principal counterparts. According to studies on the difficulties faced by rural schools, most rural school principals work under a great deal of pressure to ensure that their under-resourced schools in many parts of Africa deliver the appropriate curriculum (Ajani et al., 2018; Chabala & Naidoo, 2021; Myende & Nhlumayo, 2022; Valley, 2023). According to Ajani’s (2020) argument, rural teachers need more resources to navigate school curriculum delivery effectively. Rural schools cannot provide learners the same resources as suburban and urban schools. This results in a need for more resources in the schools. As a result, the educational attainment of learners in rural schools is lower than that of their urban counterparts. According to Barrett et al. (2019), the learning resources in schools play significant roles in determining the school's success in delivering the curriculum. Therefore, effectively delivering the
curriculum is the primary responsibility of the educational system. The findings of the participants from the province of KwaZulu-Natal are consistent with the findings of various previous studies conducted in South Africa on the occurrence in question (Ajani, 2019; Barrett et al., 2019; Amin & Mahabeer, 2021; Ajani, 2021; Shava & Heystek, 2021; Muthala et al., 2022; Mthethwa, 2022).

Support from the Department of Basic Education

School principals are referred to as instructional leaders, heads of schools, and custodians of school funds in the South African School Act (SASA), passed into law in the Republic of South Africa in 1996. They serve as ex-officio members of the Finance Committee to aid School Governing Bodies in the process of developing all-encompassing school budgets. According to the perspectives expressed by the school principals, a significant contributor to inadequate school resources for delivering the curriculum is a lack of funding. The principals acknowledged the provision of school resources by the Department of Basic Education, which is unequal. In contrast, SMTs cannot support schools meaningfully by providing necessary resources. Also identified as a factor that prevented rural schools from obtaining necessary resources was the inappropriate use of school funds, while some school resources were not utilised for the purpose for which they were intended (Ajani, 2020; Mkhasibe et al., 2021).

In South Africa, there still needs to be a solution to providing adequate funding to rural schools. Most of the time, more than the funds allotted to schools are needed. Although there are some instances in which school principals collaborate with school governance boards to manage school funds improperly. Schools that fall under Function C are the only ones to receive adequate funding. Sadly, there is not a single rural school that fits into this category (P18).

Most schools in rural areas only receive some of their grants from the Department. The schools are also exempt from the requirement that they raise funds through levies or tuition of any kind (P11).

Most of the participants agreed that the procurement systems for the purchase of school resources are corrupt. As a result, the schools are at a competitive disadvantage compared to other schools. Because they are merely the recipients of those resources from suppliers, SMTs have so little power that they cannot question the legitimacy of the corruption. According to Amin and Mahabeer (2021), the Department of Basic Education must provide sufficient support to schools in rural and urban areas. According to Ajani (2019); Mkhasibe et al. (2021), the Department of Basic Education is responsible for employing teachers in South African public schools. However, in some instances, the School Governing Boards are responsible for employing additional teachers, mainly when there is a significant shortage of subject teachers. On the other hand, Chabalala and Naidoo (2021) assert that there is still a significant disparity between the distribution of teachers and other school resources between rural and urban schools. According to what appears to be Shava and Heystek's (2021) argument, there still needs to be a significant disparity in the distribution of school resources, which poses a significant risk to the success of rural school principals in delivering the curriculum.

Support from corporate organisations

Schools in urban areas typically do not benefit from or receive significant support from various corporate organisations. According to what was reported by the participants during the interviews, their locations do not make it possible for them to receive adequate support from organisations. According to the participants' responses, most urban schools receive support from businesses and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

In rural schools, it is exceptionally challenging to obtain any support from corporate organisations (P17).

You can see that rural high schools in this region of Africa face numerous challenges due to various factors. In contrast to many schools in urban areas, which find it relatively simple to obtain financial or material support from both large and small businesses. You come to find out that many schools located in rural areas have never received any support from businesses or industries. The rural schools are found in the rural communities, whereas the businesses are found in the towns; therefore, the businesses need to be made aware of the challenges the rural schools face (P10).

Participants were under the impression that specific organisations and government agencies have a prejudice against rural schools. These businesses need to make trips to rural schools to identify potential areas of support. The following is what Participant P4 had to say:

Many businesses donate money to schools, particularly urban schools, as part of their corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. Governments at all levels should work together to devise strategies to encourage or entice businesses to provide financial assistance to rural schools. These companies ought to be encouraged to travel to rural schools, evaluate the needs of the institutions, and investigate the various ways in which they can help. (P4).

Although the participants admitted that it is also challenging for companies to support schools, schools in urban communities have an advantage. Principal 5 had this to say:

It is a challenging task to obtain support from different industries or companies. We communicate with a few of them on occasion. However, sometimes we get fortunate and acquire things like computers or other necessary school supplies. These resources need to be increased for the job. (P5).

Some participants also admitted writing letters to some organisations for support. Participant 16 expressed his frustration:
Our schools, being rural schools, need more in many different school resources. Sometimes we send letters to various businesses, asking for their support in various endeavours. Occasionally, we are given stationery and other items, such as cartridges, A4 papers, maps, and software, for certain classes. (P1)

Many public schools are schools located all over the Republic: given the Department's restricted budget, many of these schools will receive adequate support (Ma et al. 2023). In their recent study, Marongedza, Hlungwani, and Howe (2023) report that the burden of school resource provision in African schools is enormous and that these schools receive meagre budgets from the national to local government in various parts of Africa. As a result, the education system requires massive support from corporate bodies and non-governmental organisations to function effectively. In addition, Abenawe (2022) and Mthethwa et al. (2022) argue that support from all stakeholders and organisations is essential to whole-school performance in African schools, including curriculum delivery. Myende and Nhulumayo (2022) believe that the national government can appeal to or compel organisations, industries, and companies to provide meaningful support to rural and urban schools. According to Valley (2023), the participation of corporate organisations in the educational system will make opportunities available to many learners enrolled in these schools.

Mlachila and Moletui (2019) and Mkhasibe et al. (2021) are correct in their assertion that businesses can be compelled to primarily support rural schools in their domain or province through a program known as “adopt a school.” Because school supplies consume a significant amount of money, the government of South Africa may need assistance from other entities, such as organisations, businesses, industries, and individuals, to adequately provide school supplies to rural schools.

Inadequate and irregular professional development for rural teachers

The curriculum is delivered by teachers, teaching various subjects to their learners. Teachers' Classroom practices are better enhanced with appropriate and regular professional development (Ajani, 2021, 2022). The participants were engaged in the professional development of their teachers toward curriculum delivery. Participants decreed that teachers in rural schools should be more noticed and included in various professional development activities. The participants had these to say:

Professional development is crucial to teachers' classroom practices, and the Department of Education also recognises it as what every teacher must experience every year. Access to professional development for our rural teachers could be more explicit. Teachers in urban schools attend more professional development activities, such as workshops or seminars, than teachers in rural schools (P18).

Teaching in rural schools is not so palatable to many teachers willing to develop their teaching skills through professional development with colleagues. You find out that teachers still need to receive an invite to attend regularly. When they receive it, they do not honour it because of the distance and financial cost of attending, such as workshops for teachers are usually held in towns or urban schools. The cost of travelling or driving to these venues may be a challenge to teachers (P8).

Regular training on curriculum delivery should be organised for rural teachers and their contexts. We, as principals, do organise workshops for our teachers, but the problem with the fund is our challenge to do so regularly. Even though the Department of Education does not regularly hold workshops for rural teachers, when they do, they do one-size-fits-all workshops that do not attend to the subject specialisation of teachers (P10).

Evidence from the participants affirmed that rural school teachers need more professional development programmes or activities that can improve curriculum delivery in these schools. According to Ajani (2022), the professional development of teachers aims at improving curriculum delivery and enhancing learners' academic performance. Dube (2020) argues that rural teachers must be adequately given access to various professional development activities in South Africa. Similarly, Du-Plessis and Mestry (2018) and Muthala et al. (2022) report that rural teachers' engagement and involvement in various organised, professional development programmes are minimal due to several limitations. These include travel costs, time of the training as well as lack of interest by some of these rural teachers. Ajani (2020) argues that teachers across South African schools should be encouraged to attend professional development activities, while professional development activities should be contextualised according to diverse school contexts in South Africa.

Conclusion

Literature that is currently available confirms that not only do social inequalities exist in South Africa, but they also manifest themselves in the country's educational system in a negative way. Many different criteria are used to categorise schools. However, the most common classification that shows schools that have adequate resources and schools that do not have adequate resources is schools that are classified as either rural or urban. It can be difficult for principals in rural schools, which are frequently underfunded and need more resources to compete with urban schools, to effectively manage the school's available resources to implement the curriculum. This study revealed the lived experiences of rural school principals from King Cetshwayo district in KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa. These principals spoke about their challenges in ensuring that rural schools adhered to the curriculum. The principals of rural schools in South Africa admitted that, compared to their counterparts in urban schools, they need access to sufficient and appropriate resources to implement the National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). The principals also bemoaned that despite their schools being designated as rural, they were restricted in the amount of outside funding they could
obtain from parents or businesses. The participants are critical of the SMTs for not providing sufficient support in the form of school resources to help with teaching and learning in the classroom.

Amin and Mahabeer (2021) agree that providing educational resources is an enormous task that the government cannot handle, mainly neglecting rural schools. As a result, Barrette et al. (2021) call for support from corporate organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), religious bodies, and other organisations to support rural schools with necessary school resources that can assist in delivering the curriculum. Companies, organisations, and religious bodies can be compelled to provide teaching and learning support materials to rural schools as part of their Community Social Responsibilities, according to Tapala et al. (2021), Mabula et al. (2023), and Marongedzwa et al. (2023). This finding is supported by Tapala et al. (2021). (CSR). According to Valley (2023), the Department of Basic Education should prioritise rural schools and ensure adequate funding for necessary infrastructures like buildings and other educational materials. Precisely, rural schools ought to be given priority status.

Based on the findings of the study, which agree with a variety of previously published works on the topic, the study makes some recommendations:

i. Increases in funding for rural schools should be made to accommodate the varied requirements of these institutions.

ii. Assessment and evaluation of rural school needs should be carried out by the Department of Basic Education (DBE), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and corporate bodies to determine the necessary support rural schools need. This preference should be given to rural schools so that rural principals can receive assistance delivering the curriculum.

iii. As instructional leaders in their schools, rural school principals should be given regular opportunities to participate in professional development activities to improve curriculum delivery. As a result, rural school principals should participate in ongoing professional development opportunities such as workshops, leadership meetings, symposia, educational conferences, and so on.

iv. To supplement the provisions made by the Department of Basic Education, parents and businesses should be encouraged to provide additional resources to schools to support the educational system.

v. It is recommended that rural schools be encouraged to receive adequate budget allocations for school resources.

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